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Speech of the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq (DSRSG) for Political Affairs, Ambassador Gyorgy Busztin on the occasion of the Roundtable on the Constitutional and Legislative Framework of the Federation Council held on 1 February, 2012 at the Council of Representatives premises

Your Excellency the Speaker of the Council of Representatives,
Your Excellency the Deputy Speaker of the Council of Representatives,
Your Excellencies the Chairs of Committees and Heads of Blocs
Distinguished members of the Council of Representatives

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour to address the distinguished parliamentary representatives of the Iraqi people on this occasion. As you may know, I arrived in Iraq to take up my duties recently; I look forward to learning a great deal from you at the discussions today and to meeting you individually soon.

I congratulate the leadership of the Council of Representatives for the initiative to fulfill the constitutional mandate of establishing the Federation Council. Article 65 of the Iraqi constitution calls for the establishment of a second chamber of the national legislature known as the Federation Council. This body is to represent the regions and the governorates and thus complement the Council of Representatives which represents the people of Iraq. It is envisaged that the Federation Council would have the power to review laws enacted by the Council of Representatives among other functions that may be assigned to it by the enabling law.

Many countries have established a second or upper parliamentary chamber for various reasons. Upper chambers allow for the representation of a broader cross-section of society including groups, components and interests that may not ordinarily be represented in the legislatures through the electoral process for the selection of the lower or popular chamber. Upper chambers may be assigned review or confirmatory powers over the lower chamber or the executive branch.

I'm delighted to learn that there is broad agreement among the Iraqi political leaders on the need to fulfill the constitutional mandate of Article 65 by establishing the Federation Council and that the legislative process is already underway. I am hopeful that our discussions at this roundtable will contribute immensely to the deliberations in the Council of Representatives on the draft law and

ultimately will help to create an effective upper legislative chamber that will promote the consolidation of democracy in Iraq.

I hope that the spirit of accord and cooperation behind this initiative on the Federation Council will inspire similar efforts to advance the Constitutional Review Process; the success of cooperative efforts on the establishment of the Federation Council may open the way to renewed efforts to take forward the constitutional review process.

At the request of the leadership of the Council of Representatives, UNAMI is providing advice and technical assistance for this roundtable including international and comparative experiences of upper chambers in federal parliamentary democracies. The United Nations has been an important partner with Iraq in its transition; assisting in the building of its democratic institutions and processes, the review of its constitution and in the normalisation of its international status. The United Nations continues to stand ready to support the people and the Government of Iraq, and the relevant institutions in this endeavour and will place at your disposal the expertise, experience and best practices we have accumulated in different contexts.

I wish you a productive meeting and thank you all for your commitment to this important initiative.