



United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI)

Speech by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Mr. Ad Melkert Kirkuk, Wednesday 26 Jan. 2011

“Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honor and a pleasure to be back in Kirkuk. It is not often you go to a community in Iraq or elsewhere where many of its citizens conduct business or social engagements easily in four languages. Kirkuk reminds me of the richness and hope of Iraq – not in terms of oil – although that is good too if used wisely -- but most importantly in the ethnic diversity and strength of its people. I like visiting Kirkuk because Kirkuk represents a better Iraq – a commitment to inclusivity, a value the UN seeks to promote.

Iraq is entering a new era. The UN Security Council in its December 2010 meeting ended sanctions on Iraq amongst others related to proliferation issues and obligations related to the Oil-For-Food programme. UNAMI is also working to assist the Iraqi government in finalizing its obligations in relation to Kuwait, so that Iraq can emerge from under the Chapter VII mandates, a goal which all Iraqis support as does the international community.

Democracy in Iraq is also strengthening as seen by national elections in 2010– a symbol of the involvement of the Iraqi citizens in determining their future. The formation of the Coalition Government formation was the good step forward as recognized by the international community. Across Iraq citizens are increasingly demanding good government services, accountability and transparency -- key building blocs for a healthy democratic state.

But many challenges remain: Economic development, efficient delivery of good services - be it providing a sufficient number of schools so that schools do not have to rotate three shifts of students in the six hour day or the challenges of providing clean and sufficient water for drinking or for Kirkuk’s important agriculture sector. I do not need to mention the provision of sufficient electricity, as I have followed this closely and have discussed this with the Governor this morning.

The United Nations/ international community is working with you and the Iraqi government to help realize the following goals:

- Job creation and a thriving economic growth;
- the empowerment of women and children the delivery of essential basic services;
- improved governance;
- a strengthened, independent judiciary and the rule of law;
- the protection of human rights and individuals;
- enhanced security, and
- long term stability and prosperity.

The United Nations, through its partnership agreement with the government of Iraq (UNDAF), will be working over the next four years in a joint partnership to strategically address many of these issues and help ensure stability and prosperity.

However, absent national reconciliation and inclusive political dialogue to resolve outstanding issues these objectives will remain difficult to fulfil. The Security Council has given expression to international interest in addressing issues that are crucial for stability and prosperity in Iraq and indeed the wider region. I quote from the Presidential Statement by Vice-President Biden in the Chair of the Security Council on 15 December 2010:

“The Security Council encourages UNAMI’s continued work, in coordination with the Government of Iraq, to provide protection and help create conditions conducive to voluntary, safe, dignified, and in particular, the sustainable return of Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons, and stresses the importance of further attention to this issue by all concerned. The Security Council underscores UNAMI’s important role in supporting the Iraqi people and Government to promote dialogue, ease tension, and encourage a negotiated political agreement to the nation’s disputed internal boundaries, and calls upon all relevant parties to participate in an inclusive dialogue to this end.”

UNAMI is committed to fostering an inclusive political dialogue to resolve the nation’s disputed internal boundaries and promote national reconciliation. It is something which has driven a large portion of my work for most of the time I have had the privilege of serving in Iraq. UNAMI has worked with Iraqi parties in the High Level Task Force that was set up after a thorough analysis of the history and current situation in “Kirkuk and other disputed territories” as referred to in the text of the Constitution. I have found it encouraging to experience a sense of pragmatism and understanding of the issues that affect the lives of so many citizens. Discussions have taken place on the issues of detainees and missing people, provision of services including access to education in one’s mother tongue and curriculum, and the need to resolve land and property disputes, as part of a commitment to deliver results to people like you.

In one of my previous trips to Kirkuk in January 2009, I was particularly pleased to attend the start of the work of the Kirkuk Committee on property issues, and to witness

the inclusivity, pragmatism, and fairness that the committee was working to achieve to serve all ethnic communities' needs. I was also pleased to learn know of the Committee's potential ability to positively influence legislation and implementation of the property claims commission law, for the benefit of the people of Kirkuk and elsewhere. While progress has not been achieved as much as you would, the work of the committee and others has shown there is a way to resolve problems affecting the people of Kirkuk and Iraq.

Now that the government formation has confirmed that all stand to gain from cooperation and consensus building, it is time to advance in defining the future of Kirkuk in the same spirit, whether the outstanding issues concern elections, power-sharing or resolving the future status and administrative boundaries. This belief brought me to Kirkuk and to conduct a whole series of consultations in with all stakeholders.

UNAMI's role is to consult and to advise, and it is up to the people of Kirkuk and Iraq to decide Kirkuk's future. And as you or your elected officials go about addressing these issues, there are important principles and key points to consider:

- Obviously any solution on the future should serve the people of Kirkuk and their needs. For example:
 - What type of agreement can be reached which will ensure the provision of essential services and foster economic development for the people of Kirkuk?
 - How can representation and participation in government be guaranteed to all components of Kirkuk in a meaningful manner so that all can work to ensure good governance and rule of law?
 - What elements could be agreed upon to in order to address all components concerns while enabling provincial council elections to proceed so that elections can proceed and Kirkuk can reap the benefits of greater local authority?
 - What next steps can be taken to ensure a speedy but fair and transparent resolution of land and property disputes and agricultural contract issues so that investment and agriculture production can flourish?
 - What process could be re-invigorated and supported to ensure resolution of cases of detainees and missing people so that families and individuals have closure while building trust among all communities? UNAMI Human Rights and Political team remain ready to provide technical assistance on this issue.
 - What can be done to further foster the well-being of Kirkuk citizens and the provision of security based on principles of local representation and inclusivity, respect for rule of law and accountability? With the change in security over the coming months, working together to maintain security will

become even more critical. I know that much work has gone in to strengthening the capability of the Iraqi security forces – particularly in Kirkuk - and it will be critical to their success that they enjoy the support of their local community and a relationship built on mutual respect.

- How to ensure justice and fairness for those who were displaced and for those who have remained in an inclusive and participatory manner?

- What can be done to ensure that civil society has a strong role in shaping a democratic future for Kirkuk and Iraq. And I am very pleased that many of you are here today from civil society so that we can exchange views.

- Finally, how can the wonderful inclusivity and diversity unique to Kirkuk be protected and strengthened in any future arrangements in the province?

Let me say in closing that the agenda for the future is very challenging. It will be challenging because it represents pain of the past and hope for the future for so many, regardless their ethnicity or religion. It will be challenging because the history and present of Kirkuk represent such a wide diversity. It will be challenging because direction should be provided to a future that will enable the diversity to flourish and at the same time will create clarity on status and responsibilities in a way that will reduce controversy and tension instead of increasing **this**.

The agenda and its implementation will be the responsibility of the Iraqi people. The international community can facilitate, advise and support. Its role is to promote and contribute to peaceful resolution of outstanding issues. Its role is not to prescribe the outcome of this. A solution will require compromise by all and it will require input by all. Kirkuk is important to you and you hold it dear to your hearts, at the same time it is of national concern. It will be critical that you continue to inform your Council of Representatives' members of your views and provide them advice and input so they can represent your interests. As well, our UN staff here in Kirkuk remain available for you to share your views as well as to provide assistance to advance issues of concern (I thank you too for the support they have enjoyed in the community).

UNAMI looks forward to play its part. Today is a day of dialogue and we will listen carefully to all views and suggestions. It will enable us to speak tomorrow and in the near future with all stakeholders. The aim should be to make steps forward without jumping immediately to conclusions that might not be sufficiently inclusive, balanced and practical. These are criteria that will guide our advice and hopefully will guide the input by all stakeholders: inclusive, balanced and practical based on principles of justice and fairness. UNAMI remains committed to working with all citizens of Kirkuk to resolve these problems and to help you and the rest of Iraq realize stability and prosperity.”

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