

[Extract]

United Nations

S/PV.5949

Security Council

Sixty-third year

5949th meeting

Wednesday, 6 August 2008, 10:00 a.m.

New York

[...]

The situation concerning Iraq

Mr. Ambassador Alfredo Suescum

Alternate Representative of Panama to the United Nations

Mr. Suescum (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation joins in the congratulations extended to you, Sir, and to your country as you assume the presidency. We also join in the congratulations extended to Ambassador Le Luong Minh of Viet Nam, his delegation and his country for the excellent way in which he presided over the Council in July. I should also like to thank Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing, as well as the Deputy Permanent Representative of the United States and the Permanent Representative of Iraq.

My delegation is pleased to note the positive evolution of the situation in Iraq, particularly in terms of security, with the exception of the recent attacks in Baghdad and Kirkuk. The ceasefire in Sadr City remains in force, with tangible benefits for the people, and the reintegration of the various political blocs into the Government represents significant and noteworthy progress. However, the Council must take into account the remarks of the Secretary-General to the effect that the situation is still critical and that the challenge requires redoubled efforts on the part of the Government of Iraq, as well as the combined efforts of all sectors of the population and the continued cooperation of the international community.

We acknowledge the important work being carried out by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) to assist the Government of Iraq in developing an inclusive

electoral system that will allow the holding of fair and transparent elections guaranteeing the participation of all. A peaceful Iraq also requires certain important common goals to be achieved, such as the law on hydrocarbons and the demarcation of internal boundaries. We should like to thank the Ambassador of Iraq for the information he has provided to us today on the progress made in those matters.

The delegation of Panama notes with optimism the recent initiatives of regional and international dialogue, in particular the commitments achieved at the meeting of the International Compact with Iraq in Stockholm and the decisions of Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates to reopen their diplomatic missions in Iraq. Those events reaffirm the commitment of the international community to the cause of Iraq. We should also like to acknowledge the gesture by the United Arab Emirates in cancelling Iraq's debt.

Despite all those endeavours, the humanitarian situation in Iraq remains critical and deserves the greatest attention of the United Nations and Iraq. While we acknowledge the work that has been done, we also urge UNAMI and the Government of Iraq, in particular, to strengthen their response with regard to the basic needs of the most vulnerable population groups both within the borders of Iraq and beyond, so as to provide aid to the refugees in the region and to guarantee their safe and voluntary return. We also urge the international community to lend its efforts and cooperation to that difficult task.

Lastly, we note with concern the observations of the Secretary-General indicating that the human rights situation in Iraq remains alarming. The Council must pay more attention to the report prepared by the UNAMI Human Rights Office. To that end, the cycle of reports and discussion thereof must be improved. We are concerned about the serious situation of children, reports of gender violence and the excessive use of force against civilians, and the position of detainees.

The consolidation and development of political and administrative institutions in Iraq must go hand in hand with security and the respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of its people. Here we echo the appeal to Iraq by the Secretary-General to take the necessary measures to enhance its system of protection and information with regard to human rights.