

[Extract]

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**Security Council**

Sixty-third year

**6016**<sup>th</sup> meeting

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New York

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[...]

*The situation in Iraq*

**Mr. Ambassador Ricardo Alberto Arias**

Permanent Representative of Panama to the United Nations

**Mr. Arias** (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, for his briefing on behalf of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI). Through him, I would like also to thank the entire Mission and express the gratitude of Panama for the work it has been doing. We would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of the United States, Mr. Zalmay Khalilzad, who spoke on behalf of the Multinational Force, for his briefing. Finally, we would like to welcome the Ambassador of Iraq, Mr. Hamid Al Bayati, and to thank him for his important statement to the Council.

We are pleased to see that, in spite of the serious security situation that persists in Iraq, the report of the Secretary-General (S/2008/688) gives some signs of justified optimism. Those signs of optimism are based, first and foremost, on a drop in acts of violence throughout Iraq. That is due in no small measure to the political agreements and understandings achieved among the parties in conflict, with the necessary participation of UNAMI and the leadership of the multinational forces.

The holding of provincial elections in Iraq has been a pending topic for many months, due to a lack of the necessary political agreement on establishing laws and

on a suitable institutional framework in which to hold the elections. This is why we note with satisfaction the national voter registration update by the Government of Iraq, as well as the adoption of the provincial elections law, which includes the fundamental issue of the representation of minorities.

My delegation recognizes the importance of those achievements for the establishment of democracy in Iraq. It is essential to continue to pay particular attention to those issues. In spite of those advances, thousands of Iraqis continue living in very adverse humanitarian circumstances. An increase in the presence of humanitarian personnel on the ground is crucial for progress.

That is why we recognize the importance of the fact that the United Nations staff have begun to broaden their presence and activities and that different offices, agencies and programmes involved in this matter have got together to establish a permanent international presence in Baghdad. We believe that that initiative will contribute to the implementation of the goals established in the United Nations Assistance Strategy for Iraq 2008-2010.

On the other hand, the situation of refugees and displaced persons continues to be cause for concern. We recognize the incentives provided by the Government of Iraq for the return of thousands of displaced persons, as well as the measures so that those individuals can recover their property. We urge the Government of Iraq to continue those measures. No less important is that, as mentioned in the UNAMI report, human rights in Iraq continue to be violated regularly. In that context, we should make special mention of the thousands of people in various detention centres who continue to call for the application of international human rights standards, while they suffer ill treatment and humiliation and while basic procedural guarantees are denied them. That is why the Council should pay more attention to that serious situation and support the efforts of the United Nations bodies that are involved in this matter.

Finally, the main goal of the efforts of this Organization must be to achieve an Iraq that can live in prosperity and peace, both with itself and with its neighbours, an Iraq where human rights are promoted and respected, an Iraq that is free of occupation by multinational forces.