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Subject: Council conclusions on Iraq
- Council conclusions (19 June 2017)

Delegations will find in the Annex the Council conclusions on Iraq, adopted by the Council at its 3551st meeting held on 19 June 2017.

COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON IRAQ**Foreign Affairs Council, 19 June 2017**

1. The EU highly commends the Iraqi Government of Prime Minister al-Abadi and the Iraqi security forces for the significant advances they have made in the military campaign against Da'esh over the past months. These advances have culminated in the liberation of most districts of the city of Mosul, a major hurdle to the territorial defeat of Da'esh in Iraq. The EU emphasises the contribution that the Global Coalition has made in supporting the Government of Iraq in the campaign against Da'esh and remains fully committed to the Global Coalition's comprehensive engagement, including in the fight against violent extremism and terrorism in accordance with international law. The EU recognises the sacrifices that have been made by the Iraqi people in the campaign to defeat Da'esh. The EU commends the Government of Iraq's efforts to protect civilians during the military campaign and calls on the Iraqi security forces to continue to put protection of civilians at the heart of the military campaign across Iraq. The EU condemns in the strongest terms the continued brutality of Da'esh and its flagrant violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, including indiscriminate attacks, killings and conflict-related sexual violence. The EU is also deeply concerned by allegations of human rights abuses and violations perpetrated by Iraqi forces. It welcomes the commitments made by the Federal Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to swiftly investigate all allegations, and calls on them to hold those responsible to account in a transparent process.
2. At this critical juncture in Iraqi history, the EU reiterates its steadfast support for Iraq's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and its firm and active commitment to the preservation of the multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-confessional nature of Iraqi society, including the protection of its minority groups. In order to achieve the objective of building a common vision on the future of the country, it is now essential for Iraqis to embark on an inclusive process of reconciliation both at the national and at the local level. The EU welcomes efforts by Iraq's political leaders to promote political reform and reconciliation and urges all parties to continue progress towards national reconciliation in a spirit of mutual understanding and compromise. The international community's continued and long-term support in this regard is vital. Education which promotes openness towards diversity should also be encouraged.

3. The EU believes that the general interest of Iraqi people is best served through dialogue and cooperation, that unilateral steps must be avoided, and that all open questions must be resolved through consensual positions based on the full application of the provisions of the Iraqi Constitution. The EU calls on the Federal Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government to build on their successful security cooperation in the campaign to liberate Mosul and to engage in a constructive dialogue on all issues across the political and economic spectrum, including the disputed internal boundaries. The EU also urges all parties in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq to seek common ground and restore the functioning of its democratic institutions, including by holding regional elections.
4. The EU believes that it is essential for the Government of Iraq to make tangible progress on political reforms to enable full national reconciliation based on justice and accountability, the principles of a functioning democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and the genuine involvement of civil society. The EU calls for the swift implementation of the Iraqi National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. The EU welcomes and supports the reform efforts of the Government of Iraq and calls on all leading Iraqi politicians to prioritise the national interest and to support the government in its reform, reconciliation and stabilisation efforts, including in the lead up to parliamentary and provincial elections next year which should take place in a transparent way and conform to democratic standards. In all processes, the inclusion of women, youth and minorities must be ensured.

5. The EU also expresses its highest concern about the humanitarian situation and recognises the significant efforts of all the Iraqi authorities, the United Nations and other international partners in providing humanitarian relief and assistance to those displaced and affected by the conflict. The EU reiterates the importance for parties to the conflict to ensure the protection of civilians and comply with international law, including international humanitarian law and human rights law, both during and, where applicable, after the conduct of hostilities. The EU also stresses the urgency to ensure safe and unhindered humanitarian access in all areas, protection for civilians fleeing hostilities, lifesaving emergency medical care and evacuation of war wounded, and the unhindered return of IDPs as soon as it is safe for them to return to their homes. Strengthened support for the specific needs of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence is necessary. It is essential that all Iraqi authorities ensure that security screening procedures fully comply with national and international law and that camps maintain their humanitarian and civilian character. In light of the current funding gap in the United Nations humanitarian response plan, the EU stresses the urgent need for the whole international community to step up its humanitarian support taking into account the needs in the whole of Iraq. The EU and its member states have been at the forefront of the international humanitarian response and will continue to show solidarity with the Iraqi people by providing humanitarian aid to those most in need and according to humanitarian principles.

6. In order to ensure the long-term stability of Iraq, the EU believes it is essential that the Government of Iraq and political leaders propose and support a process of transitional justice. This must include measures to hold Da'esh to justice and ensure accountability for human rights violations and abuses, including war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide as well as acts against persons belonging to minority groups. Evidence of these crimes must be preserved and these violations documented. The EU and its Member States stand ready to support the Government of Iraq in this process. In this respect, the issue of Foreign Terrorist Fighters, in particular returnees, continues to deserve special interest. Cooperation and information sharing with relevant actors involved, in a legally compliant manner and through the appropriate channels, remain crucial. The EU calls on Iraq to accede to the Rome statute of the International Criminal Court. The EU also calls on the Iraqi authorities to guarantee a transparent legal claims process through which property that has been lost can be returned to its rightful owners. The EU further stresses the importance of implementing programmes to demobilize, reintegrate and educate children who have been recruited by armed groups and notes that children are always victims who need institutional, social and community support. The EU opposes the use of the death penalty in all circumstances. It calls on the Federal Government of Iraq to introduce a moratorium on executions and also calls on the Kurdistan Regional Government to re-instate a moratorium, with a view to ultimately abolish the death penalty.
7. The EU welcomes efforts of the Government of Iraq to meet the requirements of its Stand-By Arrangement with the IMF. The EU underlines that financial and economic reforms are urgently needed to enable Iraq to embark on a path of economic recovery, reconstruction and sustained economic and social development. The EU is ready to continue contributing to Iraq's economic regeneration efforts and actively supports the Iraqi authorities in their work to enhance public services, reinforce inclusive governance, fight corruption and ensure equal rights for all Iraqis irrespective of their ethnicity, gender, religion or belief, in line with the Iraqi Constitution. The EU urges the Iraqi authorities to accelerate financial and economic reforms. It stands ready to support Iraq in close coordination with the IMF and World Bank in the implementation process of the reforms needed to strengthen and diversify the economy which will result in better opportunities for job creation, including for young people, promote the return of displaced persons and contribute to the stabilization of local communities increasing their resilience. The EU welcomes efforts by the EIB and Iraq to finalise their negotiations on a framework agreement to facilitate long term loan support of Iraq. The EU continues its strong support of UNAMI's mandate.

8. The EU underscores the importance of security and the rule of law for stability in the liberated areas and across the whole country. It is essential that security agencies improve their relation with the civilian population. For this purpose, the EU and its Member States are already providing support to Iraq in the security sector, including through police training and support to counterterrorism structures and intelligence agencies, as well as military training provided on a bilateral basis by some member-States. The EU will seek coherence with other international partners to better meet the needs of the Iraqi Authorities. In response to the request by the Iraqi authorities, the EU is examining the deployment of an EU Security Sector Reform Advice and Assist Team to assist in the reform efforts in cooperation and coherence with other international partners.
9. 1.8 million IDPs have returned to liberated areas to date. The EU welcomes this important achievement. The EU considers the stabilisation of the liberated areas and the safe, informed voluntary and non-discriminatory return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees in line with international protection standards to be crucial for Iraq's long-term stability. Stabilisation efforts must be Iraqi-led, but supported by, and coordinated with, the international community, including the United Nations. Accordingly, the EU calls on the Iraqi government, through dialogue with all relevant actors and taking full account of the interests of affected communities, including minorities such as the Yezidis, Christians and Turkmens, to ensure effective security, inclusive governance and the provision of basic services in the liberated areas in order to enable the return of IDPs to their homes and efficiently counter attempts at demographic engineering. These measures will complement the ongoing efforts to restore basic services and livelihoods including through the UNDP's Funding Facilities for Stabilisation. Successful efforts in this area will enable Iraqis to return and stay in their homes therefore reducing the pressure of displacement on neighbouring countries. The EU calls on the Government of Iraq to cooperate further in the facilitation of dignified, safe and orderly return of Iraqi nationals to their home country in line with international law including human rights law and Iraq's commitments as expressed in the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. The Council also encourages the Commission and the High Representative to take forward the ongoing exchanges with the Federal Government of Iraq on migration which should cover all its aspects in a mutually beneficial, joint endeavour.

10. The EU and its Member States are among the largest donors in the stabilisation process and stand ready to step up their support. The EU participates actively in the coordination of the Global Coalition's stabilisation efforts, including as the thematic coordinator on Explosive Hazard Mitigation.
11. The EU welcomes Iraq's recent diplomatic engagement with its neighbours. The EU urges all the countries of the region to sustain these efforts, to support Iraq's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and to play a constructive role in support of stability and reconciliation within Iraq and the wider region. The EU underlines the importance for the prosperity of Iraq and its neighbours of improved economic regional cooperation.
12. Following on from its Regional Strategy for Syria and Iraq, as well as the Da'esh threat, the EU remains firmly committed to supporting Iraq in its recovery from the current crisis, notably through the implementation of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Iraq once fully ratified, including cooperation on democracy and human rights, trade and investment and migration in all its aspects.
13. On the basis of these Conclusions, the Council invites the High Representative and the European Commission to present in due course elements for an EU strategy for engagement with Iraq.
