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*Delegation for relations with Iraq  
Delegation for relations with Iran*

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**D-IQ/D-IR\_PV(2016)0511**

**MINUTES**  
of the meeting of 11 May 2016, 15.00-16.00  
Strasbourg

The meeting opened at 15.00 on Wednesday, 11 May 2016, with David Campbell Bannerman and Janusz Lewandowski, (the Co - chairs) presiding.

**1. Adoption of draft agenda (PE 578.925)**

The draft agenda was adopted.

**2. Chairs' announcements**

The Chairs noted the importance of the two delegations meeting together to discuss the issue of Iraq-Iran relations.

The Chair of the Delegation for relations with Iraq gave a brief overview of the current situation in Iraq and supported the efforts of the Iraqi Prime Minister Al-Abadi to form a technocratic government to combat corruption. He noted the breaking into the Green Zone of the followers of Shia leaders Muqtada al-Sadr that was thankfully without bloodshed. However, the death toll in Iraq continued to rise with a total of 741 Iraqis killed and another 1,374 injured in acts of terrorism, violence and armed conflict in Iraq in April 2016. The overall casualty figures were even higher in March, with a total of 1,119 were killed and 1,561 injured and car bombs were quite frequent. He noted that the humanitarian situation across Iraq continued to deteriorate, with increasing displacement due to military operations and clashes.

The Chair of the Delegation for relations with Iran announced that Ambassador of Iran to the European Union Peiman Seadat had been ready to join the discussion, but had to cancel his participation due to a meeting of Iranian Ambassadors in Iran.

He noted that the Delegation for relations with Iran had so far focused its attention of the huge impact of the nuclear agreement on the Iran/EU relations and on Syria, while the joint meeting would provide an opportunity to understand also the very important implication in the overall and complex relations between Iran and Iraq, where the situation

was quite explosive.

**3. Exchange of views on *Iraq-Iran relations post-nuclear deal* with H.E. Ambassador Dr Jawad al-Hindawy, Head of the Iraq Mission to the European Union, and Mr Adnan Tabatabai, CEO of the Centre for Applied Research in Partnership with the Orient**

Ambassador al-Hindawy outlined five key considerations in the bilateral Iraq-Iran relationship, which he described as a “strategic” partnership.

The first consideration is mutual trust - as represented by the lack of any political crisis between the two parties in the past 10 years. The strategic relationship between Iran and Iraq has not been adversely affected by recent insecurity in the Middle East, but had held strong amid “strategic surprises and political turmoil”. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) had only had a positive impact on Iran-Iraq relations: commercial trade and monetary exchanges between the two nations had become easier and more effective since the lifting of the embargo on Iran.

The second consideration was the shared social and religious ties that have existed between the two countries and two peoples throughout history. The long history of social interplay between the two nations continues to have a positive effect on their current relations.

Thirdly the relationship was based on a shared goal of fighting terrorism and extremism by “takfiri” groups. The ambassador noted that, after ISIS occupied Mosul, Iran was the first nation to come to the aid of Iraq- both politically and militarily. Active and effective anti-terrorism cooperation continues between Iraq and Iran on the one hand, and between Iraq, Iran and the United States of America on the other.

The fourth component of the bilateral relationship is the goal of achieving democracy, pluralism and holding elections. The ambassador acknowledged that Iraq is experiencing “labour pains” in its nascent democracy and is facing many challenges, however he also highlighted that Iraq is only the second Arab nation in the Middle East to establish a democratic system after Lebanon, which has also experiences challenges in establishing its democratic system.

Finally the strategic relationship is also based on mutual influence. Iran has a political and military influence on Iraq, while Iraq has a social, political and religious impact on Iran. Ambassador al-Hindawy described the ties as a bilateral relationship between two sovereign states- he criticised any suggestions that Iran interferes in Iraq’s internal affairs, calling such rumours “insulting”. The two countries had a relationship based on respect and sovereignty, he said. The ambassador highlighted the economic cooperation that has existed between the two states since 2003, and praised Iran’s role as a mediator when problems arise on the Iraqi political scene.

On political developments in Iraq, Ambassador al-Hindawy stressed that Minister al-Jaafari had remained in his post of Minister of Foreign Affairs and only five ministers had been appointed to the government thus far. The ambassador outlined the differences between the recent sit-in demonstration at the Iraqi parliament and the protests in Baghdad. He stressed that those who participated in the parliament sit-in did not represent

supporters of Moqtada al-Sadr, while the protests in Baghdad were organised with encouragement from al-Sadr's movement. The ambassador expressed his satisfaction that the protests were peaceful and that no violence was committed by any party.

Mr Tabatabai outlined that the recent nuclear agreement was only possible because a strong political will was developed within Iran to negotiate such a deal, based on both security calculations and economic incentives. Tehran was concerned about the prospect of regime change inside Iran and the danger of military attacks against Iranian nuclear sites by Israel or the USA- these threats have been mitigated for the duration of the nuclear agreement. Secondly, economic interests and incentives have been the driving force behind the nuclear agreement, as both "homemade mismanagement" and decade-long sanctions had catalysed economic hardship inside Iran.

With regard to Iraq, Mr Tabatabai quoted Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif in saying that the Iran-Iraq war "is just a short but very bitter episode" in the history of Iran-Iraq relations. He stated that the war still exists in Iranian collective memory and therefore Iraq is still a main component of Iran's security doctrine. In the early post-Saddam Hussein era, Iran was perhaps ambivalent in its relationship with Iraq - this ambivalence was due in part to the presence of US forces in Iraq and the related threat perception - it was also a reaction to attacks committed by al-Qaeda and former Baathist organisation who sought to challenge the post-Saddam Hussein order. In the years that followed, Iran-Iraq relations normalised and the gradual US withdrawal increased Iran's sense of responsibility to be a constructive actor in Iraq.

Post-nuclear deal, the only threat that Iran was imminently sensing was that of violent extremism in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq. Mr Tabatabai underlined what the Ambassador had already stated - that security cooperation between Iraq and Iran was concrete, while economic and cultural ties were also very important. In order to bolster its interests in Iraq, Iran supported non-state actors that it believed could support security and order within Iraq, to better combat terrorism. To conclude, Mr Tabatabai stated that the EU could better appreciate Iraq-Iran relations, given that the two nations had overcome warfare and crisis, to establish deep-rooted ties. He highlighted that the multi-level Iran-Iraq relationship should send a positive message to the Middle East, and could be applied to Iranian-Saudi relations in the future.

Co-chair Janusz Lewandowski praised the optimistic outlook on bilateral Iraq-Iran relations given by the speakers, and noted that Polish-German relations could also serve as a model for reconciliation, given their longstanding history of conflict.

MEPs questioned the role of Saudi Arabia in Iraqi affairs and noted possible links to violent extremism in the region. Ambassador al-Hindawy responded by stating that a number of regional and non-regional actors are engaged in "foreign interference" in Iraq through various proxies. Mr Tabatabai confirmed that the re-opening of a Saudi embassy in Baghdad has caused concern in Tehran and outlined allegations that Saudi Arabia may be funding groups which could disrupt Iraqi order - but clarified that there is a lack of evidence to substantiate such allegations.

MEPs also expressed a need for more information about the new Iraqi government, its basic goal and operational structure, and about the levels of military cooperation between the Iraqi government and the military command in Iran. Ambassador al-Hindawy confirmed that bilateral military and political cooperation occurs at the highest level:

between the office of the Prime Minister in Iraq and the Iranian Ministry of Defence. He declined to elaborate on the structure and goal of the new government, as it remains unclear who will be appointed to the Cabinet.

Concerns were raised about the lack of minority representation in the new Iraqi government and the displacement of Yazidi and Christian minorities. The Ambassador expressed his sadness about the displacement of communities, but stated that the issue was not specific to Iraq and is indeed occurring throughout the region.

Discussions were raised about the economic dimension of the Iraq-Iran relationship and how economic assistance can be provided in post-war Iraq. The Ambassador noted that various groups and nations had been providing economic assistance to terrorist organisations, but stressed that Iraq is forging ahead against its challenges, thanks to the will of the Iraqi people.

**4. Any other business**

None.

**5. Date and place of the next meetings**

The delegation for relations with Iran: 8th June in Strasbourg.

The Delegation for relations with Iraq, on 11 May 2016 (the same day) at 16.15.

The meeting closed at 16.00.

**ПРИСЪСТВЕН ЛИСТ/LISTA DE ASISTENCIA/PREZENČNÍ LISTINA/DELTAGERLISTE/  
ANWESENHEITSLISTE/KOHALOLIJATE NIMEKIRI/KATAΣΤΑΣΗ ΠΑΡΟΝΤΩΝ/RECORD OF ATTENDANCE/  
LISTE DE PRÉSENCE/POPIS NAZOČNIH/ELENCO DI PRESENZA/APMEKLĒJUMU REĢISTRŠ/DALYVIŲ SAŖAŠAS/  
JELENĹTI ÍV/REGĪSTRU TA' ATTENDENZA/PRESENTIELIJST/LISTA OBECNOŠCI/LISTA DE PRESENÇAS/  
LISTÁ DE PREZENŤA/PREZENČNÁ LISTINA/SEZNAM NAVZOČIH/LÁSNÁOLOLISTA/DELTAGARLISTA**

Буро/Mesa/Pfedsednictvo/Formandskabet/Vorstand/Juhatus/Προεδρείο/Bureau/Predsjetništvo/Ufficio di presidenza/Prezidijs/ Biuras/Elnökség/Prezydium/Birou/Predsednictvo/Predsedstvo/Puheenjohtajisto/Presidiet (*)
David Campbell Bannerman, Janusz Lewandowski, Cornelia Ernst, Damiano Zoffoli,
Членове/Diputados/Poslanci/Medlemmer/Mitglieder/Parlamendiliikmed/Μέλη/Members/Députés/Zastupnici/Deputati/Deputāti/Nariai/ Kérviseleők/Membri/Leden/Posłowie/Deputados/Deputați/Jäsenet/Ledamöter
Nikolay Barekov, Klaus Buchner, Jytte Guteland, Udo Voigt, Marco Zanni,
Заместници/Suplentes/Náhradníci/Stedfortrædere/Stellvertreter/Asendusliikmed/Αναπληρωτές/Substitutes/Suppléants/Zamjenici/ Supplenti/Aizstājēji/Pavaduojuantysnariai/Póttagok/Sostituti/Plaatsvervangers/Zastępcy/Membros suplentes/Supleanți/Náhradníci/ Namestniki/Varajäsenet/Suppleanter
Ana Gomes, Flavio Zanonato,

200 (2)
Andrew Lewer,
206 (3)
53 (6) (Точка от дневния ред/Punto del orden del día/Bod pořadu jednání (OJ)/Punkt på dagsordenen/Tagesordnungspunkt/ Päevakorra punkt/Ημερήσια Διάταξη Σημείο/Agenda item/Point OJ/Točka dnevnog reda/Punto all'ordine del giorno/Darba kārtības punkts/Darbotvarkēs punktas/Napirendi pont/Punt Agenda/Agendapunt/Punkt porządku dziennego/Ponto OD/Punct de pe ordinea de zi/Bod programu schôdze/Točka UL/Esityslistan kohta/Föredragningslista punkt)
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Наблюдатели/Observadores/Pozorovatelé/Observatører/Beobachter/Vaatlejad/Παρατηρητές/Observers/Observateurs/Promatrači/Osservatori/Novērotāji/Stebėtojai/Megfigyelők/Osservatori/Waarnemers/Observatorzy/Observadores/Observatori/Pozorovatelia/Opazovalci/Tarkkailijat/Observatörer

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H.E. Ambassador Dr Jawad al-Hindawy, Head of the Iraq Mission to the European Union, Mr Adnan Tabatabai, CEO of the Centre for Applied Research in Partnership with the Orient

Съвет/Consejo/Rada/Rådet/Rat/Nõukogu/Συμβούλιο/Council/Conseil/Vijeće/Consiglio/Padome/Taryba/Tanács/Kunsill/Raad/Conselho/Consiliu/Svet/Neuvosto/Rådet (\*)

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Nicolas LEVINE

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Alumayri Muthana, First secretary, Iraq Mission to the European Union

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ECR	Richard HAZLEWOOD, Georgi BALABANOV
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Anna ZAMMIT VELLA, Robertino BABIC	
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