

Collecting evidence to use in holding Daesh accountable for crimes against humanity

Mr President, I would like to start by thanking Special Advisor Karim Khan for his informative update on the recent progress made by the UN Investigative Team. I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and welcome the recent appointment of his Iraqi deputy, Dr Salama. The United Kingdom is grateful to them and to their team for the excellent work that they have undertaken so far.

The United Kingdom emphasises the importance of recruiting further Iraqi members of the team as soon as possible. This recruitment, alongside training and development opportunities, will provide an important legacy for Iraq in building capacity and sharing expertise.

Mr President, we welcome the strong and positive engagement of the team with the Government of Iraq, both in Baghdad and here in New York. We are grateful to the Government of Iraq for their continued commitment to and support for UNITAD's work. This message of commitment was conveyed strongly to the Council during our recent visit to Baghdad from the highest levels of the Government of Iraq. We also welcome the continued collaboration between the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government with the team to agree modalities for cooperation. Over the next reporting period, we encourage the team to redouble and prioritise its engagement with the Government of Iraq to ensure the greatest possible use of evidence collected in Iraqi domestic proceedings, including allowing for the prosecution of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide under domestic law. This would constitute a remarkable step forward for promoting accountability for survivors and the families of Daesh's victims.

Maintaining and strengthening this close engagement with the Government of Iraq, the International Community, Non-Governmental Organisations and the people of Iraq will be essential over the coming months.

Mr President, less than 12 months after UNITAD received its first budget, the team has made remarkable progress. Over the last six months, they have established a new official headquarters, developed an investigative strategy, conducted excavations in Sinjar, as well as making important progress towards putting in place the necessary systems to ensure evidence is safely stored. We welcome this progress and hope that their digital storage system will be fully up and running by the time of our next briefing. We also look forward to the planned excavation in Mosul, and to the remaining field operation units become fully operational soon.

Mr President, the Council's recent visit was also an important reminder to us all of the scale of the task ahead for the Government of Iraq in transitioning into a post-conflict environment. Reconciliation,

reconstruction and accountability for all survivors of Daesh violence is essential. The enormity of the task ahead for UNITAD in gathering further evidence is also clear. The collection of forensic, physical and biological material from mass grave sites in Iraq is an essential first step for providing closure for the families of their victims. We urge the team to continue to focus on this important task, and to share further details on their investigative strategy as it develops, as well as any challenges that they may face.

The United Kingdom also acknowledges the valuable work the team has undertaken so far in gathering witness testimonies. We urge all UN bodies in Iraq to work collaboratively to ensure they avoid duplication of effort and to mitigate the risks around the potential re-traumatising of victims. In this regard, we urge UNAMI, UNITAD and the UN Iraq Team of Experts to work together to coordinate their efforts and to share best practice and technical expertise.

Mr President, in November 2019, the United Kingdom will be hosting a conference on preventing sexual violence called "Time for Justice: Putting Survivors First." We hope that all Council members will send senior representatives from their Governments to signify their commitment to PSVI, and to ensuring accountability for the perpetrators and support for survivors, their children and relatives.

When Resolution 2379 was adopted unanimously in September 2017, it demonstrated the Council's full support for efforts to bring Daesh to justice. Since its inception, when Nadia Murad addressed the Council, survivors and victims have been at the heart of the team's efforts.

We commend the team's approach in emphasising there is no hierarchy of victims and the recognition that all Iraqis suffered at the hands of Daesh. Their work will be important in supporting the Government of Iraq and its efforts towards national reconciliation.

The United Kingdom is proud to support the important work of the investigative team and I am pleased to announce today an additional £1 million in funding to the Investigative Team, taking the total contribution from the United Kingdom so far to £2 million.

We thank the growing number of Member States who have also pledged support to the team and we encourage other countries to consider financial and in-kind support to ensure the team can continue with – and accelerate – its valuable work.

Mr President, in concluding, I would like to reiterate the United Kingdom's full support for the efforts of the Special Adviser and his team. We look forward to the unanimous renewal of the team's mandate in September.

I thank you, Mr President.