

International Compact with Iraq, Stockholm, 29 May
2008

Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Raymond Johansen

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Secretary-General (Ban Ki-moon), Prime Minister (Al-Maliki), Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me start by thanking Foreign Minister Carl Bildt and the Swedish Government for organising and hosting this conference.

I would like to assure Prime Minister Al-Maliki that our presence here today demonstrates our collective commitment to the people of Iraq and to the challenging task of bringing security, stability and development to the country.

In my view, four main areas of concern should be raised.

Firstly, reconciliation. Long-term stability in Iraq can only be achieved through a broad and legitimate political reconciliation process. After years of violence, it is self-evident that such a process is very hard to put together and will need continued commitment by all constructive forces. Norway stands ready to support such efforts.

Secondly, continued transformation of Irak to a democratic country based on human rights and the rule of law. This constitutes the cornerstone of the political reconciliation process. It is vital to continue to reach out to all parts of the Iraqi society. We also support the call from this conference to safeguarding the rights of women, minorities and other vulnerable groups. In order to succeed, this process must be Iraqi-led, Iraqi-owned and internationally supported. The upcoming provincial and national elections must be held in a free and fair manner. They will constitute an important test to the will and ability to strengthen democracy and democratic institutions in Iraq.

Thirdly, humanitarian efforts. The situation of internally displaced persons is a cause for concern. So is the large number of refugees in neighbouring countries and elsewhere. Addressing these challenges will call for close cooperation between the Iraqi Government, the United Nations and the entire international community. Norway is pleased to take an active part in these efforts by chairing a humanitarian donor group in Amman. In addition, we are addressing the pressing needs by supporting humanitarian action in Iraq and its neighbouring countries.

Finally, reconstruction and the economy. Let me assure you that Norway will continue to support Iraq in its efforts to rebuild sound economic institutions. We are pleased to cooperate closely on capacity-building of the petroleum sector which is a key factor in the Iraqi economy. I encourage the Government of Iraq to work actively towards an agreement that deals with the issue of revenue sharing. In this regard I warmly welcome the Iraqi Government's commitment to combating corruption. Its decision to implement the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) is an important step.

The United Nations should be given political support and sufficient resources to gradually increase its role in supporting the Iraqi reconciliation and rebuilding processes. The UN took a terrible and tragic blow in 2003. We should work together to ensure that the UN's role in Iraq is restored as an important asset in this critical phase for Iraq.

To conclude, Mr Chairman, we need a continued focus on enhancing security and a continued commitment on the part of all stakeholders to improving the lives of ordinary Iraqi citizens if we are to achieve our common objective of bringing stability, reconciliation, democracy and development to Iraq.