

Session 1.2 - From Global Agreement to Implementation – National Action Plans for migration-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Statement by Iraq

Roundtable 1: Migration and Development through National Strategies: Enhancing the Effectiveness of Domestic Policies

Mr. Chairman

Respected Foreign Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased and on behalf of Dr. IBRAHIM AL-ESHAIKER AL-JAAFARI, minister of foreign affairs of the Republic of Iraq, to express our appreciation to the Republic of Federal Germany for holding this conference and the invitation to participate and discuss with you the subjects of migrants and migration and the how to help them to settle in the societies where they live and take part in developing it.

As you all know, one of the challenges facing all of us and is the main cause leading to the flow of refugees, that is terrorism and its criminal deeds against the residents of the areas they attack or occupy.

You are certainly aware of the huge challenges that Iraq and its people are facing in their fight against Daesh (ISIS) terrorist organization. They have caused all sorts of destruction to the cities as well as to the cultural and religious heritage. The terrorists committed flagrant violations of human rights that amount to crimes against humanity. This has led to the displacement and migration of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, depriving the country from many qualified people who are expected to take part in re-building their country.

According to the Iraqi Ministry of Migration and Immigration statistics there are 4.2 million IDPs in Iraq since 2014, while those who returned to their homes are more than 1.8 million. The Iraqi government spent more than 1.5 billion US Dollar on humanitarian assistance to the IDP during the past three years, at a time it is experiencing financial difficulties caused by the drop in oil prices and the costs of war against terrorism.

The Iraqi government is doing what it can to remove the causes of displacement and migration and to create the required conditions to encourage the IDPs and migrants to return to their residential areas. The sacrifices made and victories achieved by the Iraqi Armed Forces, through all its formations such as the army, federal police, counter terrorism service, popular mobilization forces, Peshmarga and tribal forces resulted in the liberation of most of the territories occupied by ISIS. The entire world witnessed the bravery of our security forces and their sacrifices in liberating the city of Mosul which is the second largest city in Iraq and which Daesh proclaimed it as its capital.

It is worth mentioning that all formations of our security forces, acting on the strict orders of their high military command, are committed to preserving civilian's life and the infrastructure in the combat areas against ISIS. The government raised the slogan of (liberating the civilians and ensuring their safety is prior to liberating the land).

Our government is working on plans to achieve sustained stability in the liberated areas through all sorts of projects and programs focusing primarily on providing basic services and security. However the scale of the human crisis exceeds our national financial and technical capabilities, especially at a time of reduced financial resources, due to the drop in oil prices, and the war we are still waging against terrorism.

We thank the friendly states and international organizations which contributed in financing humanitarian projects and assisting the IDPs and refugees, such as the Federal Republic of Germany, and many other countries whose their representative are attending this conference, also the EU and UN organizations. At the same time we call for more humanitarian assistance and for the donors to fulfill the commitments made by

them. It is estimated that the reconstructing the liberated areas requires \$70 billion US dollar.

The Iraqi government strived, through close cooperation with the UN, EU and international specialized agencies, to take all necessary measures to alleviate the humanitarian crisis of the IDPs, preparing the suitable conditions for their home return. Worth mentioning is the cooperation in this regard between the Ministry of Migration and Displacement (MOMD), Reconstruction Fund for Damaged Areas, the UNDP and the International Organization for Migration. The Ministry of Migration and displacement installed 42384 tents and caravans. As for the total temporary shelters provided by International Organization reached 32218 tents. The government facilitated the process of reenrolling the displaced students in schools and universities at the cities of their displacement, and continued paying salaries, grants and humanitarian assistance to the displaced employees.

As for the migration of the Iraqis and their request for the asylum in foreign countries, we emphasize the commitment of the Iraqi government in working towards providing decent life, employment opportunities and encouraging young people to stay in their homeland in order to participate in building, developing and developing their country. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is in touch with the migrants through its diplomatic missions to assist them, help resolving their problems, encouraging them to return voluntarily in a dignified way and has provided them with Laisse –Passé and air tickets, in addition to allowing the students and employees to resume their study and work without any legal implications. Our government reaffirms its readiness to cooperate with the host countries to facilitate the voluntary return of the Iraqi refugees and migrants. The Foreign Ministry has directed its missions to provide hot line to communicate with the Iraqi communities.

Several official

delegations visited London, Bern, Helsinki, Brussels and Berlin for this purpose. Good number of voluntary return have been recorded. Germany reported the voluntary return of 5600 Iraqi asylum seekers in 2016. Bulgaria reported the return of more than 1000 and from Finland returned 2850 Iraqi asylum seekers in the same year.

Dealing with the current migration crises and asylum seekers requires joint international effort and radical treatments to its roots. We are jointly responsible of encourage the legal migrants to be good citizens, to participate in the development and stability of the states they chose to settle. This is possible by providing education and work opportunities and respecting their culture and beliefs.

In order to encourage the asylum seekers and immigrants to return to their mother countries, it is helpful to provide them with education opportunities and financial support should they decide to go back. This better be arranged in cooperation with their governments, to enable them to find work and residence in their homeland. Most of them have sold what he/she possessed in order to cover their immigration expenses. Furthermore, we suggest that the diplomatic missions should be allowed to communicate with their citizens in the refugee centers without any negative consequences in order to help and encourage them to return voluntarily.

Iraq has declared repeatedly its objection to the forced return of asylum seekers, pursuant to the Iraqi House of Representatives (Parliament) decisions and in consistence with the international resolutions and human rights principles. At the same time the government is ready to negotiate in order to ways to extradite convicted prisoners wishing to spend their sentences at their home country, in coordination with the respective ministries at the host countries.

We renew our thanks to the German Government for organizing this conference which we hoop that it will achieve its objectives.

Thank you

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