



UNAMI FOCUS

Voice of the Mission

News Bulletin

Issue No. 30

February 2009

The United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visits Baghdad *He extends UN congratulation to people and government of Iraq on provincial elections and reiterates UN support*



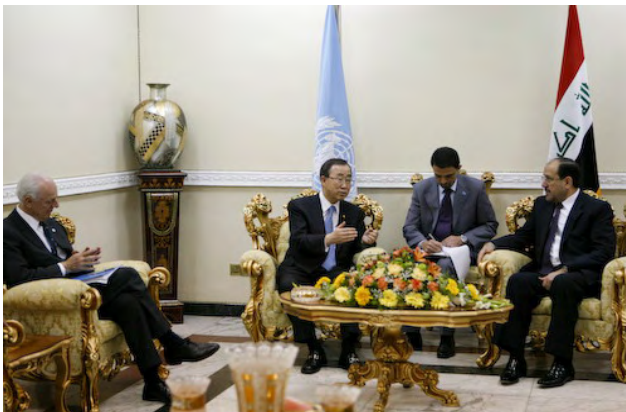
Iraqi President Jalal Talabani with UNSG Ban Ki-moon (UN/Rick Bajournas)

By Randa Jamal

United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG) Ban Ki-moon visited Iraq on 6 February 2009, following the provincial elections held on 31 January 2009. He was last in Baghdad in March 2007. A keen follower of the electoral process from the early days of the parliamentary debate, UNSG Ban Ki-moon came to congratulate the

people and government of Iraq on their achievements towards democracy by holding provincial elections and to express support of the international community. The elections marked the progress made in Iraq, as the elections showed its ability to manage the entire process, implement security measures and ensure lack of fraud. Very little violence was reported on elections day.

The Secretary-General met with several top Iraqi officials, including President Jalal Talabani, Prime Minister Nuri Al Maliki, both Vice Presidents



UNSG Meets with Iraqi Prime Minister (UN/Rick Bajournas)

Adel Abdul-Mahdi and Tareq Al-Hashemi, and the Chairman of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) Faraj Al-Haydari. He also met with a number of Baghdad based foreign diplomats.

UNSG Ban Ki-moon expressed his delight at the progress made towards democracy, and commented that "Millions of Iraqis exercised their right to vote in an environment free of violence, a remarkable achievement in a country that has known so much conflict in recent years". He commended the courage and determination of the Iraqi people, and congratulated the IHEC, and the thousands of Iraqi elections workers and monitors, for having organized and conducted elections so effectively, despite logistical challenges.

INDEX

The United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visits Baghdad _____ 1

Interview with IHEC Top Commissioner Faraj Al-Haidary _____ 3

Final Provincial Elections Results Announced on Thursday 19 February 2009 _____ 6

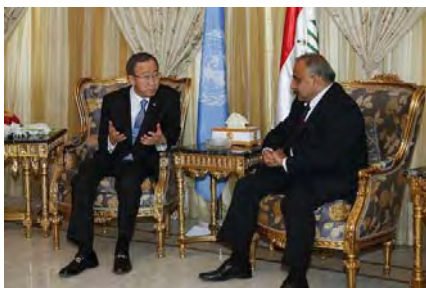
SRSG Mr. Staffan de Mistura visits Polling Stations in Ramadi, Najaf, and Baghdad on Elections Day _____ 8

UNOPS holds a Round Table for Civil Society Representatives: Observing and Monitoring _____ 8

UNAMI Electoral Team Members Work Around the Clock During Prep Time for Provincial Elections _____ 9

The Secretary-General highlighted the significance of participation, saying, "This marks an important event, these being the first polls to affect the day-to-day lives of Iraqi voters. In fact these elections are about real power, in the sense that local leaders are nominated to be accountable for the delivery of basic services."

Several themes were highlighted in UNSG Ban Ki-moon's remarks, including: national reconciliation, regional dialogue and the continued commitment of the United Nations. On national reconciliation, he said, "Security has improved and Iraq has asserted its sovereignty; but with more sovereignty comes more responsibility. With more responsibility should come less impunity and a greater feeling on the part of the Iraqi people that there are steps towards rule of law, with increased confidence in the state



UNSG Ban Ki-moon meets with Vice President Adel Abdul-Mahdi

institutions." He added, "Striking a compromise on the core outstanding and constitutional issues at the heart of Iraq's system of governance is essential for establishing stability in the country and a vital process of national reconciliation in Iraq".

UNSG Ban Ki-moon also highlighted the role of the United Nations in regional dialogue and inte-



UNSG Ban Ki-moon Meets with Vice President Tareq Al-Hashemi (UN/Rick Bajournas)



UNSG and Iraqi Prime Minister during Joint Press Conference (UN/Rick Bajournas)

gration by engaging with regional powers to help improve Iraq's relations with neighboring countries. He was especially pleased by the recent opening of embassies by Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Syria and the Arab League, adding that the UN will continue with their technical assistance to support a mechanism for regional cooperation based in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Secretary-General also thanked the Prime Minister and the Iraqi government for their generous contribution of \$25 million towards building the new UN mission headquarters in Baghdad. His hope is that the safety and security of the UN staff at their new office will be ensured.

During a meeting with President Talabani, the Secretary-General reiterated the UN's strong commitment to the people and government of Iraq towards achieving full democracy, security, safety and development.

Joint Press Conference

At the joint press conference with Prime Minister al Maliki, the media questioned the Secretary-General about his evaluation of the democratic process in the provincial elections, the role of the UN in removing international sanctions imposed on Iraq, and if the UN will scale up its role in Iraq.

The Secretary-General emphasized that Iraq has made progress towards democracy and that the elections were a tribute to the growing effectiveness of the Iraqi Security Forces and testified to the increasing stability in Iraq. On lifting the sanctions imposed on Iraq in 1990, he said "the UN Secretariat is now in the process of reviewing all the resolution and upon my return, I will discuss this issue with the Security Council and I hope we will make progress."

Reiterating the organizations' support, UNSG Ban Ki-moon said the UN is expanding its mission by having nine agencies present in Iraq, and noted the UN's continuing role in mobilizing humanitarian assistance and promoting and protecting human rights. He highlighted the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, gender empowerment, and education as key areas of potential collaboration between the UN and the Iraqi government. In addition, the UN will continue to coordinate with member countries on the International Compact with Iraq (ICI) to promote socio-economic development, national security, regional cooperation and Iraq's full participation with the international community.

The preliminary results of the provincial elections were released a day prior to UNSG Ban Ki-moon's visit. ■

Interview with Faraj Al-Haidary, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) in Iraq



IHEC Top Commissioner during Interview(UN/Rick Bajourmas)

UNAMI Focus:

In your view, what are the main lessons learned by the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) from the governorate elections?

FH: In fact, there are certain characteristics/observations that distinguish these elections from the previous three elections. First the huge number of political entities that participated in these elections in comparison with the previous ones because in the previous elections, certain groups or segments of the Iraqi people boycotted the governorate elections. This time around 440 political groups and more than fourteen thousand candidates competed in the elections. The system adopted in these elections is the open-list system, while the last elections adopted the close-list system. The voter registry in the previous elections was at the central level, while in these elections, it was at the polling station level.

In other words, in the previous elections, each center contained five, six or ten polling stations where names were repeated and thus the voter could vote more than once, while in these elections the voter could only vote in the station where his name was listed. These were some of the differences between the past and current elections. These elections are definitely important because the governorate council representatives are chosen to be in direct contact with the living conditions of citizens, including service issues such as electricity, water, unemployment, reconstruction and development. These elections also gave special significance to the Governorate Councils Law which, in turn, gave broad powers, even the right of legislation, to the Governorate Council and, therefore, they are no less important than the elections of the Council of Representatives (CoR), if not more important.

Other lessons learned from these elections in terms of the reasons behind the low voter turnout in comparison to the previous elections is that although many names were registered when the voter registry was established, the locations for these names changed disallowing some registered voters from voting as they could not identify their polling stations. In view of that, we will work to avoid this problem in the next elections.

UNAMI Focus: Although a 51% voter-turnout is considered average according to international standards, both the the Government of Iraq and the IHEC expected larger turnouts; what would you do differently to even-

uate a larger turnout the next time around?

FH: I believe that the percentage of 51% is a good percentage according to international standards. However, some may ask why the percentage was higher during the last (2005) elections. The reason is that in the last elections, the voter registered his/her name and voted on the same day and, therefore, the door was open to the citizen to leave his house and vote in the nearest school (polling station). Now, we have developed controls to guard against fraud, breach or violation. Consequently, and as stated in the first question, the lessons learned include updating the Voter Registry and the existence of special polling stations.

Moreover, the issue of displaced persons is also a major factor. We had designated 15 April as a date for registration of the PDS card for 2008. The reason behind determining this very date is to facilitate the transfer from one area to another. This means that the PDS cards issued after that date would be ineffective, so as to prevent forced displacement. In other words, in order to prevent forced displacement, we had to take actions that may have led to the deprivation of a large number of displaced Kurds from participation since their voter registries were updated after 15 April. These factors are added to the lack of services and the state of frustration of the citizen, as there was no strong desire to participate because citizens question how useful voting is, or what were the achievements of former elected officials, and why the newly elected would

be different. These factors have affected the enthusiasm and desire of the citizen to participate noting that the last days of the media campaign have witnessed some increase in the last minute turnout. These were some of the reasons behind the limited participation in these elections in comparison to the previous elections.

UNAMI Focus: What is the best method to reduce the number of complaints in the future?

FH: I believe that the large number of candidates and political entities is an element acknowledged all over the world. When you have 14,500 candidates competing over 440 seats, 14,000 were destined to lose. It is worth mentioning that we are neither in the USA nor in Europe where the looser congratulates the winner and does not blame the Commission or accuse it of being biased or even committing fraud. Democracy is not a theory that you learn by heart (in a school); it is a culture that you gain through practice and time. We are currently in a transitional period towards realizing democracy. This stage means moving from a dictatorship which lasted for many decades, towards absolute freedom where many citizens lose their balance and espouse what they perceive as normal views, but seen as abnormal by others. The issue of complaints is a natural consequence of the general Iraqi situation or context.

UNAMI Focus: How would you increase participation by the internally displaced in future elections?

FH: Large segments of IDPs have returned to the areas where they used to reside. The security situation is currently good, so I believe that no compulsory displacement from one

place to another will occur. Based on that, returnees will be able to register in the voter registry of the area from where they have left in the past. If they prefer to reside in the new location, they should register in that governorate. When future elections take place, they won't face any problems because they know the location of their PDS card and the voting station that they belong to. This is the remedy for the displacement issue, in case there is any future displacement. The reason behind the low number of displaced voters is that when the registration centers were opened during the period of 15 July – 28 August, displaced persons were supposed to refer to the registration center or station in order to include their names in the displaced persons' lists. For example, if a person was displaced from Diyala to Baghdad, he/she should have referred to Baghdad registration centre and inform them that he/she was displaced from Diyala. As such, his/her name would be included in the station where the displaced persons from Diyala would vote. However, this did not happen. Consequently, it was difficult for the Commission to open a specific station when the number of IDPs coming from Diyala to Baghdad was not known. IHEC is aware that there are IDPs who came from Diyala to Baghdad, Najaf and Karbala. Therefore, if the displaced persons had visited the registration centers to register, we would have been able to specify the place where they reside, and based on the numbers of the IDPs, we would establish a new registry and provide the center with the required number of voting ballots in order for them to vote. The problem is that they did not refer to any of the centers. The registry should be up-

dated to deal with this issue in the future.

UNAMI Focus: Although the IHEC applied uniform measures in all governorates, some provinces experienced more problems than others; To what do you attribute these differences?

FH: Many problems were reported, of course, in all governorates. However, the media focused on certain governorates, and I believe that we all know why. For example, they talked about Anbar which is one of the hot governorates. This is considered normal because the Awakening Councils were established and the security situation has witnessed improvement in a Governorate that did not participate in the previous elections or barely participated with a 2% turnout. During these elections, the governorate's participation rate reached up to 50%. There was also political competition between the forces that were in the Governorate Council which constituted the majority of the new forces. Consequently, the governorate was put under the spotlight for political reasons that have nothing to do with IHEC's procedures and standards. Many complaints were received from other governorates other than Anbar. However, and as I mentioned earlier, the media and press are eager to tackle attractive or provocative issues. This was the only reason. When the results were announced, they were similar to what we predicted and different from what the political entities propagated.

UNAMI Focus: What are the main problems that emerged after the elections?

FH: We have announced approximately 90% of the results after the elections; the remaining 10% were delayed due to the huge number of candidates.



UNSG Ban Ki-moon, Top Commissioner Faraj Al-Haidary, SRSR Staffan de Mistura, UNAMI Advisor to the IHEC Sandra Mitchel (UN/Rick Bajourmas)

The processes for calculating the votes for each political entity and for each candidate will take time. I think that by announcing initial results after four or five days from the elections, we have managed to accomplish a great achievement, this was certified and acknowledged by most of the international experts and observers. As you know, the political entities are eager to get the results soon after the elections, they think that they live in America where all the processes are computerized and the results can show within few minutes. They are unaware of our basic capabilities and other impediments that we already suffer, for instance, the shortage of electrical power supply and lack of internet facilities for 42,000 polling stations in Iraq. Subsequently how can we absorb all such difficulties?

Consequently some of the political entities have questioned the reason for the delay. Part of that is due to the huge number of complaints that we would be addressing. Complainants allege that some of their complaints are considered red; in addition there are green, white and yellow com-

plaints. Overall, there are more than two thousand complaints.

We established a committee of jurists and specialists to tackle each problem separately; we did not neglect any complaint. All complaints have been reviewed and we developed the proper solution to address each problem. It is natural that announcing the results will take such time since we have to finalize all of the complaints, conclude the counting and sorting process, count the special votes, identify all the political entities and the names of the winner candidates for each political entity, and verify whether the winners are eligible or not in accordance with the terms set for holding their posts (i.e. their academic qualification, not included in the de-Baathification Law and not convicted of any moral crime), all of this requires time and cadres. Despite the aforementioned factors, there are more than 500 employees in IHEC working around the clock in the tally centre to get the job done. Hopefully, we will announce the results within the next two weeks.

UNAMI Focus: How do you see the future of the Commission and

its role in the upcoming elections whether national and others?

FH: IHEC is trying to learn from the mistakes of these elections. The biggest problem we have in Iraq is the lack of a central census registry forcing us to rely on the database provided by the Ministry of Trade. Although this database was adopted with precision, problems with the citizen's PDS card still exist. We do not believe that the Government is currently able to conduct a census for the coming CoR elections, unless we develop voters' records or any official statistics provided by the state. Once this is achieved, we will have a vision on how to use the smart electronic card through which the voter can cast his/her vote within a minute in the nearest station without any problem. This is our idea, and hopefully we will succeed in implementing it; every citizen will have the smart electronic card which can be used for voting purposes. This practice will also eliminate double voting. To that end, we need time and a central internet network connected to 42,000 electoral stations. Therefore, we are hopeful that we can implement this mechanism in the election that follows the next CoR elections.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) for its great role in assisting IHEC through providing it with experts, extending its guidance and moral support to IHEC and its offices. I have personally thanked Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in my last meeting with him and of course I am thankful to all the cadres working in UNAMI. We hope that we can create a cadre that can take over the task, and subsequently we will be able to provide our cadres to other states. ■

Final Provincial Elections Results Announced on Thursday 19 February 2009



Press Conference: Commissioners announcing the final provincial elections results

ANBAR	29
Awakening of Iraq and Independents, Sheik Ahmed Abu Risha	8
Iraqi National Project, politician Saleh al-Mutlaq	6
Alliance of Intellectuals and Tribes, Iraqi Islamic Party	6
National Movement for Reform and Development	3
National Iraqi List, former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi	2
Iraqi Tribes List	2
Iraqi National Unity	2

BABIL	30
Coalition of the State of Law, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki	8
Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council Alliance	5
Sadrism Trend	3
National Reform Trend, former Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari	3
Civil Society list	3
National Iraqi List, former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi	3
Independent Justice Association	3
Independent Ansar list	2

BAGHDAD	57
Coalition of the State of Law, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki	28
National Accordance Front, Iraqi Islamic Party	7
Sadrism Trend	5
National Iraqi List, former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi	5
Iraqi National Project, politician Saleh al-Mutlaq	4
Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council Alliance	3
National Reform Trend, former Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari	3
Christian	1
Mandaeen	1

BASRA	35
Coalition of the State of Law, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki	20
Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council Alliance	5
Gathering of Justice and Unity	2
Sadrism Trend	2
National Iraqi List, former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi	2
Iraqi Islamic Party	2
Fadhila party	1
Christians	1

DHI QAR	31
Coalition of the State of Law, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki	13
Sadrism Trend	7
Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council Alliance	5
National Reform Trend, former Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari	4
Fadhila party	2

DIYALA	29
National Accordance Front, Iraqi Islamic Party	9
Iraqi National Project	6
Kurdish Alliance	6
National Iraqi List, former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi	3
Coalition of the State of Law, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki	2
Diyala Coalition	2
National Reform Trend, former Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari	1

KARBALA	27
Youssef Majid al-Haboubi	1
Hope of Rafidain	9
Coalition of the State of Law, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki	9
Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council Alliance	4
Sadrist Trend	4

MAYSAN	27
Coalition of the State of Law, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki	8
Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council Alliance	8
Sadrist Trend	7
National Reform Trend, former Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari	4

MUTHANNA	26
Coalition of the State of Law, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki	5
Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council Alliance	5
The People's List	3
National Reform Trend, former Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari	3
Sadrist Trend	2
Gathering for Muthanna	2
Independent National List	2
The Gathering of Iraqi Professionals	2
The Gathering of Middle Euphrates	2

NAJAF	28
Coalition of the State of Law, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki	7
Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council Alliance	7
Sadrist Trend	6
Loyalty to Najaf, secular led by former governor Adnan al-Zourfi	4
National Reform Trend, former Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari	2
Union of Independent Najaf	2

NINEVAH	37
National Hadba Gathering	19
Ninevah Brotherhood, Kurds Alliance	12
Iraqi Islamic Party	3
Shabak	1
Chrisitan	1
Yazidi	1

QADISIYAH	28
Coalition of the State of Law, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki	11
Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council Alliance	5
National Iraqi List, former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi	3
National Reform Trend, former Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari	3
Sadrist Trend	2
Islamic Loyalty party	2
Fadhila party	2

SALAHEDDIN	28
National Accordance Front, Iraqi Islamic Party	5
National Iraqi List, former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi	5
Iraqi National Project, politician Saleh al-Mutlaq	3
National Project of Iraq	3
Group of Iraqi Intellectuals and Scientists	2
Iraqi Turkoman Front	2
Front of Liberation and Building	2
Salaheddin Patriotic List	2
Brotherhood and Peaceful Coexistence, Kurds	2
Coalition of the State of Law, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki	2

WASIT	28
Coalition of the State of Law, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki	13
Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council Alliance	6
Sadrist Trend	3
National Iraqi List, former Prime Minister Ayad Allawi	3
Iraqi Constitutional Party, led by Interior Minister Jawad al-Bolani	3

SRSR Mr. Staffan de Mistura visits Polling Stations in Ramadi, Najaf, and Baghdad on Elections Day



Iraqi Women Casting their Vote in Ramadi (UN/Rick Bajournas)

In an effort to observe the elections, the Special Representative of the Secretary General, Mr. Staffan de Mistura, visited polling stations in various provinces: Baghdad, Al-Najaf and Ramadi. He spoke to monitors, representing a range of political entities, including voters and workers at the various stations.

During his one-day mission, the Special Representative said, "I have a good feeling about the organization and a good feeling about the way voting is taking place."

Mr. de Mistura greeted people, checked ballot boxes, and toured the polling stations. In Baghdad, his final stop, he said, "So far so good. The significance is histori-

cal: remember this is January 2009, the first test for Iraqis to show that they can walk on their own legs after having reacquired their sovereignty. This is the first opportunity for the Iraqi people to vote by indicating a party and a name and therefore choosing also the people who should be accountable to them."

A few days prior to the elections, Mr. de Mistura indicated that issues could be solved through voting and political dialogue. He said this involves "going from bullets to ballots" and would send a message from Iraqis to the rest of the world.

In addition, Mr. de Mistura's Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs, visited polling stations in Karbala. Several other international monitors were spread throughout the country's various polling stations.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq helped to broker and mediate an election law last year that paved the way for provincial elections to be held in 14 of Iraq's 18 governorates on 31 January 2009. ■



An Iraqi Family Enters a Polling Station in Najaf (UN/Rick Bajournas)

UNOPS holds a Round Table for Civil Society Representatives: Observing and Monitoring

By Randa Jamal

Civil society made up of volunteers and social organizations is fundamental for a functioning society. What's more, civil society is the key to social development and democratization.

That's why the United Nations of Project Services (UNOPS) organized the National Round Table on the Role of Civil Society and the United Nations in Elections. Funded by the United Nations Development Group/Iraq Trust Fund, the round table was held in Iraq on 29 January 2009, a few days before the provincial elections. It highlighted the importance of civil society in raising awareness and reinforcing transparency about the electoral process. Several representatives of Iraqi civil society organizations were invited to participate and cement their partnership with the United Nations.

During the workshop, the 20 participants from different governorates and regions split into three working groups, with one UNOPS field staff member facilitating discussion. Each group was expected to make five recommendations on how best to enhance the role of civil society in the electoral process in Iraq. Initially, 15 recommendations were generated; then reduced to 10. Gregory Kehailia, UNOPS Project Manager of the Electoral Education Campaign, commented: "These recommendations are crucial because they represent the voices of Iraqis from all country's governorates where they have implemented over 10,000 electoral education activities, between July and December 2008 in preparation for the January provincial elections of 2009". He con-



Some of the Civil Society Representatives gather to hear Recommendations and Receive Certificates (UN/Rick Bajourmas)

UNAMI Electoral Team Members Work Around the Clock During Prep Time for Provincial Elections

By Randa Jamal

The UNAMI Electoral team is made up of 19 members, working with the Iraqi High Electoral Commission (IHEC) at its premises in Baghdad. This team is, by definition, a real one: a small group of people with complementary skills committed to a common purpose and set of specific performance goals. This small team was able to assist an entire commission, made up of 350 staff members, in house, and in total over 900, which include the Governorate Liaison Officers, in charge of running provincial elections in Iraq, a country with an estimated population of 27 million, and 14 million eligible voters.

UNAMI electoral members were able to assist and provide recommendations to the various sections at the IHEC, including logistics, operations for procurement and training, data entry, complaints, public outreach, coordination and security.

There were times in the weeks prior to and since the provincial elections held on 31 January 2009, when members of the team worked around the clock. "I didn't leave the commission for three entire days, I pulled out all night long shifts, because I wanted to make sure that my part was done with utmost professionalism," said Annan Sorri, Electoral Affairs Officer. Sorri is in charge of political entities and ensuring that candidates are certified and qualified to run for elections.

Similarly, Christine Karakyrakou, in charge of logistics, described the UNAMI team as very hard working. She said, "I felt like we helped out a great deal with the elections and everything ran smoothly." She attributes the suc-

cluded that the recommendations will serve as the foundation for UNOPS to continue supporting the partnership between IHEC and civil society.

Participants presented the recommendations to the Special Representative of the Secretary General, Staffan de Mistura. In turn, Mr. de Mistura presented each participant with a certificate of appreciation. Before presenting the certificates, he told the participants: "The role of civil society is very important and you represent the people and their needs. The role and alliance of the Iraqi civil society and the UN is very important in monitoring and observing the elections". He added, "I listened to your recommendations and I agree with you. The Iraqi nature is full of credibility."

One of the female participants said the round table was useful, especially discussions that pinpointed lessons learned about electoral awareness. She added, "Creating partnerships between organizations and the United Nations is one of the most important recommendations."

A male participant said that learning about mistakes from the 2005

elections would help them, as civil society representatives, better identify needs and avoid problems in future elections. One of the most important lessons for him about moving towards democratization was that "the voters need to be educated on the electoral process."

UNOPS has been involved in promoting electoral education in Iraq since 2004. Niels Guenther, Deputy Director of UNOPS Iraq, said, "We started supporting national networks of domestic electoral observers. Later in 2006 and 2007, UNOPS, in coordination with UNAMI/EAT (Electoral Assistance Team), also supported the empowerment of women and youth in the electoral process". He explained that a major cornerstone of the work implemented was through the Electoral Education Campaign focused on enhancing electoral awareness.

The event enabled civil society representatives to display their knowledge about earlier projects on electoral support. It also allowed participants to identify the technical and coordination advice they expected from the United Nations. ■



UNAMI Electoral Team holds a meeting at 9:30AM (UN/Rick Bajourmas)

cess, among other things, to daily meetings. "We would meet everyday from 9:00Am to 9:30Am to ensure that everyone was in the loop on what was happening and on Saturdays they would run from 9:00 Am to 10:00Am." She added, "We also had a monthly schedule of the work plan, including tasks to be accomplished by team members."

The Chief of Operations, Ponto Letic, describes the challenges they faced on daily basis, with a sense of satisfaction and anticipation of how he will continue addressing them. He explained, "The first challenge dealt with Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and how to craft a legislation that en-

that no fraud took place. This open list system was implemented for the first time, and, Letic said, "It forced us to change all the procedures to create completely new forms, much more difficult to design and produce."

Iraqi Al Khazragi said that she learned so much working with the team especially when attending the meetings with the Board of Commissioners. She said, "I voted and it felt good because I worked with the team and I knew how much time and effort went into these elections." She is optimistic that the situation in Iraq will continue to improve.

Svetlana Galkin, Public Outreach Adviser to IHEC, was also optimis-

tic. She assisted the Commission with designing and implementing voter education and public information campaigns in preparation for the elections and referenda. She also advised on the media strategy and outreach to civil society, political entities and other electoral stakeholders. She said, "This election is the fourth Iraqi electoral project I have participated in. Baghdad has been a very special place for me, a place where I keep returning - for work, which is always a challenge - but also fun, for our team and colleagues from many missions around the world, and for our Iraqi counterparts, through whom we get to know the country and the people we are assisting."

Several team members connect their success to the leadership of the UNAMI Chief Advisor to IHEC, Ms. Sandra Mitchell, who played a fundamental role in ensuring the team kept together and in the loop. Most importantly she kept them all motivated and happy. Annan says, "she is absolutely amazing in how she was able to support each one of us."

Clearly, it takes a real team to assist in pulling together such important elections. ■

UNAMI Focus

Is an internal bulletin produced by the Public Information Office of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. The opinions expressed in this bulletin do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations.

For further information contact e-mail:

unami-information@un.org

Or Randa Jamal,

jamalr@un.org

Phone + 962 6 550 4700

Extension: 2644

Visit our web site www.uniraq.org