



EUROPEAN UNION

DELEGATION TO IRAQ

Baghdad, 9th May 2016

EUROPE DAY

Baghdad - May 9, 2016

Your Excellences,

Nazar Khairallah, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Republic of Iraq,

Dr Mahdi Al Alak, Chief of Staff of the Prime Minister,

Ambassador Ahmad Berwari, Head of the Europe Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

Jan Kubis, Special representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations in Iraq,

Fellow Ambassadors,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is a festive occasion – a reception, not a seminar. I will not be long, we will not be long. ... and as Shakespeare said 400 years ago "*brevity is the soul of wit*".

But still: let me tell you why we are here and what we celebrate today... and then, if you allow me, I would like to briefly touch upon two important subjects: Democracy and the Partnership between the EU and Iraq.

Europe Day

Europe Day is the day on which we celebrate the declaration made by Robert Schuman in 1950. Robert Schuman, then Foreign Minister of France, proposed the creation of a Union of Sovereign States that would replace the apparent fatality of war by the logic of **cooperation, integration and solidarity**.

"Making war not merely unthinkable but materially impossible".

This declaration marked the first move towards a **united Europe**, now bringing together, around our common values of democracy and shared prosperity, and within the biggest single economic market in the world, more than 500 million people from 28 European countries.

Europe is not perfect. It is work in progress subject to constant internal negotiation and debate, as we see it currently happening in the UK. From the very beginning, it was known that there would be **crisis and setbacks** in the integration process and the last ten years have tested our resolve: Eurozone

debt crisis, global terrorism, the recent migrants' crisis and across Europe the rise of the anti-European or nationalist sentiment.

The fact is that none of those challenges can reasonably be solved by one country acting alone. It requires collective action and more than that, it requires – as Robert Schuman was saying - "**creative efforts** proportionate to the dangers which threaten the European project". In Iraq also, the EU tries to be creative, speaking in one voice and striving to make its collective action more relevant for Iraq. Let me thank here my EU colleagues, the EU Member States Ambassadors and Chargés d'affaires, for their constant support.

Democracy

Let me say a word on Democracy. The European Union was born - and still is - a political objective, using economic means to promote it. Over the years, we have collectively strived to build a Union that respects **democracy, the rule of law, human rights and individual freedoms**. Just remember that of the 28 EU Member States some 17 were not democracies only two or three decades ago.

But democracy cannot be taken for granted and we must work constantly for it. It **takes work by all** of us to uphold our Constitutions and to strengthen our

institutions. Strong, accountable and legitimate institutions are the only way to prevent political violence and conflict. That's true for Europe and also for Iraq, particularly now. Let me reiterate again here our full support to the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the Parliament and the President of the Republic in their efforts to overcome the current political divisions and tensions in the country.

Personally I don't like those who give lessons of democracy; I prefer much more those who help, more silently, to achieve progress. That's why I value very much our **longstanding cooperation** with Iraqi institutions and civil society which aims for example at strengthening the accountability of the police forces, setting-up a human rights compliant counterterrorism strategy or building an Independent Commission for human rights etc.

EU- Iraq cooperation

What we have achieved for ourselves in Europe, today we wish to help Iraq to accomplish it, in a spirit of cooperation between equals. This goes for human rights but also for all the sectors in which we **cooperate actively with Iraq**: governance and stabilization, education and health, energy. And let me take this opportunity to commend the outstanding work carried out by national

counterparts in Iraqi Ministries and EU teams who jointly manage our EUR 100 million portfolio of projects. Many of them are here today.

I want also to pay tribute to our joint effort to address **humanitarian needs**. In Iraq, the EU has been at the forefront of the life-saving humanitarian response for both internally displaced persons and local hosting communities, with over EUR 107 million committed and contracted in 2015. With our EU MS bilateral contributions, we reach twice this figure. Together with the UN, we have been also actively advocating for the protection of civilians, the respect of humanitarian law and access, which remain major challenges in the country.

Future of our cooperation

But let me turn now to the future of our relationship. Because we want to build a long term relationship and a partnership of equals (let me underline), we have given to ourselves a clear framework: the **Partnership and Cooperation Agreement** (PCA), negotiated and signed in 2012.

The first objective of the PCA is to provide a platform for **political dialogue** at Ministerial and senior officials level – we hope to hold our next EU-Iraq Cooperation Council at Ministerial level in autumn this year in Brussels. This will

be an important political event in order to maintain a high degree of support for Iraq in addressing its security, economic and humanitarian crisis.

The second objective is to promote **trade and investment** and harmonious economic relations. Iraq is an important trading partner for the EU (16 billion € in 2014, in bilateral trade) and much more can be done to boost our trade relations, including Iraq's accession to the WTO.

The third objective of the PCA is to provide a basis for **collaboration and exchange of experience in a variety of new sectors**: social systems, employment schemes, small and medium sized enterprises, industrial standards, agricultural technologies, environmental rules and culture. There is a lot of potential there for the EU and its Member States to support Iraq's efforts towards speedy reconstruction and economic diversification.

Let me conclude with a short anecdote. Before my arrival, I read once a school book on Mesopotamia with one of my kids. The book was telling the fascinating history of the old cities of Sumer such as the famous city of Ur near your birthplace Minister – of the Akkadian empire, of the great rulers of Babylon and Assyria through to the classical age and the Islamic conquests. It was a

fascinating exploration of the **diversity of your culture...** and as you know, Europeans love culture and consider it as a great gift for their citizens.

The author of this book was ending with this sentence: "Iraq's future remains uncertain today but the resilience and endurance of the people of this region is proven by history".

All Europeans admire your incredible history and culture as well as the strength and resilience of your people and that's why, unlike the author, we are very confident in Iraq's future.

.....

Follow the EU Delegation in Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/EUinIraq>

For more information, please contact the EU Delegation Press and Information Officer, Mr Mohammed Fawzi (Tel. +964 (0) 7809285377 email: Mohammed.FAWZI@eeas.europa.eu)