



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
27 February 2024

Original: English

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Seventy-fifth session

Summary record of the 12th meeting*

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 19 February 2024, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Crăciunean-Tatu

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Consideration of reports *(continued)*

(a) Reports submitted by States parties under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant
(continued)

Fifth periodic report of Iraq (E/C.12/IRQ/5; E/C.12/IRQ/Q/5; E/C.12/IRQ/RQ/5)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Iraq joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Iraq**, introducing his country's fifth periodic report (E/C.12/IRQ/5), said that the challenges posed by the continuing war against Da'esh, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, climate change and drought had significantly affected the Government's efforts to promote and protect human rights.
3. **A representative of Iraq** said that the report had been prepared with input from the executive, legislative and judicial branches. The Government followed a programme which placed importance on human rights and covered issues such as social protection, poverty, unemployment, health and corruption, as well as economic, financial, education and infrastructure reforms.
4. The national human rights plan for 2021–2025 was aimed at developing and adapting national legislation and policies in line with the Covenant, consolidating existing achievements in that regard and strengthening institutional and individual capacities. The plan had been designed with input from civil society and international organizations to help governmental and non-governmental human rights bodies to implement international human rights recommendations. The Government had introduced several programmes to empower, support and protect women and provide them with job opportunities and social protection.
5. A national committee had been formed to increase school enrolment and decrease dropout rates, and a national education strategy for 2022–2031 had been developed. Funds from the national budget had been allocated to support student scholarships. Several schools had been built across the country to address the shortage of educational facilities. The Government had approved a national child protection strategy and had prepared a bill on the issue that was aligned with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and which had been approved by the Council of Ministers and referred to the Council of Representatives.
6. A series of projects in the fields of education, health and economics was being developed to work towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The Government was cooperating with regional and international organizations to create a favourable environment for investment and development by reforming and simplifying the relevant procedures, launching a plan to identify land suitable for investment and finalizing the industrial cities plan. An ambitious project to develop rail and road infrastructure was aimed at transforming Iraq into a regional transport hub and linking Europe to the Gulf via the port of Al-Faw. Measures to combat unemployment included expanding private industry, reviewing investment policies and creating job opportunities for young people in the public and private sectors.
7. A fund to reconstruct liberated areas would facilitate the return of internally displaced persons to their areas of residence and ensure the protection of ethnic and religious communities. A guide for helping internally displaced persons had been sent to the League of Arab States, and the Council of Ministers had ratified the Protocol to Prevent and Combat Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the Arab Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The Government placed importance on cultural heritage and promoted peaceful coexistence between the different sectors of society.
8. In the area of legislation, new laws had been adopted on emergency support for food security, retirement and social security and legal aid. Other bills under review covered enforced disappearance; the right to information; the freedoms of expression, opinion and peaceful assembly; child protection; disability; and juvenile reform.
9. In December 2023, provincial elections had been held. The local governments which had subsequently been formed would play an important role in meeting citizens' basic needs.

10. **A representative of Iraq**, speaking on behalf of the Kurdistan Regional Government, said that over the previous four years the Regional Government had adopted more than 20 pieces of legislation that were in line with the Covenant. Following the introduction of the national anti-corruption strategy for 2021–2025, in 2023 there had been nearly 400 corruption cases, of which around 250 had been referred to the specialized courts, just over 100 had been settled and just over 40 had been dismissed due to insufficient evidence.

11. There were approximately 1 million refugees and displaced persons in the Region, more than half of whom were internally displaced. The Kurdistan Regional Government provided for 80 per cent of their needs. More than 3,000 kidnapped Yazidis had been freed, although more than 2,000 remained captive. The number of registered persons with disabilities had reached nearly 18,000, more than 1,000 of whom had benefited from specially allocated university places. Persons with disabilities were provided with job opportunities, and 3 per cent of government housing units were reserved for them.

12. In the area of women's rights, the 2011 act on combating domestic violence was being amended, and five women's shelters had been opened. Almost 150,000 women worked in the public sector, with more than 70,000 in the private sector. Women could participate effectively in decision-making and could lead the parliament, cabinets and other bodies. There were approximately 70 female judges, approximately 60 female public prosecutors, more than 200 female legal assistants and 500 female investigators. A total of 1,500 women had joined the Region's trade union for journalists. The Region's Council of Ministers had adopted a child protection policy in 2023, and the bill on labour regulations had been referred to the regional presidency for approval. In 2023, more than 3,000 women working in the private sector had benefited from social security. A total of 20,000 housing units were being established for individuals with low incomes. A 2022 act on education had been adopted by the Regional Government, and more than 20,000 school dropouts had re-entered education. More than 800 individuals had benefited from the opening of 10 literacy centres.

13. A cabinet in the Kurdistan Regional Government worked to preserve and restore artefacts through more than 40 projects. In 2023, almost 70 of the 3,000 registered archaeological sites had been restored and excavated. More than 10 projects were being planned to restore Yazidi holy sites, including Lalish.

14. **Mr. Mancisidor de la Fuente** (Country Rapporteur) said that he would like to know whether the term "national legislation", when used in the context of Kurdistan Region, referred to laws applicable throughout the State party or to laws specific to the Region. He wondered whether the provisions of the Covenant were incorporated into national law and, if not, whether the Covenant could be invoked directly in the courts and whether there were any examples of such cases. He would be interested to hear whether the State party was considering the possibility of ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Covenant. He wished to know more about the high-level members of the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights.

15. Amid reports that only 8 per cent of judges were women, he would welcome an update on the plan that had been announced one year earlier to increase the number of female judges. He wished to know how interference with the judiciary, for example by the executive branch or pressure groups, was monitored and avoided in order to maintain judicial independence.

16. He wished to know what criteria had been used to select the three civil society organizations that had participated in drafting the State party's report and whether they were sufficiently representative of the country's diverse views regarding human rights. The State party had been ranked 167th out of 180 countries in the 2023 World Press Freedom Index; he would appreciate the delegation's comments on whether that was an accurate representation of the state of the country's press. He would be interested to hear whether any protection measures were in place to ensure that human rights defenders could carry out their work. He wished to know whether the State party had, or intended to develop, a national plan on business and human rights.

17. He would like to know what the effects of the new anti-corruption measures had been and would welcome examples of cases in which high-level government officials had faced prosecution for corruption. He wondered whether reports that the Iraqi National Communication and Media Commission had recommended that media outlets should replace the term "homosexuality" with "sexual deviance" were accurate and, if so, how such a

recommendation was compatible with the principle of non-discrimination. He would welcome clarification regarding new measures to criminalize consensual same-sex sexual relations that could lead to the imposition of the death penalty.

18. The Committee was concerned that the State party drew no distinction between genders in its national legislation. In the light of the Committee's view that it was sometimes appropriate to draw such a distinction precisely to avoid discrimination, he wondered whether the State party's legislation included any temporary special measures to allow for affirmative action, in particular for women. He would appreciate an update on the implementation of the article of the Criminal Code which provided exceptions to the criminalization of acts committed by a man against a woman if they occurred in the context of defending family honour.

The meeting was suspended at 3.50 p.m. and resumed at 3.55 p.m.

19. **A representative of Iraq** said that the country's system of governance was divided into the federal and regional levels. No regional authority, including the Kurdistan Regional Government, could pass legislation that violated the Constitution, and any unconstitutional regional statutes could be challenged in court. Regional legislation took precedence in matters for which the Federal Government did not have sole authority pursuant to article 110 of the Constitution. International instruments to which Iraq was a party prevailed over national law, provided that those instruments did not conflict with the Constitution.

20. The Government sought to encourage foreign investment in the country and had become a party to various international agreements to protect investors, including the Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards. In January 2024, the Council of Ministers had approved a law to reform economic regulations, and a reform package that included amendments to allow foreign companies to register on an equal footing with Iraqi businesses would be presented to the Council of Representatives. Over the previous year, companies had launched a series of investment projects in the energy, oil and construction sectors and had also invested in Iraqi infrastructure, including bridges and roads.

21. **A representative of Iraq** said that the previous regime had banned the appointment of female judges; there had been only eight in 2003. However, the number had now risen to 122 and was expected to increase further in the coming years, following an instruction that had been issued to the Supreme Judicial Council to appoint more female judges and prosecutors.

22. **A representative of Iraq** said that the High Commission for Human Rights had been established pursuant to Act No. 53 of 2008 and complied with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles). The Commission promoted respect for human rights under international law and was financially and administratively independent pursuant to article 102 of the Constitution. Owing to the dismissal of the Prime Minister, no new commissioners had been appointed after the previous commissioners' terms of office had expired in 2021, but parliament was currently receiving nominations, and elections were expected to be held soon. The Minister of Justice was leading the Commission until the new commissioners took office.

23. **A representative of Iraq** said that the judiciary was independent from the Ministry of Justice, in accordance with Order No. 35 of 2003. An instruction issued in 2004 had established the independence of the Federal Supreme Court, and the entire judiciary, including the Public Prosecution Service and the Judicial Oversight Commission, was independent from the executive and legislative branches. The Government did not interfere with the appointment of judges, and any laws regulating the judiciary must be proposed by the judiciary itself. The Public Prosecution Service, which was responsible for monitoring the rulings and decisions of the courts and places of detention, was not dependent on the Supreme Judicial Council. A number of government decrees had been reversed because they had violated the right to equal opportunities in the civil service under the Covenant and other international instruments. In one case, the Speaker of the Council of Representatives had been removed from office by decision of the Federal Supreme Court.

24. **A representative of Iraq** said that the country had acceded to the United Nations Convention against Corruption in view of the dangers that corruption posed to the stability

and security of society. The national integrity and anti-corruption strategy covered ministries and non-ministerial bodies at all levels, and the Government had begun developing a six-year strategy for the period 2025–2030 in cooperation with the private sector, civil society organizations, international organizations and investigative journalists. A commission had been established to investigate high-level corruption cases that involved significant sums of money, a team had been formed to coordinate corruption investigations with the media and investigative journalists, and a large number of court cases had been brought against ministers and other high-level officials, over half of which had resulted in convictions. Approximately 220 travel bans had been issued against persons accused of corruption. Billions of dinars had been recovered following the launch of a major anti-corruption campaign. Laws had been passed on access to information and combating corruption, and numerous workshops had been held to reinforce cooperation with the private sector and civil society.

25. The Government was undertaking a digital transformation across all institutions, and memorandums of understanding had been signed with several countries, including France, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and the Russian Federation, on mutual assistance and knowledge-sharing in combating corruption. A visit by Transparency International in February and March 2023 had led to the creation of projects to build the capacities of civil society organizations and government agencies in combating corruption, and a consultative council had been formed to assess the country's integrity system. The Government was working in close cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme and had also implemented an anti-corruption project in collaboration with the German Agency for International Cooperation.

26. **A representative of Iraq** said that all decisions in corruption cases were issued by judges appointed by the Supreme Judicial Council in the presence of public prosecutors. Defendants were granted full legal safeguards, including access to a lawyer, and the judges' decisions were subject to various levels of appeal.

27. **A representative of Iraq** said that the provisions of the Criminal Code that allowed perpetrators to invoke defence of honour as a mitigating circumstance dated from 1969. Acts of infidelity, such as adultery, were very serious in Arab societies, and mitigating circumstances had been established to take into account the emotional state of persons who committed crimes in response to such acts. However, a committee of active and retired judges were updating the Code to include alternative measures to corporal punishment and the death penalty. Consensual sexual relations between adults of the same sex were not punishable under the Criminal Code.

28. **A representative of Iraq** said that the enactment of any legislation that contradicted sharia law was prohibited under the Constitution. Bills banning homosexuality and prostitution had been proposed and were being examined by a parliamentary law commission. The Government was determined to ensure respect for human rights and individual freedoms within the scope of constitutional principles. The bills were unlikely to be enacted, but if they were, they would be implemented without violating the human rights enshrined in the Constitution.

29. Iraq had boasted a free press since 2003. Authorizations were granted to the media and journalists through the Iraqi National Communication and Media Commission, which was independent of the Government. The right of journalists not to disclose their information sources was protected under the Journalists' Rights Act, and the freedom of the press was guaranteed by the Constitution. The national journalists' union was involved in regulating issues related to the freedom of the press. Most politicians who had been subjected to undue criticism from journalists lodged a complaint with the courts. In a recent case, the Prime Minister had lodged a complaint against a journalist who had insulted him, but had later withdrawn the complaint in order to uphold press freedom. Iraq had the largest number of satellite channels in the region, and there was no censorship.

30. **Mr. Abdel-Moneim** said that he wished to know whether the Government considered that it allocated sufficient financial resources to honour its commitments under the Covenant, particularly those under article 2 (1). He would welcome the delegation's comments regarding the impact of sanctions on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.

31. **Mr. Amarti** said that he would be interested to learn whether citizens regularly submitted complaints to the national courts for violations of their economic, social and cultural rights, and whether the courts based their judgments and decisions on the Covenant or whether they applied national legislation incorporating the provisions of the Covenant into domestic law.

32. He would appreciate more detail on the activities of the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights in relation to economic, social and cultural rights. He would also like to know how the authorities were ensuring pluralism in the Commission's composition, in line with the recommendations of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, and to what extent non-governmental and civil society organizations could participate in the Commission's activities. Details of the gender balance in the Commission would be welcome. It would also be helpful to understand whether citizens could approach the Commission to file complaints and grievances relating to violations of economic, social and cultural rights, and whether the Commission could investigate and resolve such complaints and ensure that its decisions were implemented by the relevant parties.

33. **Mr. Mancisidor de la Fuente** said that he would like to know what plans the State party had to ensure that it met its commitments under the Paris Agreement, given that it was not currently on track to do so. It would be interesting to hear about the authorities' vision for the country's future in a decarbonized world, particularly given its economic dependence on oil.

34. **Ms. Saran** (Country Task Force) said that she wished to know what measures were being taken to ensure unrestricted, fair and equitable access to water, including for the most marginalized communities. She was curious to learn how the Government was ensuring that its recent austerity measures did not adversely affect those communities. She wondered whether any impact assessments had been carried out to evaluate the assistance provided by the State party's development partners, and, if so, how efficient and effective the assistance programmes were.

35. **A representative of Iraq** said that Iraq had an annual budget of \$140 billion. The Government had taken steps to maximize revenues from oil, agriculture and trade, and to make use of revenues from natural resources such as gas for the purposes of food security and to provide a decent life for citizens.

36. **A representative of Iraq** said that to support jobseekers, amendments had been made to the Small Business Support Act No. 10 of 2012 to increase the loans offered to enterprises to 20 million Iraqi dinars (ID) for enterprises employing one worker, ID 30 million for enterprises employing two workers and ID 50 million for enterprises employing three workers. The small business support fund had been increased to provide support to the largest possible number of jobseekers.

37. The Social Protection Department had been expanded in line with the Social Protection Act No. 11 of 2014. A new digital inclusion portal had been launched, through which 2,734,031 social assistance requests had been received. In 2023, 900,000 families had been provided with social assistance in the form of meals, approximately 2 million families had been given financial assistance, more than 50,000 displaced families had been provided with social assistance and more than 60 million food baskets had been distributed to beneficiaries of social assistance. Extensive free health care was provided under a Government programme for social assistance recipients.

38. A range of scholarships were available to the children of families in receipt of social assistance, providing ID 30,000 and ID 50,000 per month for children in primary and secondary school, respectively, and ID 100,000 per month for those studying at universities in Iraq. The cost of evening classes had been reduced by 50 per cent for the children of beneficiaries. Child protection units had been established to meet the needs of children of beneficiaries aged under 13 years.

39. A digital platform had been launched for the online delivery of social assistance, alongside a new soft loans programme. The Government had decided to waive the debts of beneficiaries and had signed an agreement with the World Bank for a \$40 million grant to support the social protection network and improve infrastructure and services.

40. **A representative of Iraq** said that the country could not meet all its economic needs by itself, given the sums needed to resettle displaced persons and rebuild the country following occupation by Da'esh, the impact of the 14-year economic embargo and the wars of the 1980s. Consequently, the country's budget needed to be supplemented with international assistance in order to meet its international commitments under article 2 of the Covenant.

41. The country's problems with water scarcity were the result of neighbouring countries' use of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers and violations of international agreements on transboundary waters. The authorities had taken measures to regulate water use, introduced new irrigation and desalination techniques and worked with European companies to provide sprinklers for Iraqi farms. They had also recently allocated more than \$300 million to a project to optimize the use of water for agricultural purposes.

42. **A representative of Iraq** said that, as part of its commitment to implementing the Paris Agreement and meeting its nationally determined contributions, the Government had drafted its second national communication. The national adaptation plan was also being drafted, and Ministry of Environment personnel were being trained on its implementation. A committee featuring representation from various ministries would be established to oversee the plan. An implementation road map would be drawn up, which would include a review of the oil and gas environment. A study was being undertaken on the effect of climate change on different environments in Iraq, the vulnerability of human and natural habitats and the medium- and long-term impacts on the Iraqi economy. Additional information on the Government's climate-related plans and programmes would be submitted to the Committee in writing.

43. **A representative of Iraq** said that the Ministry of Water Resources was attempting to use the canal network to divert water from the Tigris River to the Euphrates River to remedy the significant water shortage in the latter. It was working to address the 4,463 violations relating to fisheries and run-off water and 2,132 violations relating to underwater basins. Dams and reservoirs had been strengthened to meet hydroelectric requirements. To extend the useful life of dams, the Ministry had also removed almost 18,000,000 cubic metres of sediment. More than 700 wells had been built to provide water for agriculture and land cultivation. A large-scale campaign had been launched to clean the inlets and outlets of marshes. There were also ongoing negotiations with Türkiye on water flow issues.

44. **A representative of Iraq** said that the right of citizens to resort to the courts in order to defend their economic rights was enshrined in national legislation and the Constitution. There were specialized courts for commercial cases and labour-related cases, and the Federal Supreme Court was responsible for cases concerning violations of the social and economic rights of citizens. The Court had ruled in favour of the private sector in a historical case of perceived preferential treatment of the public sector over the private sector and it would soon rule on a case brought by employees of the Kurdistan Regional Government regarding the non-payment of salaries.

45. **Ms. Saran** said that she would like to hear about any steps taken to strengthen the enforcement of existing labour laws guaranteeing employment. She wondered what reforms, training programmes and strategies had been undertaken to increase employment opportunities and help workers move to the formal sector. She would also like to know about any initiatives and awareness-raising activities to prevent bias and discrimination in recruitment on the grounds of national origin, religion or sex. The delegation might comment on how the authorities ensured the enforcement of laws and penalties for employers engaging in discriminatory practices and on what steps had been taken to address discrimination against Iraqi women and their unequal enjoyment of the rights set out in the Covenant. The delegation might also comment on efforts to encourage youth entrepreneurship and industrial development and policies to encourage partnerships between the private sector and small and medium enterprises, start-ups and young entrepreneurs in order to support job creation. She also wondered how the authorities were addressing issues of corruption that affected the right to work.

46. She wished to learn how the authorities were ensuring the implementation of the Labour Code and whether any new legislation was being considered to guarantee fair conditions of work and improve access to public services. It would be helpful to understand how the authorities ensured that all individuals received their salaries, wages and social benefits. She would like to know why workplace injuries had significantly increased from 2020 to 2021 and what steps had been taken to monitor occupational health and safety procedures, particularly in the oil and gas, construction and agriculture sectors. She would be grateful for statistics on the number of labour inspection visits to such sites and on any subsequent investigations conducted, penalties imposed and remedies provided as well as details of effective remedies provided to workers in the past five years. She wondered how the State party was protecting the rights of migrant workers and whether it planned to ratify the International Labour Organization (ILO) Medical Care and Sickness Benefits Convention, 1969 (No. 130). She would be grateful for statistics and information on concrete steps to prevent the economic exploitation of children, child labour and the recruitment of children by armed groups. The delegation might also explain how trade union rights were protected for workers in the public sector and how the authorities ensured that members did not face reprisals for legitimate trade union activities.

47. She would be grateful to receive disaggregated statistical data on social security coverage; information on steps to raise awareness among private sector employees about their rights under the Pensions and Social Security Act No. 39 of 1971; and clarification as to whether the Act covered all workers in the private sector. Lastly, she would appreciate additional information on the financial sustainability of the social security system for public sector workers and on how the authorities were improving coordination between the food rations distribution system and the cash transfer programme within the social safety net.

48. **A representative of Iraq** said that there were no restrictions on the work of trade unions. Article 22 (3) of the Constitution stipulated that the State would guarantee the right to establish trade unions and professional associations, and article 42 (1) of the Labour Code set out the right of employees to create and join trade unions. Iraq had ratified the ILO Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87). In practice, the State recognized collective bargaining. The judicial system was independent and anyone belonging to any union could seek remedy through it.

49. Work was under way to revise the Trade Union Organization Act No. 52 of 1987, in line with the provisions of the Constitution and the country's international commitments and with technical assistance from ILO.

50. Similarly, a new social security bill, prepared in collaboration with ILO, had been voted on by parliament and had entered into force in November 2023. The new law allowed persons employed in the informal sector, as well as self-employed persons in the private sector, to request social security, and covered retirement, including optional early retirement, death, pensions, illness, workplace injuries, unemployment assistance, health insurance and services for women in the labour market.

51. Thanks to measures taken by the Government, Iraq had a developed economy with diversified revenue streams, although there continued to be pressure on public sector employment. The Labour Code, which had been promulgated in cooperation with ILO, contained guarantees of workers' rights and represented a tangible step forward. There was no discrimination against women in the labour market. However, some jobs required certain physical attributes, and the specificities of Iraqi society had to be taken into account. To promote youth employment, training programmes had been delivered in centres across the country. With support from ILO, a national training centre for inspectors had been established within the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and a system had been put in place to maintain and improve health and safety in the workplace. A national employment policy was being drafted, and assistance was being received from ILO through the Decent Work Country Programme for Iraq 2019–2023.

52. **A representative of Iraq** said that the National Strategy for Iraqi Women 2023–2030 set out several targets related to the Sustainable Development Goals and aimed to empower women and foster their political participation. Together with the World Bank, the Government had launched a plan to support women's economic empowerment, including

through legislative reforms and capacity-building. In 2023, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs had awarded grants to 3,147 women for small and medium-sized projects and had provided entrepreneurship training to 400 women. The Central Bank of Iraq had adopted measures to enhance women's financial inclusion and participation in public life. Furthermore, steps had been taken to increase women's access to banking and financial services, and a number of commercial banks made lower-interest loans available to women entrepreneurs. The German Government would provide €20 million in funding for an initiative to empower small and medium-sized enterprises and foster inclusive growth. Women were expected to account for 40 per cent of the beneficiaries of the initiative, which was set to be launched in the first half of 2024. In collaboration with ILO, the Central Bank of Iraq had developed a \$3 million project for entrepreneurs targeting 550 individuals, 50 per cent of whom were women.

53. **A representative of Iraq** said that an initiative had been introduced to strengthen youth entrepreneurship through tailored training and funding. The Supreme Council for Youth, formed by the Council of Ministers and presided over by the Prime Minister, provided a forum for young people to put forward ideas and proposals, which were compiled on an online platform.

54. **A representative of Iraq** said that domestic legislation set the minimum age of voluntary enlistment into the armed forces at 18 years. Nevertheless, there had been reports of individuals being recruited at younger ages by the Popular Mobilization Forces, which had been recognized as an independent State entity and an integral part of the Iraqi armed forces through Act No. 40 of 2016. In response to the reports, the Government had set up a commission to investigate possible violations of children's rights. The commission, which was chaired by the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs and included representatives of various government ministries and other relevant bodies, had drawn up a plan, under which it had carried out visits to the headquarters of the Popular Mobilization Forces and to a military training centre in Kirkuk. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict had visited Iraq from 7 to 11 January 2024 and had held several meetings with government officials and commission members. Following the conclusion of her visit, the Special Representative had noted progress in tackling serious child rights violations, including through the action plan signed by the Government in March 2023 to prevent the recruitment and use of children by the Popular Mobilization Forces. The plan would conclude on 3 March 2024 on account of its satisfactory implementation.

55. **A representative of Iraq** said that, to promote the labour market integration of young people, the Ministry of Higher Education had opened training centres, delivered 1,210 courses, held 939 certification workshops and organized 28 careers fairs for the benefit of 4,314 students. In addition, summer training classes had been offered, universities had helped their students to secure employment in the private sector, and numerous employment schemes had been launched, including in cooperation with international organizations and national non-governmental organizations.

56. **A representative of Iraq** said that women had accounted for 55 per cent of the 45,000 new graduates hired during the previous year and for more than 50 per cent of the 24,922 newly hired graduates who had achieved the top grades.

57. **A representative of Iraq** said that, in Kurdistan Region, a road map had been drawn up to combat corruption, and projects had been carried out to enable the electronic payment of salaries and avoid unnecessary charges. Between 2020 and 2022, a total of 338 cases of suspected administrative corruption had been investigated and 95 had been prosecuted.

58. There were 75 women judges in the Region. In 2011, the parliament of Kurdistan Region had passed a law against domestic violence. Following amendments to articles 128, 130 and 131 of the Criminal Code, "defence of honour" was no longer considered a mitigating circumstance for violence committed against family members.

59. A fund had been created for the protection of labour rights, a hotline had been set up to provide guidance to labourers, steps had been taken to educate migrant workers about their rights and the value of the public pension fund had increased from ID 27 billion to ID 194 billion over the previous three years. More labour inspectorates had been established,

licences had been issued for development projects, of which 1,219 had been carried out, and a plan had been put in place to build 18 dams.

60. **Ms. Saran** said that, while the forward-looking laws, policies and programmes adopted by the State party were commendable, it would be useful to receive more specific information on their implementation.

61. **Mr. Emuze** (Country Task Force) said that he would appreciate information on the status of the bill on enforced disappearances, on whether children who had committed crimes as members of Da'esh were treated in line with international children's rights standards and detained only as a last resort, on the steps taken to remove the obstacles to education and access to child protection services faced by returnee children, on whether measures had been adopted to ensure the provision of essential primary and secondary health services and on the steps taken to guarantee that every child was registered immediately after birth. He would welcome details of efforts to support internally displaced persons in camps, most of whom were women and girls, and of the measures taken to prevent all forms of gender-based violence in camps. He wished to know what specific steps had been taken to protect children from being forced into hazardous work, begging, commercial sexual exploitation and so-called temporary marriages, whether the State party would reconsider repealing articles 128, 130 and 131 of the Criminal Code, how many times those harmful provisions had been or could have been set aside by judges, whether a national action plan had been formulated to end child marriage and set the marriageable age at 18 years without exception and whether the State Party was contemplating a thorough review of criminal provisions to eliminate those that discriminated against women and girls. He would be grateful for updates on the status of the anti-domestic violence bill, on the progress made in harmonizing the bill with the Criminal Code and on efforts to amend the Criminal Code by repealing articles 41 (1) and 398, and, in general, any provisions that reduced penalties for so-called honour crimes and allowed perpetrators of sexual assault or rape to escape prosecution. Details of any measures to provide care to victims of rape, including minors, would also be welcome.

62. He would be interested to receive information on the number of internally displaced families who had returned and had benefited from the restitution of their housing, land and property rights, on the status of the housing units mentioned in paragraph 112 of the State party's replies to the list of issues ([E/C.12/IRQ/RQ/5](#)), on the number of such units that had been made available, on efforts to curtail property price rises and make housing affordable nationwide, on the status of the national plan for the return of displaced persons to their liberated areas of origin, on measures to ensure that compensation for damaged and destroyed property was disbursed in a fair and timely manner and on how the State party intended to address the very large gap between the demand for and supply of housing and ensure that housing projects conformed to urban planning standards. He wished to hear about any steps planned or taken to solve the severe water crisis and the problems endured by tens of thousands of members of Sunni tribes expelled from their lands, as well as about the outcome of efforts to address the sources and long-term consequences of water pollution, any measures adopted to ensure the realization of the right to an adequate standard of living, bearing in mind the recommendations on water and sanitation contained in paragraph 52 of the Committee's concluding observations on the State party's fourth periodic report ([E/C.12/IRQ/CO/4](#)), and any efforts undertaken by the State party to reduce the poverty rate and improve living conditions.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.