



**Permanent Mission of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
to the United Nations**

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Statement

By

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Thank you to Special Adviser Khan for your insightful briefing and continued efforts in Iraq.

We begin by welcoming the enhanced cooperation between the new government of Iraq and UNITAD, noting that this cooperation has resulted in important agreements concerning action on key activities, including the excavation of mass grave sites, support to Iraqi authorities with respect to witness protection measures and the implementation of UNITAD's evidence digitization project. The mutually reinforcing relationship between the Iraqi Government and UNITAD facilitates implementation of UNITAD's mandate and provides necessary support to the Government of Iraq, with respect for Iraq's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence. We recognize the constructive engagement of UNITAD with national authorities, such as the Ministry of Justice, and the Supreme Judicial Council, which has led to an agreement for the provision of support to Iraqi investigative judges pertaining to the development of casefiles for the prosecution of ISIL members. We cannot overstate how critical these confidence-building and capacity-building measures are to sustaining peace and enhancing stability and security in Iraq and by extension, the wider region. A stronger Iraq can only be built from within. At the same time, we emphasize that the international community has a role to play in supporting Iraq in its reconstruction and development.

We encourage the Iraqi Government to take a victim-centered approach as it works to secure accountability for the crimes of ISIL and its affiliates, which have assaulted the people of Iraq. To that end, we welcome that the Council of Representatives have formally commenced consideration of legislation to establish a legal basis for the prosecution of ISIL crimes as war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. We urge authorities to build on this momentum and finalize this work.

UNITAD plays a critical role in Iraq, and the Council has recognized this, as evidenced by the unanimous adoption of resolution 2544 in September. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines welcomes UNITAD's steps towards discharging its mandate, and its engagement with diverse parts of Iraqi society, including religious actors, survivor groups, NGOs and community leaders. We also welcome the critical work of the Gender-based Crimes and Crimes against Children Unit. Witnesses play an important role in facilitating UNITAD's work, and we commend the steps that have been taken to ensure their protection. Attempts to strengthen UNITAD's trauma-informed approach to all interviews, including the role of the Witness Protection and Support Unit, must be commended.

In closing, we emphasize that, unless perpetrators are held accountable and justice secured for victims, sustainable peace in Iraq will not be possible. The primary responsibility for this rests with Iraqi authorities; however, all states and actors, at international and regional levels, are encouraged to support Iraq. In closing, we reaffirm our support to Special Adviser Karim Khan and his team for their dedication and express our hope for a secure, prosperous and stable Iraq.

Thank you.