Statement

By

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At the

VTC Briefing on UNITAD

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United Nations Security Council
Thank you Mr. President,

We begin by extending our gratitude to Special Adviser Karim Khan for his briefing. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines thanks you for the dedication that you have shown to the people of Iraq, and for all of your constructive cooperation with this Council. We congratulate you on your appointment as ICC prosecutor, wish you continued success, and look forward to engaging with UNITAD under the guidance of your successor. To Ms Nadia Murad, we thank you for again providing very clear analysis and insights on the most urgent actions required.

We welcome the progress made by UNITAD on its investigation into crimes against humanity as it relates to the Yazidi community and the massacre in Tikrit. It is commendable that, despite a reduced footprint as a result of COVID-19, UNITAD has maintained efforts towards discharging its mandate. To this end, we recognise the role played by the Government of Iraq, particularly the judiciary, that continues to engage constructively with UNITAD. We encourage further collaborative efforts between the Government of Iraq and UNITAD, with respect for Iraq’s sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity, and its jurisdiction over crimes committed within its territory.

The people of Iraq have suffered immensely under the surge of ISIL, and concerted effort is required to achieve sustainable peace and reconciliation. UNITAD’s focus on the mental health of victims and survivors is a critical part of this reconciliatory process, and we encourage continued provision of this psychosocial support. The Trauma-Informed Investigations Field Guide is an invaluable resource that will assist investigators, including in Iraq, to better understand the effects of trauma on witnesses.

Another element of the reconciliation and reconstruction process is capacity-building of various Iraqi institutions. This is critical to ensuring that all arms of the State are sufficiently capable of holding accountable all individuals and entities guilty of committing infractions of domestic and international law. These violations are inimical to peace and justice, and threaten the safe and dignified return of displaced persons. We welcome discussions on the draft legislation that establishes a legal basis for the prosecution of ISIL members for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. These crimes must be prosecuted in a way that reflects their gravity and provides a form of justice to the victims and survivors. We urge all stakeholders to work towards achieving comprehensive accountability for these atrocities.

We also note the findings that chemical weapons were used by ISIL in Iraq between 2014 and 2016. Chemical weapons atrocities cannot be ignored, neither should there be impunity for the use of chemical weapons by non-state actors. Accountability is necessary for the protection of civilians and we thank the Special Adviser and his team for their efforts to bring these matters to the fore.

Mr. President
In closing, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines would like to recognise the support provided by UNITAD to the Government of Iraq in returning the remains of Yazidis to be laid to rest by their loved ones. Nothing can undo the grief suffered over the loss of loved ones and communities; however, these efforts offer closure to families whose suffering is unjustified and immeasurable. We encourage further efforts in this regard, as this is an element of the broader reconciliation and
reconstruction process. Iraq’s path is not one to be traversed alone. UNITAD’s support, as well as efforts by the international community, including regional stakeholders, are critical. For Iraq to heal, all efforts must be made in good faith. There is no room for negative rhetoric and divisive actions. We affirm our support to the government and people of Iraq, and the invaluable work of UNITAD.

Thank you.