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Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi of Iraq in New York City

September 24, 2014

President Obama. Well, I want to thank Prime Minister Abadi and his delegation for the opportunity to meet here this morning.

As I've said previously, the United States and Iraq have a strategic relationship that is important to both countries. We believe in a vision of an Iraq that is inclusive, in which Sunni, Shia, Kurd are all able to come together to peacefully iron out their differences and to achieve prosperity and peace for all the people of the country.

Obviously, Iraq is under enormous threat at the moment from the organization that calls itself ISIL. And as I've discussed today and for many weeks now, we consider ISIL to be a threat not only to Iraq, but to the region, to the world, and to the United States.

We are committed to working in support of Iraq regaining territory that ISIL has currently taken over and making sure that an inclusive Iraqi Government is able to control its territory and push ISIL back. In doing that, we are coordinating closely in our military campaign. And the airstrikes and air support that we're able to provide, as well as the training and assistance, I think will be critical in partnership with Iraqi forces on the ground.

One of the things I'm very impressed with, however, is the fact that Prime Minister Abadi understands that in order for Iraq to succeed, it's not just a matter of a military campaign; it's also the need for political outreach to all factions within the country. And I've been very impressed with Prime Minister Abadi's vision.

Since he took over the Prime Ministership, he has reached out systematically to all the peoples of Iraq. He has articulated a vision of reform and a commitment to moving forward with many of the laws that had previously stalled, but offer the potential of unleashing energy and entrepreneurship inside of Iraq.

And so, in addition to the military campaign in which we're going to be coordinating, I want to say directly to the Prime Minister that we fully support his political vision, and we are also encouraged by his willingness to reach out and work with other countries in the region who are going to be very important in supporting our overall effort to defeat ISIL.

Last point I would make: I think that the Prime Minister recognizes, this is not something that is going to be easy and it is not going to happen overnight. But after talking with the Prime Minister, I'm confident that he's the right person to help work with a broad-based coalition of like-minded Iraqis and that they will be successful.

And my main message to the Prime Minister is that although we cannot do this for you, we can be a strong partner, and we are fully committed to your success. We wish you Godspeed. And we are grateful for your willingness to take on this leadership mantle at such a critical time in your country's history.

Prime Minister Abadi. In the name of God, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful, I would like to thank President Obama for allowing for this opportunity for Iraq to explain its points of view towards the confrontation that is happening in Iraq and in which Iraq is at the forefront of the confrontation against the forces of ISIL.

[*At this point, President Obama interrupted Prime Minister Abadi to allow the interpreter to translate.*]

Iraqi people have confronted this very brutal, ruthless attack on the Iraqi territory with bravery, and I am very proud to say that I am the commander of the Iraqi Armed Forces. Our Armed Forces have also offered a lot of sacrifices when they confronted the Daesh attack. And I can say today that in many of the areas we are now turning around the ground.

Today I am also proud to say that our people are brave, and I am—the popular effort on the ground has been of utmost importance. I am keen to protect our brave people on the ground, and I am proud of their sacrifices and protect them and protect all that they have been doing to protect their communities on the ground, their religious sites, and to stand a firm stance against the terrorist attacks that targeted the minorities and targeted and killed children, men, and women.

In my discussion with President Obama, I emphasized the importance of the respect of the sovereignty of Iraq and the territorial integrity of Iraq. And as a Prime Minister of Iraq, I reaffirmed my—I reaffirmed the importance for all forces that want to help Iraq to respect the sovereignty of Iraq and the—its territorial integrity. I am very thankful for President Obama and all the allies, all who are helping, for maintaining and respecting the territorial integrity of Iraq and its sovereignty.

Finally, one of the requests that I have put forth for President Obama is the importance of equipping and arming the Iraqi Army and to provide the Iraqi Armed Forces with weapons. As you know, our Armed Forces are in dire need for equipment and for weapons, mostly because we lost a lot of the equipment and the weapons in our confrontation and our fight against ISIL, and specifically, when the ISIL groups came through the borders from Syria, many of the weapons were destroyed. Some of the weapons were—fell in the hand of ISIL. Therefore, I am very thankful for President Obama that he promised that weapons and supplies would be delivered to Iraq as soon as possible so Iraq can defeat ISIL and Iraq can overcome this crisis.

We are keen in Iraq to promote further the strategic relationship between our two countries, a strategic relationship that is based on mutual respect within the strategic framework agreement that was signed between the two governments back in 2008. I am pleased to say that President Obama has promised to reinvigorate the strategic framework agreement not only to put the focus on the military and security aspect of that agreement, but also on all other levels: scientific, educational, economic, cultural and academic, social and other aspects of our relationship.

Mr. President, I thank you for all your support and all the promises that you have given us. And I hope to see that these promises will be concretely fulfilled on the ground as soon as possible. Thank you.

Prime Minister Abadi. Thank you Mr. President.

President Obama. Appreciate it.

Prime Minister Abadi. Thank you very much.

President Obama. Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:05 p.m. at United Nations Headquarters. In his remarks, he referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. Prime Minister Abadi spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Categories: Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Iraq, Prime Minister al-Abadi.

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