

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to address this conference on behalf of the Government of Spain and to renew a message of support and solidarity with the Government of Iraq and with its people. I would like to thank Sweden for the excellent job that it has done in hosting and helping to coordinate this meeting.

Spain has fully supported the International Compact with Iraq since its inception and, following the principles of the Paris Declaration, we have aligned our cooperation with the objectives and principles of the Compact, according to the priorities formulated by the Government of Iraq, as it makes progress towards our common goal: a united, democratic, safe and prosperous Iraq.

I welcome the results of the First Annual Review. Through the ICI, the international community has indeed made available, in a coordinated fashion and in partnership with Iraq, an unprecedented amount of resources and political will in order to achieve these goals. We welcome the strong determination of the Government of Iraq to work towards national reconciliation and reconstruction, with a firm commitment with human rights, and we encourage our Iraqi friends to continue to take concrete steps along this path.

We firmly condemn all the acts of terrorism that Iraq continues to suffer, and we strongly support the efforts of the Government of Iraq to establish the rule of law throughout the country.

It is clear for us that all these elements are closely interrelated, and we have accordingly placed the emphasis of our cooperation with Iraq in the field of governance and the rule of law. We have actively participated in projects to improve governance through the UNDP in the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq and through the EUJUST LEX program of the European Union.

My Government has fully disbursed all the donations pledged in the Madrid conference, 225 million USD. We have been the third largest donor country to the IRFFI. We believe that IRFFI has a relevant role to play in the next few years, providing the necessary technical assistance to implement reform.

In the framework of the Paris Club, Spain has already cancelled 80% of Iraqi debt and restructured the remaining 20%, bearing in mind the needs of the Government of Iraq to devote its resources to the pressing needs of structural reform, as endorsed by the international community.

Spain is also showing its solidarity with the plight of Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons. Last year, we disbursed 800.000 € through United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to help the Governments of Jordan and Syria in their efforts to alleviate the suffering of this people.

This year, I can announce that my Government will more than double the amount devoted to this cause: 1.5 million € to help cover the health and educational needs of the refugees in Syria and Jordan, to be disbursed through UNHCR, and an extra 300.000 € for the IDP's in Iraq, through the Protection program of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

With this help we want to acknowledge and support the solidarity shown by these countries with their Iraqi neighbours, and to underline the need to work in a coordinated manner to bring about the conditions for their return to their homeland.

A lesson of the last few years of stabilization efforts in Iraq has been the crucial role that the neighbouring countries have to play, in contributing to create an atmosphere that is conducive to the success of the endeavours of the Government of Iraq in the fields of national reconciliation and the rule of law.

Spain and the EU strongly support the process of Iraq's Neighbouring Countries' Conferences and we look forward to seeing more of its specific results. Spain and other EU countries maintain a very important diplomatic presence in Bagdad.

Another important development of the last year has been the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1770. We strongly support the work of UNAMI in addressing precisely all the issues that we have outlined here and more, and we commend the excellent work that is being carried out by Special Representative Staffan De Mistura and his team.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our gathering here has to send a strong message of hope to the people of Iraq. Delivering the results that can materialize these hopes is ultimately the responsibility of the Government of Iraq. Let me assure you that Spain will continue to help and to make its contribution to this joint effort.