

**Opening statement by Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt at the ICI  
conference 29<sup>th</sup> May 2008.**

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

Your Excellency, Secretary-General of the United Nations Mr Ban Ki-moon,  
Your Excellency, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq Mr Nuri al-Maliki,  
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is an honour to welcome you here today for the First Annual Review  
Conference of the International Compact with Iraq.

We are pleased and honoured that the Government of Iraq and the United  
Nations have entrusted us with the responsibility of hosting this conference.

It gives Sweden an opportunity to manifest the strength of our commitment to a  
better future for Iraq.

We stand ready to support the Government of Iraq and all Iraqis in the quest for  
a secure  
sovereign,  
democratic,  
united and  
prosperous country, where the human rights of all are fully respected.

At first glance, Iraq might seem far away from Sweden.

Yet it is close.

Iraq is Europe's neighbour.

What is more, today, over one per cent of the Swedish population is of Iraqi origin. Iraq is indeed an important part of our society.

Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, Ministers and members of the Iraqi delegation – to you I would like to extend an especially warm welcome.

The International Compact with Iraq is a process that is, and must be, owned by the Government of Iraq.

Your commitment to the Iraqi people - and hard work - lay the foundation for progress in sectors of crucial importance such as security, democracy, fair and sustainable development, rule of law and human rights.

I would also like to extend a special welcome to you, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The Security Council has given the United Nations a strong mandate to play a central role in Iraq and in the ICI process.

The international community stands firmly behind the UN in its endeavour to support, advise and assist Iraq.

I would particularly like to commend the work of the Special Advisor of the Secretary-General Mr Ibrahim Gambari and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr Staffan de Mistura.

Together with their teams, the entire UN family and NGOs, they are making important contributions to the development of Iraq under difficult and demanding conditions.

The UN is demonstrating its growing capacity to overcome complex challenges and is today the main international partner of Iraq.

The engagement of the UN, with its funds and programmes, is a necessity for a successful ICI process and the realisation of our shared vision of a better future for Iraq.

I am pleased to see that so many members of the international community have convened here today.

We are here to show our support for efforts to improve the situation in Iraq. Building a strong partnership with Iraq is in all our interest. This shared ambition will help the international community overcome past divisions.

I also extend a warm welcome to Iraq's neighbours and the regional organisations. The geopolitical landscape surrounding Iraq is complicated.

History has sown many seeds of distrust that have hampered the development of fruitful and constructive relations between States in the region.

Iraq's neighbours have a particular responsibility to ensure that Iraq can develop in peace and prosperity as a sovereign country.

This is of crucial importance for regional stability. Certain countries in the region are hosting large numbers of displaced Iraqis, a contribution that deserves acknowledgement and gratitude.

The fact that a European country – a member of the European Union – is hosting this conference shows the commitment of the EU to Iraq's future.

The contribution of the EU to Iraqi development is substantial in political as well as in financial terms. The EU is building a strong and multi-faceted partnership with Iraq that will be to our mutual benefit.

The Government of Iraq has made progress during the past year, even though some of the achievements might not yet be visible to the public eye.

The security situation has improved in large parts of the country.

Advances are taking place in the economic field. This is encouraging.

However, Iraq is a country with a complex legacy. The re-establishment of Iraq as a sovereign state with a democratically elected government is a great achievement, but the challenges - as well as the opportunities - are tremendous.

Solutions must be found to many contentious issues. This can only be achieved by a comprehensive dialogue which includes all segments of Iraqi society. An atmosphere of trust and cooperation is a prerequisite.

Any government has a responsibility towards its citizens to do its utmost to bring about and maintain peace, stability, fair and sustainable development, as well as to ensure that all inhabitants enjoy security and decent living conditions.

The clear link between security and development cannot be overlooked.

One of the most urgent tasks in Iraq is the improvement of the humanitarian situation, not least for the many who have been forced to flee from their homes.

It is the government's responsibility to ensure that all Iraqis can enjoy their human rights.

The international community must be ready to support Iraq in this process.

Like Iraq, we must acknowledge our responsibilities and identify areas where we can do better.

Improved coordination of our efforts and respect for Iraq's sovereignty are two examples. Allowing the UN to take the lead in our engagement with Iraq, and facilitating this development, is imperative.

Iraq is a rich country, in terms of both natural and human resources. The potential of the Iraqi economy is still far from fully realised.

This is a source of hope for Iraq's future.

It is also an important area for mutually beneficial cooperation between Iraq and the international community, where there is scope for further development.

Economic progress is a cornerstone of the ICI and requires reforms to tackle issues such as inefficiency, inequality and corruption.

I hope and believe that Iraq will soon be able to become a prosperous country and a solid international partner in economic and trade terms.

Without improved security it is difficult to imagine a flourishing Iraqi society. The situation today is better than a year ago, but it is still fragile.

Lack of security is still a part of everyday life for far too many Iraqis. Millions of people have left their homes in fear of violence and it remains difficult for many to return.

National reconciliation,  
political compromises,  
imposition of the rule of law and  
increased respect for human rights - are the only way to bring about a sustainable improvement in the security situation.

Steps are being taken in this direction, but much more remains to be done.

It is worrying that women and minority groups continue to be targeted by violence and face serious difficulties in seeking and obtaining legal redress.

For these important segments of society, basic security is still a distant prospect.

This severely limits their opportunity to make their voices heard in the public sphere, and this limitation in turn jeopardises the establishment of a democratic society.

Their empowerment and meaningful participation in peace-building efforts and political processes is necessary for fair and sustainable development.

Today's conference will be an opportunity to address all these issues, and to discuss what has been achieved since the launch of the International Compact with Iraq a year ago.

Based on the evaluation of achievements over the past year, important priorities will be set for the next steps on the path of reform.

What we all strive for is an Iraq where present and coming generations are able to look towards the future with a sense of optimism and hope.

I would like to take this opportunity to once again warmly welcome you to Sweden.

I am looking forward to frank, open and rewarding discussions.

Thank you