

In the name of God, the compassionate and the merciful

Final Statement
Meeting of the Coordination and Follow-Up Committee held in
Salahaddin, 26 February – 1 March, 2003

As Iraq faces a critical stage in its history, the Coordination and Follow-Up Committee that was elected at the London Iraqi Opposition Conference between 13-16 Dec. 2002, held its first meeting with the participation of 54 members, in the liberated territory of Iraq, in the city of Salahaddin in heroic Kurdistan, between 24-28 February 2003.

After a series of frank and comprehensive discussions over a period of three days, which preceded the official meeting, the meeting was opened with a recital of a verse from the Holy Quran and a minute's silence in memory of our martyrs and in solidarity with our people in prison, detention, and exile.

After listening to a speech by the host, Mr. Masoud Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), the meeting listened to a message from his eminence Mohammad Bakir al-Hakim, President of SCIRI, and speeches by a number of leaders of the Iraqi Opposition and quests. With a quorum of 54 members the meeting held seven closed sessions during which a steering committee was elected and the rules of order of the meetings, the agenda, election of Mr. Jalal Talabani as a chair for the meetings, and the structures required to face conditions both inside and outside the country were established, in pursuit of the establishment of an alternative democratic government.

The meeting evaluated the political and international situation and the possibilities of a military conflict, which the allied forces plan to launch under the leadership of the US. The meeting puts the responsibility on the Iraqi regime for endangering the security of the country as a result of its repressive policies, violation of human rights and rights of various groups, non-compliance with relevant UN Security Council resolutions, aggression against neighboring countries and its refusal to get rid of its Weapons of Mass Destruction.

The meeting calls upon the US and the international community to distinguish between Saddam Hussain's regime and the Iraqi people and between Weapons of Mass Destruction and the infrastructure of Iraq.

The meeting reconfirmed that, in the aftermath of the overthrow of the Saddam Hussain regime, power should be transferred to the Iraqi people and their true representatives as soon as possible. It looks forward to Iraq enjoying balanced relations with other countries, on the basis of mutual relations and cooperation and without occupation.

The meeting took note of news reports that thousands of Turkish troops are planning to enter Iraqi Kurdistan unilaterally, and hopes this is not the case. While we appreciate the undertaking of the international coalition to enforce the relevant UNSC Resolutions and its support of the Iraqi people in overthrowing the dictatorial regime and establishing

democratic rule in Iraq, we reject Turkish military intervention, or the intervention of any other regional power, in Iraqi internal affairs.

At the same time, the meeting extends the hand of friendship and cooperation to the republic of Turkey and reassures her that our Kurdish brothers and all members of the Iraqi opposition reject the division of Iraq. The meeting asserts its belief in one unified country. It takes seriously Turkey's legitimate security concerns and it is willing to establish optimum neighborly relations with Turkey. We, the members of the Iraqi opposition, call upon the government of Turkey for open, frank and direct dialogue, with the participation of the US, and reaffirm our commitment to establishing a unified Iraq and reinforcing Iraq's national unity on the basis of democratic, parliamentary, federal and equal citizenship to all Iraqis, be they Arabs, Kurds, Turkomans, Assyrians, or Chaldeans.

The Iraqi people would have the first and last word in deciding and managing the affairs of their country. Iraq is a country with multiple Arab and Muslim dimensions of identity. It is a land with many holy sites and shrines that have been subjected by Saddam Hussain to the worst kinds of violation of all that is sacred and holy. The Saddam Hussein regime has forced millions of its sons into exile. Hundreds of thousands of its citizens have been killed and wounded in internal wars that have touched every part of the land.

The opposition is a partner in the liberation of Iraq and in building of a new democratic Iraq. The Iraqi opposition will contribute to the restoration of stability and to the prevention of potential anarchy and chaos. The opposition will enlist the assistance of the Iraqi army and people, including religious and tribal personalities, to enhance law and order, social peace and toleration among all sections of society. The Iraqi opposition ultimately wishes to rehabilitate all militia organizations, including those forces operating under the command of the leadership council of the Iraqi opposition, and reintegrate them into a future Iraqi national army and to end the state of society's militarization by returning the army to its barracks, dismantling all Iraq's repressive institutions and ending those currents of thought in Iraq that gave rise to tyranny. The Iraqi opposition wishes to return to a life of constitutionalism and to reengage with regional, international, and Arab countries in relations of mutual interest and good-neighborliness. A democratic Iraq based on the rule of law, characterized by internal peace, is the best guarantee for the spread of peace and stability with other countries and the international community.

Considering all of the above, and implementing the decisions of the London conference, in particular the two documents – the Political Statement and the Transitional Period – on 13-16 Dec 2002, the meeting has elected a leadership council of the Iraqi opposition along with the following 14 specialized committees: 1) Operational, 2) Media, 3) Reconstruction and Development, 4) Foreign Relations, 5) National Outreach, 6) Social, 7) Economic, 8) UN Resolutions Follow-Up, 9) Displaced and Deportees, 10) Finance, 11) Legal and Constitutional, 12) Human Rights, 13) Relief and 14) Education and Higher Education.

This is in order to prepare for liberation and to prevent the emergence of a political, administrative and security vacuum. It is also to guarantee the best possible representation for the Iraqi people in the international arena and with friendly states who wish to cooperate with them. The meeting emphasized the importance of cooperation with the widest possible forces of our people to reach the goal of change, face all possible eventualities and to prepare for the transitional period, which will begin immediately after the collapse of Saddam's tyrant regime.

Within this framework, the meeting decided to continue dialogue with forces that did not participate in this meeting, or the London conference of the Iraqi opposition, and we call upon them to join this patriotic process. We call upon all people with expertise and specialist skills inside Iraq and in exile to be engaged in this work, to assist in building a future Iraq, to be in contact with the administration and the existing infrastructure in the country and to carry out the necessary tasks during the transitional period. Furthermore, the effects of Saddam's brutal policies must be eradicated to pave the way to transition to a parliamentary system and constitutional traditions in a united, democratic, pluralistic, and federal Iraq that respects Islamic values and religious freedoms and practices.

The experiment in Kurdistan and all its progress of the last 11 years, is the best proof of what the Iraqis can achieve. The delegates of the meeting noticed the great achievements in all fields of development – political, democratic, providing security and stability, national reconciliation and transparency – in spite of the difficult and complicated circumstances and the pressures and destruction the area faces that remained after the Iraqi regime left the region in 1991. It must also be taken into account that this area came under two economic embargos, not just one. The delegates enjoyed the hospitality of the Kurdish leadership, especially the Kurdistan Democratic Party under the leadership of Masoud Barzani, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan under the leadership of Jalal Talabani.

The delegates discussed Iraq's ties with its neighbors and they also expressed appreciation for the positive historical role of both the Syrian Arab Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Those two countries were the first who welcomed the Iraqi opposition and refugees and they carried a large burden as a result of this. The meeting also expressed appreciation for the role played by two neighboring countries, Kuwait and Turkey, in this regard. The meeting sent its greetings to all people, organizations and friendly states in the world.

In particular, it sends its greetings to the Ambassador-at-Large for Free Iraqis, Dr. Zalmay Khalilzad, and the accompanying delegates for coming to Iraq, in spite of difficulties, to meet the delegates and members of the Follow-Up and Coordination Committee on behalf of the American President, George W. Bush, in order to convey the US administration's messages and opinions. Dr. Khalilzad's important address to the opening session included a confirmation of statements made by the President that the United States does not intend to change one dictator for another, that it supports a democratic regime in Iraq as was mentioned in the President's September speech, that the US has no desire to govern Iraq and that the Iraqis should choose who will govern them.

These policies were received by the delegates with great appreciation for the president of the United States.

The meeting also sent a special message to other Arab states urging them to support the Iraqi people, who have many strong ties with Arab countries, in their endeavor. It also demanded from those who are still trying to save the Iraqi regime to give up their short-sighted policies.

The meeting also supports all those who have tried to pressurize Saddam Hussain to give up power in order to guarantee a peaceful transition that will end the brutal regime and all its policies. We ask them to continue these efforts to stop war and to stop this terrible saga of Iraq's history.

The meeting also discussed the humanitarian issue and put forward views for emergency relief and development. It emphasized that for the Iraqi economy to recover and its massive potential growth to develop in such a way as to support the democratic process in the future, Iraq requires massive financial resources that can only come from the production of Iraqi oil through a guaranteed fair share of the international market. It also requires the readiness of regional and international communities to provide humanitarian aid and endeavor to solve the issue of debt, compensation and the freeing up of Iraqi assets abroad.

At the end of this historic meeting, the delegates salute the steadfast freedom-fighters, our martyrs and their families and we hail the political prisoners, detainees and the exiled, displaced and disappeared people. The meeting also calls upon the people of Iraq who continue to be under the reign of repression and destitution to prepare for liberation day. The delegates also salute our people in exile and call on them to increase their activities and mobilize and unify their efforts so that we all have one unified vision for the future of Iraq.

The meeting also sends a call to all citizens that are conscripted in the party organization and the many other party institutions: The coming order will be about tolerance, forgiveness and reconciliation. It will end all forms of ethnic and religious discrimination and eradicate all repressive laws and all forms of behavior that are above the law.

A future Iraq will be for all: Arabs, Kurds, Turkomens, Assyrians, Chaldeans and other ethnic minorities, Muslims and Christians, Shi'a and Sunni and all other cultural diversities. Iraq will not be for one individual or one party or a single ethnic minority group to the exclusion of the rest of the Iraqi people.
