

# **Statement by Shri MJ Akbar, Minister of State for External Affairs at the International Conference for Reconstruction of Iraq in Kuwait (February 14, 2018)**

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**His Excellency, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister of the State of Kuwait;**

**His Excellency, the Foreign Minister of Iraq;**

**Distinguished Foreign Ministers;**

**Distinguished invitees;**

**Excellencies;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Let me thank His Highness the Amir of Kuwait and the government of Iraq for inviting India to this important event. This is an opportunity for the world to congratulate the people and government of Iraq for their historic victory over a vicious contemporary menace ISIS, and its allies, who used a volatile fusion of false ideology and barbaric terrorism to become a regional epicentre of upheaval and violence against innocent civilians and legitimate government. We must recognise this achievement in the best way possible: through meaningful assistance that fashions a reborn Iraq on the ashes of war. Our focus must be on both Iraq and the Iraqi, and in particular the youth. We must win both the battle and the argument. The answer to terrorism lies in security, prosperity and reaffirmation of sovereignty. The three sustain each other; any indifference or complacency towards any side of this triangle will make the rehabilitation process infructuous.

On behalf of the people and Government of India, I also compliment all those nations who, directly or indirectly, have come together to defeat the regressive and extremist forces that spread their tentacles far beyond Iraq. Terrorism, Fundamentalism and Extremism are the scourge of the 21st century. We must be united in our defence of pluralism and civilisation without ifs and buts. There is no "good terrorism" or "bad terrorism": all terror is an unmitigated evil. India has always supported a free, democratic, pluralistic, federal and unified Iraq.

India responded to the need for humanitarian assistance even while the war was at its peak in Iraq; among other things, in August 2016, we proposed to reconstruct the hospital in Karbala. India responded to the urgent needs of Iraq for relief and economic reconstruction both directly and as part of international efforts under UN auspices.

In response to UN Secretary General's urgent appeal, India contributed US\$ 20 million for assistance to the people of Iraq. Activities under this pledge included milk food supplies through World Food Programme, training of Iraqi Foreign Service officers in diplomacy, and other Iraqi officials in Information Technology. In cooperation with WFP, India provided assistance to Iraqi school children and Iraqi refugees in Syria. In addition, India contributed US\$ 10 million towards the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq (IRFFI) for investments,

reconstruction and development in Iraq.

India continues to assist Iraq in capacity building through training of Iraqi officials under our technical and economic cooperation programme (ITEC); providing scholarships to Iraqi students for studying in India, and also training Iraqi diplomats in Foreign Service Institute of India. India welcomes thousands of Iraqi nationals annually for diverse reasons from higher studies to advanced medical treatment. To broaden our services, we have also established a Consulate General office in Erbil.

We welcome Baghdad's announcement that it is now open for investment. We will play our part with project-specific proposals. We support the important role assigned to private sector investors in rebuilding of the terrorist-affected areas in Iraq. During the recent visit of H.E Ibrahim Jaafari, Foreign Minister of Iraq to India, External Affairs Minister of India had assured him on India's full support and cooperation in the rebuilding process. Our companies have long experience in undertaking projects in the Gulf Region, including Iraq. We are willing to play a substantive role in major projects in petrochemicals, health, education, infrastructure and other sectors. We will also look at any specific requests for rehabilitation projects and essential supplies like medicines, equipment, etc., as required for internally displaced persons as part of our assistance programme.

There are many routes to security and prosperity, but they all have one starting point. The suffering of the Iraqi people must arouse the generally dormant conscience of the international community. Rebuilding must continue in tandem with the longer term sustainable option for the region, which has to be a comprehensive political settlement and reconciliation. Segmented and partial approaches as adopted by some have historically been at best suboptimal, and at worst, unsuccessful.

This is also the moment to remind the international community that an early adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism, a draft of which was proposed by India as early as 1996, would be advisable. It is essential to have a comprehensive legal regime against terrorism. After all, we recognise the enemy; we must also define it.

**Thank you.**

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