**Statement by His Excellency Mr. Hussain Mahmood Alkhateeb**

**Head of delegation, Republic of Iraq**

**Madam Chairman of the Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Woman,**

**Distinguished Members of the Committee,**

**Representatives of International NGOs and National Institutions**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I have the honor to present along with my colleagues, the delegation of the Republic of Iraq, the progress that Iraq achieved in its efforts to protect and promote of the rights of women, and the implementation the (Convention of Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), which represent the fruits of the long struggle to reach the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, and reflects the commitment of the government of Iraq in respecting its international obligations and positive cooperation with Treaty Bodies, Special Procedures, and UN experts in human rights. The government of Iraq puts transparency, credibility, and professionalism among its top priorties in this interactive dialogue that aims to promote human rights in a country that has been facing major challenges since 2003 until now while working diligently to overpass the legacy of the decades before 2003.

Iraq has presented his reports to the treaty bodies timley. And currently is preparing for the discussion of its report of Universal Periodic Review which will take place soon.

Iraq has also presented its national report on Beijing +25 in which all governmental bodies and civil society organizations have participated.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Iraqi women have struggled and suffered over decades since the establishment of the state in Iraq because of the social, political, legal legacy until she gets the current privileges that she enjoys whether in level of legislations, policies, and political participation and even in public life in which developed with social vision to the woman status in society taking her economic and social role

Iraqi women have struggled and suffered for decades since the founding of the Iraqi state, because of the social, legal and political heritage, until they reached the current gains in terms of legislation, policies and procedures, political participation and public life. Meanwhile, the social vision of the status of women in society has developed and allowed them to exercised their social and economic roles effectively.

The period of the control of ISIS (Daesh) over vast areas of Iraq represented the darkest phase in the life of the Iraqi woman , especially , in the province of Nineveh and surrounding areas, south-west of Kirkuk , province of Salehaldhin , and parts of province of Diyla and province of Anbar. Women role transformed from being a partner in the building of the society into a tool of combat and a target for brutal crimes and one of the weapons used by ISIS to destroy the morale of multiple groups in these areas, especially religious and ethnic minorities and rural communities. Terrorist crimes included killings, abductions, captions, rape and torture, in which thousands of women were killed in areas controlled by the terrorist ISIS. This resulted in paralysis of economic and social life, a total cessation of women's participation in political and public life, and the exploitation of women in hostilities or as a commodity to satisfy the wishes of terrorists.

Iraq has since early stages ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) under Law No. 66 of 1986 and continued to report after the process of comprehensive democratic change in the spring of 2003.

We are now presenting the seventh periodic report prepared by a specialized committee formed of representatives of Iraqi institutions active in this file. The report then was presented to a national committee with high-level representation mandated with writing of reports on human rights conventions, and eventually the final report was endorsed by the Iraqi Council of Ministers. Several meetings were also held with representatives of civil society and the national human rights institution on the subject.

Iraq is still in the process of studying accession to more human rights and other relevant conventions, including labor, asylum and immigration, nationality and others, as well as individual complaint systems established under human rights conventions or protocols thereto.

Iraq is also constantly studying the reservations it has made in the context of ratification or accession to human rights conventions. Article 9 of the Convention under Law No. 33 of 2011 on the granting of mother's nationality to her children.

Since the discussion of the previous report in 2014, Iraq has been studying the mechanisms for implementing the Committee's concluding observations and developing appropriate plans. A ministerial committee was formed to follow up the implementation of the recommendations that drew up plans and distributed responsibilities

In spite of the abolition of the Ministry of Human Rights and the Ministry of State for Women's Affairs, which were overseeing the work of the Committee, the work in the mechanisms of implementation of these observations has continued, whether through the (Department of Women's Empowerment) in the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers or through the competent ministries and the (Higher Committee for the Advancement of Women). The responsibility of writing the National Reports to the Treaty Bodies and follow-up on the implementation of obligations has become under the competence of the Ministry of Justice, which has founded the ( Department of Human Rights) to undertake this task, and coordinate with the relevant ministries through specialized subcommittees of each treaty, and with a high-level national committee to approve those reports and submit them to the Council of Ministers.

That department also follows up the observations and recommendations of civil society, and present the national report before your Committee, and the report of the official response to the list of issues and makes extensive clarifications on what has been done on the ground to implement the concluding observations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Iraq is studying and reviewing the legislative system on a continuous basis to ensure compliance with international human rights standards and the Supreme Judicial Council developed drafts of proposed amendments to the Penal Code and other laws to ensure the effective implementation of international conventions, and the State Council is currently considering those proposals

It is appropriate to indicate to you here, the legislative efforts on the draft law on protection from domestic violence, which consulted the views of civil society, legal experts, and active actors in the society, and the efforts of H.E. the President of the Republic to reach the final version currently being presented to the House of Representatives The House of Representatives is also considering other legislative packages, including:

- A draft law amending the social welfare law to ensure a shelter for victims of violence.

- The Survivor Yezidi women Bill, under which health care, economic empowerment, inclusion and care will be provided.

- Draft health insurance law.

- Accession to the remaining ILO conventions.

The State Council is currently studying draft laws on harmonizing legislation with human rights standards, including (Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Law, Evidence Law, Personal Status Law, Anti-Terrorism Law, Juvenile Welfare Law, Pleadings Law, Civil Law, prepared by a specialized committee in the Supreme Judiciary. The proposals included amending some articles referred to by civil society organizations in their reports. The Committee submitted draft bills on:

- Delete paragraph (1) of article (41) of the Penal Code, which granted the husband the right to discipline the wife and according to the text of the draft modern penal code to prevent the husband from the right to discipline.

- Amendment of Article 398 of the Penal Code, which considered that the entering of the accused of committing the crime of rape into a valid marriage with its victim as a reason to stop the prosecution, investigation and other procedures or to stop the execution of the sentence if it was issued at the time.

- Civil society organizations made important observations on the proposed amendments to certain paragraphs of Iraqi laws relating to custody, honor motive, polygamy, forced marriage, early marriage, complaint mechanisms in cases of personal right, discrimination against women in marriage, dowry, etc, and the possibility of resorting to justice for crimes committed by the terrorist organization of ISIS. The draft law against domestic violence has addressed many of these observations.

The issues related to guardianship, stewardship and custody are of great importance as they touch on the essence of equality between men and women and the enhancement of the role of women. As the Iraqi law was placed in the light of the provisions of Islamic law and the Federal Court enshrined the constitutionality of the personal status law in its 2019 decision.

The judiciary has also devoted important applications in the area of preference of the mother in the matter of guardianship over others in accordance with the provisions of the law on the care of minors, and custody in accordance with the law of personal status, without any conflict between the civil law and other laws.

Within the framework of strengthening the institutions concerned with human rights in general and the rights of women in particular, the High Commission for Human Rights has taken important steps to enhance the status of women in terms of quantity and quality. The Iraqi government is working to create a National Council for Iraqi women proposed by the President of the Republic in light of the efforts made by the organisations concerned with women rights. There are also proposals for the creation of a Ministry foor Women and Social Development.The efforts of civil society, human rights and women's rights activists are continuing to defend the legal gains that Iraqi women have received, and to make proposals for reforming the legal situations that contradicts international human rights standards, the latest of which was the expanded conference held recently in Baghdad in partnership with UN Women. The conference presented Important recommendations to the Iraqi government in preventing impunity in crimes against women and human rights activists, enhancing women's participation in constitutional amendment committees, and advocating for the allocation of one of the sovereign positions to women, like (Vice President for Women Affairs), and the approval of the draft anti-domestic violence law. The Iraqi Women's Empowerment Department is also working to strengthen the role of women in various areas of life, this department is part of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers.

Over the past years, Iraq has adopted several policies for the advancement policy of women affairs, such as:

-National Strategy to combat violence against woman

- Poverty Reduction Strategy.

- National plan for the implementation of the universal periodic review recommendations.

- National Strategy for Education 2012-2022.

- National strategy for reproductive health and maternal, legal guardian, child and adolescent health 2018-2020.

These policies and strategies have contributed to, and continue; to enhance the status of women in society towards the full enjoyment of their rights, and enable them to exercise their important role in public and political life.

Iraq is working to strengthen the status of rural women, and laying the appropriate legal foundations for their protection during their work within family projects, and to assure full enjoyment of their rights to education, health, participation and other rights and by taking in consideration her yields as part of gross national product.

Also the Iraqi Council of Ministers approved in 2018 to establish (Development Social Fund), an independent board funded by The World Bank, the Government, and other donors, with the first installment of US $ 300 million dollars, , as among its objective to target the local communities and rural areas.

As well, The Women's Fund for Rural Women was established within a number of agricultural funds approved for lending to rural women according to a survey previously prepared by the Higher Committee for the Advancement of Rural Women. The Fund started its work in 2011 and the Agricultural Bank is providing loans to support these categories.

Women contribute to the Coexistence and Community Peace Committee in the Office of Implementation of the National Reconciliation Recommendations in the Prime Minister's Office with the aim of promoting women's participation in the process of restoring security and stability to areas affected by terrorist acts and ensuring women's participation in security and peace through dialogue, reconciliation and negotiation committees, The Women's Office of the National Reconciliation Commission is working to raise the status and participation of women in the national reconciliation process.

Government institutions are actively working with civil society to implement Security Council Resolution 1325 and to participate in the implementation of paragraphs of the National Plan for Resolution 1325 prepared by the Secretariat of the National Team for the above resolution in the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, in which all such activities implemented in accordance with this resolution have contributed significantly to enhancing the role of women in The peacemaking process in Iraq. Iraq is currently working in cooperation with the United Nations to develop the logical framework of the action plan for the period 2019-2023 with the participation of all concerned parties in the federal government and the Kurdistan Regional Government and civil society organizations, by the adoption of three pillars are: participation, protection and prevention.

Gender equality is a key priority in the National Plan 2018-2022 for the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, with the aim of empowering women and girls to achieve their aspirations, eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against them, including harmful practices, This plan aims to ensure opportunities for women in the area of gender and reproductive health, with regard to their reproductive rights, recognition of their work, access to productive resources and equal enjoyment of their rights as men in public, political and economic life.The Iraqi government program 2018-2022 make reference to human rights files , eradication of poverty and promote participation.

The Supreme Judicial Council took a number of steps to ensure that sexual violence-related crimes were addressed, as soon as the areas under the control of the terrorist organization were liberated, including the city of Sinjar, the Nineveh Plain and Tal Afar areas, the Council reopened all courts in these areas, including investigative courts where Investigating judges have started to take legal procedures, and these procedures are continuing in light of the development of judicial procedures and the trial of the accused.

The Supreme Judicial Council is also dedicated to the rights of women in judicial decisions, including the issue of interviewing, where family affairs judges were obliged to choose a suitable place to look into the issues when the plaintiffs did not agree on a place instead of courts and enforcement departments, increasing interviewing time, accompanying, and increasing the role of civil society.

The process of democratic building in Iraq after the spring of 2003 was characterized by the active participation of women in the parliamentary and local elections and the Kurdistan region elections, and the electoral quota allocated to women contributed to enhancing women's opportunity in the transitional period until women became leaders of political blocs and political figure active in parliament and outside and influential in building policies and decision-making. Women also have a significant influence in local governments in Iraq and the Parliament and the Kurdistan Regional Government, and this enabled women to transfer the suffering of women to decision-making centers to develop the most effective solutions. Women also actively contribute to public life in career centers in public and private institutions.

Ladies and Gentlemen: -

The internal displacement crisis has been considered the most difficult test for the government efforts to protect and promote respect for human rights in general, and the rights of women in particular. The displacement crisis has been accompanied by an increase in terrorist threats, killings, rape, enslavement, and others. The situation of women at that time was at its worst. Therefore, the Iraqi government has put all its human and material efforts to protect the rights of internally displaced persons and ensure the provision of human resources. Efforts to reduce the incidence of violence against displaced women and sexual violence during the period of displacement also have contributed to the promotion of the right of women in displacement camps to access health care in general and care for pregnant women and infants. Iraq also sought to ensure other rights for girls, including the right to education; such measures have contributed to the provision of schools adapted to the special conditions of the displaced.

On 23 September 2016, Iraq signed a joint statement with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Plans have been made to activate the provisions of this statement, and Iraq is cooperating seriously and transparently with the special rapporteurs and treaty bodies in the areas of information, reports and questionnaires, which require information on applications in Iraq in the legislative and procedural fields.

Ladies and Gentlemen: -

The report before your committee was prepared under circumstances in which all information may not be available. Iraq, therefore, sought to supplement the information through the report of the response to the list of issues, and information that the delegation will provide during the interactive dialogue.

The Ministry of Justice in the Government of the Republic of Iraq is working to benefit from the accumulated experience of women leaders among its staff. Throughout the life of this ministry, women have had an active role and today there are five women in the position of General Director, two of whom are members of this delegation. The delegation, which is predominantly female, represents various government institutions and the Regional Government of Kurdistan concerned with dealing with the subject of the Convention.

**The delegation consist of the following dignitaries:-**

- H.E The Iraqi permanent representative at UN office in Geneva and the team of the Mission

- Mrs . Khanum Lateef Raheem/ President counselor for woman’s affairs

- Mr. Kamil Ameen Hashim /Director-General of Official Newspaper /Supervisor on Human Rights Dept./**Ministry of Justice**

- Ms. Shatha Abd Al Mahlik Khudher /Director- General of Judicial Relations/**Ministry of Justice**

- Ms. Muna Matti Beythoun/ Director –General of Judicial Planning/ **Ministry of Justice**

- Dr. Dindar Zebari/ Coordinator of the international recommendation in KRG/ Prime Minister office

- Dr. Bushra Hussein Zoinei/ member of the higher committee for woman advancement /Baghdad Morality/ Secretary –General office-

- Mr. Ahmed Abdul Karim Al Maeeni / counselor/**State’s Council**

- Mr. Nidham Ali Kaka / Director of administrative Dept. / Ministry of Migration and Displacement.

- Dr. Mohammed Turki Abbass / Director of Human Rights Dept./ **Ministry of Justice**

- Mr. Ali Abbas Khalaf / Director **/ Prime Minister Office** / Committee of peace and coexistence

- Mrs. Muna Ibrahim Assal / Director of Reports- Writing Dept./ **Ministry of Justice**

- Ms .Hiba Mahmoud Mubarak/Reports-Writing Dept./staff working on the File / **Ministry of Justice**

- Mr.Thaer Abd Ali Alwan / Media Dept. Director / **Ministry of Justice**

- Mr. Sami Ameen Othman/ Person in charge of Minister’s safeguard/ **Ministry of Justice**

- Mr.Ahmed Jamal Mohammed / Translator / **Ministry of Justice**

- Mrs. Hiam Rasheed Khudiyiar / Human Rights Dept. Director / Ministry of labor and social affairs

- Dr. Marwa Mahdi Hadi / General Health Dept. / Ministry of health

- Mrs. Taghreed Ismeal Khaleel /Human Rights Dept. Director/Ministry of interior

- Ms. Mashael Matti Aziz/ expert / Christians endowment

- Ms . Osamah Hadi Khamias / senior researcher / Ministry of education

- Dr. Huda Jawad Abdulridha/ legal counselor /Legal Dept. / General Secretariat of the council of Ministers .

- Ms. Zaytoun Fraj Abdulallah/ first secretary / human rights dept. / ministry of foreign affairs

- Mrs.Kurdo Omar Abdulallah/ Director of anti-violence on woman /Ministry of interior

- Ms. Tarza Faiq Ahmed /researcher /Gender section responsible /Ministry of Education/KRG

- Ms. Rawa’a Ahmed Mohammed Salih / responsible for periodic reports /KRG