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Introduction:

Mr. President, Mr. Secretary General, fellow delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

His Excellency, President Massoud Barzani sends his best regards and greetings to SI members and participants.

Thank you for the invitation to attend the Socialist International Council Meeting and the opportunity to discuss “Strengthening the Political and Humanitarian Responses to Current International Crisis.” As you might be aware, today, we have several international challenges. First, the threat of ISIS to international peace and stability. Second, a humanitarian crisis, involving refugees and IDPs from the disorder in the MENA region.

I am honored to come before you to enhance your knowledge about some of the challenges facing the Kurdistan region as well as the greater Middle East.

Part 1: Background of the crisis and achievements

Ladies and gentlemen, the situation in the Kurdistan region, in Iraq and in Syria is critical and of high priority. Currently, the Kurdish Forces, known as the Peshmerga, are battling the deadliest known terrorist organization on behalf of the free world. They are on the battlefield, fighting ISIS as we speak, with support from the anti-ISIS Coalition Forces.

At this point, I would like to provide you with an update on the achievements in this war against terror.

Kurdistan as a region plays a crucial role in facing global threat which is manifested in ISIS.

Our Peshmerga with the help of the anti-ISIS Coalition Forces have achieved great victory. Thus far, more than 27,500 square kilometers have been liberated. In addition, our Peshmerga forces are maintaining a battlefield of 1,000 kilometers with ISIS, with limited supplies. According to credible sources, 24,000 ISIS terrorists have been killed and more than half were killed in direct fighting with our Peshmerga. Peshmerga have been successful in breaking the myth of ISIS, it was our forces who proved that ISIS is not an invincible force.

We have suffered greatly with a war which was imposed upon us. Thus far, 1,475 Peshmerga have been martyred in this war against ISIS, and more than 8,600 other are wounded. Out of the 1,475 Peshmerga martyred; more than 400 were commanders and veterans Peshmerga.

In addition to this great sacrifice, the Kurdistan region is home to 1.8 million refugees and IDPs including Christians, Ezidi Kurds, and Arabs. Over the past two years, the Kurdistan region has had an increase of 31% in its population. This increase is from people seeking safety and security due to the rise of ISIS in the area and the failed policies in Iraq.

In Iraq, out of the 350,000 Christians, most have relocated to Kurdistan and to be exact, we, as the Kurdistan region are now hosting 335,000 Christian people.

The people of Kurdistan and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) remain committed to providing shelter to refugees and IDPs. However, this humanitarian crisis is an international responsibility and requires an immediate international response.

We kindly ask for your support to attend to these refugees and IDPs, and to support our beloved Peshmerga, who are in the frontline with ISIS as we speak.

Battling ISIS, providing refuge to people seeking safety (1.8m), while facing an economic crisis is not easy.

These are not local problems alone, we need partners to help find solutions.

Part 2: Effective strategy to tackle international issues

Ladies and gentlemen, instead of Baghdad being a supportive, accountable, and federal capital to support the Kurdistan region— as it should do— it has become a source of problems for the Kurdistan region. Ladies and gentlemen, I am sure that you are aware that the Kurdistan region's budget has been cut since February 2014 and Baghdad has not provided enough support to our Peshmerga in this fight against ISIS.

Iraq is a failed state and we must begin to recognize this and also to recognize that ISIS is the symptom of the illness in the region. ISIS will be defeated but the threat will not be eliminated.

Lack of inclusiveness, violating constitution, no control over borders, lack of a national army, sectarian conflict, role of militias, lack of federal institutions, lack of services, high unemployment, 3 million IDPs — are all indicators of a failing state, Iraq.

Failed policies in Iraq and the surrounding area has created a more permissive environment for radicalization. Failed system in the region, poorly governed or ungoverned spaces, exclusive government rather than inclusive have all contributed to the rise of ISIS.

To deal with this big threat to international security, we must start to discuss the symptoms and then move to a practical solution.

Any solution for this problem must be representative of the people of the region. The will of the people must be kept in mind.

In order to deal with this problem, we must address the root causes of the problem. Hence, there needs to be New Regional Order based on facts, realities and the wishes of the people. There needs to be a New Security Order. There needs to be a New Social Contract. Addressing the Kurdish issue peacefully through democracy and dialogue is key for new order in the Middle East.

Kurdistan has been a key player and stable region since the establishment of the KRG in 1992. We are adding to the working, functioning governments in the mid of chaos.

A recent report is evidence to this. The Economist Intelligence Unit conducted an independent assessment on peace and security, political environment, business environment and quality of life in the Kurdistan region in 2013. Some of the ranking are the following.

- On the Global Peace Index, the Kurdistan region is ranked as 115th out of 163 countries and is considered to be more peaceful than Turkey and Iran. Iraq is ranked as 160 out of 163 countries, ahead of Syria, Afghanistan and South Sudan.
- On the Security and Stability Index, the Kurdistan region is ranked 83rd out of 181 countries, on a par with China and Brazil. In contrast, Iraq is ranked as 177th and is among the most unstable and unsecure countries in the world.
- On the Political Environment Index, the Kurdistan Region ranked as 55th out of 83 countries, a par with those of Thailand, India, and Turkey. Iraq ranked as 83rd.
- On the Business Environment Index, the Kurdistan region ranked as 57th out of 83 countries, ahead of Indonesia and Japan. Iraq ranked as 72nd.
- On the Human Development Index, the Kurdistan region ranked much higher than the rest of Iraq. Kurdistan Region rank was 76th out of 188 countries. Iraq ranked as 97th.

Ladies and gentlemen, these are some of the findings of the report which are astonishing because if given the chance to prosper, Kurdistan would be ahead of many other countries on many other categories.

Part 3: Future

The first step in defeating ISIS requires a comprehensive military strategy while the second step requires an international, collective strategy, which aims at destroying their radical ideology. This is a War of Ideology and Good Governance. Empowering and encouraging unity among different

people of different communities through awareness and education can greatly help us with the second step.

Let's remember the only effective force fighting ISIS have been Peshmerga forces. Therefore, they need to be fully supported to completely defeat ISIS.

In the coming months, we will see details of the Mosul operation and interesting developments in the Kurdistan region.

The people of the Iraqi Kurdistan do not want to be part of a failed state any more.

Borders of the Middle East are changing; increasing numbers of weak, failing and failed states are contributing to the environment in which radicalism can find recruits.

Borders of the current Middle East do not reflect the realities of the people and their will. Kurdistan does not want to be part of a failed state like Iraq. We need to start dialogue and through peaceful and mutual understanding work towards a new formula.

We, as the Kurdistan region, want to have a peaceful process through democratic means, in other words to carry out a Referendum under the supervision of international organizations such as your fine organization, SI and others like UN, EU and etc.

We need your support when we carry out the Referendum.

Our aim is not fragmentation. It is finding a new formula for co-existing, collaboration and our self-determination.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Kurdistan region has been a great source of stability to the Middle East as well as the rest of the world, and will remain an open, tolerant, and plural region. It will be the anchor of more stability the Middle East.

Thank you very much.