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June 02, 2004

Briefing By U.N. Special Envoy for Iraq

Wednesday, June 2, 2004

Briefing By U.N. Special Envoy for Iraq

MR. BRAHIMI: Good morning, everyone. I'm sure you have noticed that (name inaudible) -- is not here. Unfortunately, he had to leave ahead of us. I will say a few introductory remarks in Arabic, then in English, and then I'll be happy to take your questions.

(English translation begins in progress) -- and we have not commented on lots of what has been said and issued from some media organizations, whether they are local Iraqi or foreign organizations. By this time, which our mission has been accomplished, the mission that we have come here to accomplish, I will try to answer some of your questions. And please allow me to repeat again that we have come to this mission based on a dual request from the IGC and from the CPA. And the request was for the U.N. to contribute first and -- assessing whether or not an election before the 30th of June would be possible, and also if this election were not possible, what would be the substitution.

Our visits and work has concentrated on answering the first question, and we have reached an assessment that unfortunately these elections were not possible before 30th of June. And I would like to emphasize that this result which we reached did not come randomly or based on our personal assessments, but it was the result of long negotiations and discussions, and also consulting some of the experts in this field. Some of them were Iraqis, and they said that these elections were not possible. So we have reached a joint decision with all of these sides that a free and honest election was not possible during this period.

The second subject is these elections may be possible, but they need a long period of preparation, so we hope that the interim government will help to prepare for these elections. And I'm sure you have heard that by cooperating with the delegation of the U.N., we have reached a selection of members for the independent body that will supervise the elections, the general elections. And Mrs. Perelli will talk to you about her work here and about the future of the U.N. participation in the elections here in Iraq.

In our second and third visits, we concentrated on constructing the government in its general or broad

lines of the government in order to hand over sovereignty to Iraq. As you know, this has been accomplished by cooperating with the two sides that requested our assistance, which are the IGC and the CPA, and also through widespread consultations with thousands of people in Baghdad essentially and also in visits to Mosul, Basra and Erbil. And you also know that during our first visit we visited Najaf, and we met with the Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. So this process -- all of this process has come to an end yesterday by the declaration or announcing the interim government. And we shall try to answer questions about the process which led to this result.

So this process is a political process which is not restricted to forming the government, although it is a very basic and important stage of the process. But the other process is the process of general elections, which is the utmost important stage here in order to rebuild Iraq. So we will try to create the suitable environment for the elections.

The other object which is a complimentary subject to the forming of this government is the agreeing upon holding a wide national meeting during the first week of July. So in order to accomplish this we have formed a supreme body in order to organize this meeting or this conference, and the benefits of this conference are very wide and large. And no matter what efforts are presented, 30 ministerial positions cannot by any way represent all the spectrums of the Iraqi society. But I believe that this government is the best that we can reach right now, and it includes within it -- who represent many trends in the Iraq society. And I also believe that they respond to a large extent, not 100 percent, but to a large extent, to what we said that we have heard from the Iraqi people, that the Iraqis want a government composed from experienced and honest people that are not related in a narrow meaning to their political parties.

But this government does not only include people who represent these needs, but also there are people who represent some political parties; some of them are members of the former Iraqi Governing Council, which was dissolved yesterday. And the reason is that during our previous visits from a number of people who said that be careful because this (common ?) government has large duties and has large tasks to perform, so it should have a wide range of political support from the Iraqis and this cannot be done without the Iraqi political parties being represented within the government.

So from here, you see that some faces are familiar from the Iraqi Governing Council, and there are some people who have a political profile. But the basic needs, which are the experience and honesty, are available in these members. And as you have seen, I believe that in the previous government, some cities were absolutely not represented, such as Mosul and other cities. We have tried to avoid this in this government.

So shall this satisfy all the Iraqis? Of course not. But we believe that a lot of Iraqis, if not all of them, shall find within this government members who not necessarily represent them but are close to them.

What are the deficiencies in this government? The body that shall organize the conference at the beginning of June shall try to fix or avoid these deficiencies.

Because all the political spectrum in Iraq should find its representation in this government, was this because this government should represent all the Iraqis and all social and political and other sectors in the Iraq coalition should feel that they are part of this political process?

And I'm sure that you know that this body shall be chaired by Mr. Farad Massoum (sp), and he is one of the close friend of Mr. Jalal Talabani. And I wish that Mr. Jalal Talabani will chair this body by himself, but we wish that he will try to nominate himself for this position, and at that time, he might be selected.

These are our observations that I wish to provide to you. Now, if you allow me, I will present these observations in English. It is not a literal translation, but it gives the basic idea.

(In English.) Now that the interim government has been introduced to the public -- (off mike) -- to take any

questions that you might have about the process and -- (off mike).

I am an old-fashioned diplomat who does not engage in debate -- (off mike). That is why I am generally reluctant to confirm or deny things that are said or written in the press about the U.N. role. (Off mike) -- I hope you will allow me to make -- (off mike). As you know -- (off mike) -- prime minister -- (off mike) -- with the Governing Council and the Coalition Authority. The bodies -- (off mike) -- which had requested assistance -- (off mike) -- as well as -- (off mike). Now that the government's composition has been announced, it is ultimately up to the Iraqi people to judge for themselves whether this is good government and how good it is. I believe that they will make up their minds on that on the basis of what the government does and says during the critical few months ahead.

I would appeal to the Iraqi people, as I said yesterday, to give this government a chance. There is a lot of talent in the Cabinet. A number of the ministers who have established -- a number of the ministers who have established very good reputations over the past months have stayed on. Many others have strong track records from past service.

While this government has a very strong cadre of technocrats, a word which you will note I am using for the first time, it also includes a strong political character, particularly in the leadership positions. This is a reflection of what many Iraqis told us during these last few weeks of discussions. Not only those in the political parties themselves, but also many independent and respected figures stressed that the magnitude of the challenges ahead will require that there be some continuity, and more importantly strong support of the Iraqi public for the government. The best way to build that support is to have a government which is as inclusive as possible, and inclusion means also political actors.

I believe that many if not all the people in Iraq, in their full diversity and variety, will recognize themselves in at least a few of the names in the list of the Cabinet. At the same time, one cannot ignore the fact that many people around the country will also be critical of the composition of the government. Some will consider that this or that choice as controversial at the very least. But it is impossible for an exercise of this sort to be significantly different. The overall makeup is reflective of a sometimes extremely difficult negotiation process, which had -- with hard but realistic compromises having to be made.

Of course, in a country emerging from the traumatic experiences that Iraq has endured not only during and since last year's war, but also through the previous two wars, a decade of severe sanctions and 35 years of an especially harsh and brutal regime, one expects discussions on the composition of any government to spark intense debate and controversy. Likewise, nobody would expect that the rich diversity of Iraq could be fully represented to the satisfaction of every ethnic group, every province, every religious group, and every one of the several hundred political parties that are said to exist. But if people stop to reflect on today's realities, I very much hope that they will see that even though this government may not reflect everything they had hoped for, it was the best outcome that was possible at this time.

I also hope that they will recognize that it is a government that can effectively lead this great country during this critical seven- month period. As I said before, there is a great deal of talent in this Cabinet. All of this interim government's talent will need to be summoned to ensure that suitable conditions can exist for credible, free and fair elections to take place no later than January 2005. None of us should forget that ultimately, it is only an elected government that can legitimately claim to represent the people of Iraq. Meanwhile, the members of this government know and should not forget that they have not been elected, and this places an extremely heavy burden on them. This government will, therefore, have its work cut out for it. It will not be easy for them to prove the skeptics wrong, but I know they will try their very best, and I join Iraqis around the country in sincere hopes and prayers for their success.

The people of Iraq will judge them on how they address the most immediate concerns, starting with security. To be sure, Iraq requires an effective police force and a well-trained and professional army. The sooner they are stood up and are able to protect their fellow citizens from harm's way, the better. Of course, the police

and military forces will not be able to deliver security on their own. As I have said often, insecurity cannot be solved through military means alone.

What is behind the present insecurity in the country? And what will it take to address it? These are probably among the most important questions that the Iraqis must now begin to debate amongst themselves. Many wise and respected Iraqis with whom we met of all persuasions told us in no uncertain terms that a political solution, one that commands genuine national consensus, is desperately needed to bring peace and stability to this land.

It is these kinds of questions and debates that must take place in the national conference that will bring together as representative and diverse a group of Iraqis as humanly possible. This conference should be attended by well over a thousand of Iraq's most respected and accomplished figures. In this regard, I am pleased to note that the annex of the TAL includes a provision for the holding of that conference in July.

To make the necessary arrangements for the holding of that conference, a preparatory commission is being formed with the participation of those members of the Governing Council who will not serve in the government and a fairly large number of representatives from across the political, regional and social landscape of Iraq.

Each of the 18 provinces will be asked to select from among their ranks respected figures to represent them on the committee. So too will professional associations and the academic community. And independent notable figures from around the country will also be invited to join. And this will make something like 60 members, men and women, in total.

The preparatory commission will be chaired by Dr. Fouad Massoum, and I very much hope that my friend Jalal Talabani will consider chairing the conference itself and, later on, the Interim National Council.

We are confident that in this conference and in the Interim National Council to which it will give birth, the variety of Iraqi society will be even more representative than was the case in the interim government. Men and women who have been active participants in the political process of this past year as well as those who have been very vocal critics of it will need to come together in this conference. I also think it will be particularly important that small ethnic groups be given an opportunity to express themselves side by side with their brothers and sisters in larger communities. There is a real opportunity for an open political discourse to finally take place in this country. The best way to honor this opportunity is to seek peaceful debate and disagreement rather than to shy away from disagreement because it is uncomfortable and inconvenient. This is the spirit of cooperation that the people of Iraq now expect from their representatives, including those who are in the interim government.

Thank you very much.

Q (Through interpreter.) Mr. Brahimi, the majority of the Iraqi people accept Mr. al-Yawar as president, but they ask whether he was selected by the political parties or by you. Are there any members of the IGC who opposed the selection of Mr. al-Yawar?

MR. BRAHIMI: (Through interpreter.) As for the post of president, it is no secret that there was a competition for this post from a wide range of people, but Mr. al-Yawar prevailed at the end and was selected as president. And actually there was a competition for all the posts in the government, but Dr. Mahmoud Othman was the member who leaked the story of the competition between Mr. Pachachi and Mr. al-Yawar.

What happened exactly was that wide consultations and negotiations, including members of the IGC and also personally with Mr. Ghazi al-Yawar -- they led to that Mr. Pachachi was the suitable person for this post, but because of the media taking on this subject and also some other problems, Mr. Pachachi relieved himself from this post and offered it to Mr. Ghazi al-Yawar who accepted it -- who is quite capable of fulfilling the requirements

of this post. And I'm sure that he will perform very well, and that he will be the president of all Iraqis, and that he will gain support from all the Iraqi people.

As for whether or not some members of the IGC were opposed to this selection, at the end there was an agreement reached that those members who did not agree upon this selection or did not gain any positions could regain other posts in the government.

Q (Through interpreter.) Al-Fariah (sp) TV.

MR. BRAHIMI: (Through interpreter.) Is it an Iraqi channel?

Q (Through interpreter.) Yes, sir, it is an Iraqi channel and it broadcasts within Iraq. After the handover of sovereignty on 30th of June, will the U.N. duties be restricted to the subject of the general elections or shall there be other duties, such as assisting the interim government? Thank you very much.

MR. BRAHIMI: (Through interpreter.) As you know, there are negotiations taking place right now at the U.N. concerning a new resolution. And as you know, Mr. Hoshyar Zebari, the Foreign Affairs minister, has reached New York to take part in these negotiations at the U.N. And I believe that within the subjects included in these negotiations are determining the duties of the U.N. after handing over sovereignty. There's no doubt that there will be a large duty for the U.N. and also for specialized agencies that will try to resume their job in Iraq in the best way possible, and will cooperate with the Iraqi government and with Iraqi people and other organizations.

As for the political side, this will be decided later on.

Q (Through interpreter.) Ashur (sp) TV. What are your preparations for the handover sovereignty, and what is the type of your assistance that will be provided for the Iraqis during the general elections?

MR. BRAHIMI: I have talked about the general elections in the first part of this conference, but now, after the independence committee that was supervised upon the general elections, this body will be absolutely independent, but in addition there will be other duties for the government and for the conference to be held within July. But the main role shall be for the independent body, but the U.N. will also monitor the process, and I believe that one of the members of this body shall be somebody appointed by the secretary-general of the U.N. He shall not have a voting right, but he shall be a member of this committee or this body, and he might be announced during the next two or three days.

Q Ambassador Brahimi, Rajiv Chandrasekaran from The Washington Post. In interviews with some reporters at the United Nations on Friday, you made reference to the fact that you felt that you were under a lot of pressure here, and I'm wondering if you can elaborate.

MR. BRAHIMI: Did I say that?

Q Yes. To that effect, yes.

MR. BRAHIMI: Oh.

Q If you could just elaborate on the constraints and the pressure you felt at doing this job, and particularly with the selection of the president and the prime minister. I know you -- many of your choices for the Cabinet were accepted by Dr. Alawi, but if you could just sort of address the issue of the prime minister and the Cabinet and how you feel your efforts to select candidates fared in that process.

MR. BRAHIMI: Sure. You know, this is -- you know, I don't know whether I said that I was under pressure, but even if I didn't said it it's actually true that I have been under a lot of pressure.

You know, it is a terrible responsibility to come to a country, even if you love that country, even if you know a little bit that country, and take such -- accept such responsibility. That alone is a source of terrible pressure.

The other thing is I think, you know, if you will forgive me, you in the press have had a field day, from considering that I was here forming the government single-handed to I don't know what kind of other speculations. But the fact is I have been invited by the CPA, which governs Iraq. The government of Iraq -- I sometimes say -- I'm sure he doesn't mind me saying that -- that Bremer is the dictator of Iraq. He has the money. He has the signature. Nothing happens without his agreement in this country. And he signed the letter to the secretary-general asking him, "Please, can you come and help?" So we've worked with Ambassador Bremer, with the government of the United States.

The second letter was received from the Governing Council, and we have worked with them.

The process -- I'll tell you a little -- you know, one or two factors. We've been around. We've been listening to people. We've been listening to suggestions, including from the Governing Council and the CPA. And we've heard lists of hundreds of people.

But 10 days or 15 days ago, we had to start moving towards the formation of a cabinet. So what we have suggested and what happened was the creation of a working group composed of CPA, ourselves and the Governing Council troika. The Governing Council troika is composed of the president of the last month, president of May -- so you know, as we were in May -- the president in April -- that is Massoud Barzani -- the president in May, Dr. Izzedine Salim, and the president for June, Ghazi Yawar. And you see, the happy thing is that we had, like this, one Arab Sunni, one Arab Shi'a and one Kurd.

Unfortunately, that wonderful man Izzedine Salim has been assassinated. So we have agreed with the presidency, and they have picked Majeed -- Hamid Majeed Mousa to replace him, because he was the chairman of the committee for the transfer of sovereignty.

That is the group where we started to narrow down the choices. We were very much the secretariat of that group, if you like. And that is how the names started to narrow down, including those of the prime minister and those of the president.

This is not exact science. And diplomacy is about -- in French they say "un flou artistique" (sp). I'm sure you understand what it means. It's artistic vagueness. I think there was an element of that.

We had to consult, of course, with the Governing Council and the CPA, but also with a lot of other people, including, I'm sure you are going to ask me, religious leaders. And the result is the government that you have now.

Follow-up?

Q Just to follow up, do you feel at all frustrated that your initial choices of prime minister and president did not come to be?

MR. BRAHIMI: No. No, no, no. Again, when you are engaged in a process like this, you don't go in with preconceived ideas and say if I don't get -- you know, like a spoiled brat -- if I don't get my choice, then I'll start stamping my feet. What you do is, as I said, work out compromises. Of course, if the compromises are totally unacceptable, you say so. But ultimately you know that you are in a very, very complicated situation and that what you end up with is a compromise, with strengths, weaknesses, and if the overall picture is positive, I think it's all right. And I think the overall picture is very much a positive one.

All right. Yes?

Q Dexter Filkins with The New York Times. I wonder if you could just -- to elaborate on Rajiv's question -- if you could be a little bit more specific about the role of the Americans in the negotiation. There's been some suggestions that they got the better of you in this --

MR. BRAHIMI: That they did what?

Q That they got the better of you in this negotiation. That for example, in the selection of the prime minister, Mr. Alawi wasn't your choice, or at least wasn't your first choice, and --

MR. BRAHIMI: I'm sorry. Please speak slowly and speak up. My English is not as good as yours.

Q I'm sorry. There's been suggestions that the Americans got the better of you in this negotiation, and that in the selection for the prime minister, for example, Mr. Alawi wasn't your choice, certainly wasn't your first choice, and that you agreed to that only reluctantly. So I wonder, I mean all of that suggests a larger role here for the Americans, and I'm just wondering if you could elaborate on that.

MR. BRAHIMI: I would not say who was my first choice and who was not my first choice. I think I can only repeat that the whole slate is a compromise between the main actors, the Governing Council, a lot of Iraqis and the Americans. If you are saying whether the Americans are playing a role in this process, you know, again, I would remind you that the Americans are governing this country, so their point of view certainly was taken into consideration. Whether Dr. Alawi was their choice, whether they maneuvered to get him, you know, in position where -- that, I think, you better ask them. The thing is there were a number of candidates and then the common denominator at the end was Dr. Alawi, and he's now the prime minister.

How about this side. Yes, please.

Q Claude, Le Monde. What do you say --

MR. BRAHIMI: Who are you?

Q That is Claude from Le Monde.

MR. BRAHIMI: Ah.

Q I could speak French to you; I know you speak it. But it's maybe better to try my English.

MR. BRAHIMI: Yeah, I think so, yes. If I lose my English, I speak to you in French.

Q Okay.

What do you say to all those, and there are a number of them -- diplomats, commentators -- who say that the whole competition between Mr. Yawar and Mr. Pachachi was staged, that the Americans staged it with your reluctant consent in order to give some kind of credibility to Mr. Yawar?

MR. BRAHIMI: Yeah, I would say I wish it was like that. I really wish it was like that. Unfortunately, it was a little bit more real. And -- yeah, I was going to say, you know, that suggestion is nonsense, but I think it's just as well to say I wish it were the reality.

Yeah.

Q Yeah, Rod Nordland from Newsweek. Who is going to decide which of the Governing Council members will go on to the Supreme Commission, and will it be all of them or some of them? And specifically, will Mr. Chalabi be among them?

MR. BRAHIMI: I think that if he wants to, he will be. I think the decision is that all those who are not in the government or in other positions can join. Whether Mr. Chalabi will choose to do so I don't know.

Yes, please. (Pauses.) Well, you move somewhere else.

In the meantime, anybody? Yeah, please. Please.

Q Tom Lasseter, Knight Ridder.

MR. BRAHIMI: Who?

Q Tom Lasseter. I work for Knight Ridder newspapers. I was wondering if you could speak to the continuing presence of American troops in Iraq after June 30, and also -- what you think about that, but also the dialogue that went on during this -- the discussions for the past few months, you know, if that subject came up -- I assume that it did -- and the different opinions expressed about it; just sort of the dynamic that's going to play in the future.

MR. BRAHIMI: No, this was not part of what I was here to do. But you may have noticed that I have said repeatedly, yeah, you know, very, very often in private and from time to time in public that this government, amongst the things that they need to urgently do, is go to the United Nations and be present when this resolution is being discussed. There is a lot in this discussion that is going to be of consequence for the -- you know, immediately after the 30th of June, and certainly the presence of foreign troops is one of them. Then I think there are a lot of discussions that need to take place directly between the troops that are here now -- the foreign troops that are here now -- and the government.

You know, there's a whole debate about, you know, sovereignty, total, limited and so on. Whatever your religion about that, there are practical problems that are going to arise. And from a legal point of view, the authority will be in the hands of the Iraqi government. How does that translate in what the troops do in the streets of Baghdad or in the streets of any city?

So there is need for a detailed discussion about what is going to happen, how these troops are going to behave, what they are going to do, who is -- what is the chain of responsibility, not -- chain of command is clear; that is a military thing -- but the chain of responsibility, and where does the political responsibility end. These are discussions that need to take place. I have been calling for those. I've been saying that we need this government to be in place sooner, rather than later, because these things have to start to be discussed.

Follow-up?

Q Yes, if I could follow, you before used the phrase, perhaps tongue in cheek, of "dictator."

MR. BRAHIMI: Yeah.

Q But if the --

MR. BRAHIMI: But he is leaving on the 30th, so --

Q Right.

MR. BRAHIMI: Yeah.

Q But -- I understand. But you know, if his, you know, troops remain, if the troops of his country remain, how does that speak to the issue of sovereignty?

MR. BRAHIMI: It doesn't speak to the issue of sovereignty. It speaks to the issue of authority. And this is what -- you know, what I say needs to be discussed.

Yes, please.

Q (Inaudible.)

MR. BRAHIMI: Yes, please.

Q Eddie Sanders from The L.A. Times. You talked about a lot of the compromises, resulting in a government with some strengths and weaknesses, and you talked in your opening statement about some of the strengths. Could you talk about some of the compromises that were difficult for you to make or some things that might worry you a little bit still in the new government, and also if -- what your personal plans are? Is this the end of the process for you? Do you have an interest in going further in participating?

MR. BRAHIMI: You know, compromises are always difficult. Some are more difficult than others. Let's not -- I'm starting to forget what happened.

I think -- why don't you look at the strength? You have a cabinet with, as I said, a lot of talent in it, a lot of technocrats, a lot of new faces, six women. It's not bad. I was asking about number of women in the Indian government. I am told there will be four or five. And I don't know how many women there is in American government. I don't think there are six. So it's not bad.

They'll have a very, very difficult task. In a lot of critical positions you have very capable people. I hope that they will give a good account of themselves. Oil, finance, education, higher education, health -- these are critical positions, and you have first-class people.

My personal involvement, I think -- as you know, I do not have an official position in Iraq. I have come here as special advisor to the secretary-general. I'm returning to that position. From that position, I will most probably continue to have an interest in what happens here, but I'm not going to be the special representative of the secretary-general if there is one.

Yes?

Q Stephanie Halasz from CNN. Sir, could you characterize for us to what degree the U.N. was involved in the selection process of the new government yesterday?

MR. BRAHIMI: (Chuckles.) I thought I have been saying that we were involved. I think we were involved, as I told you; we were involved with others. I think that -- yes, I think we were very heavily involved. Nevertheless, I always insist, in Iraq and elsewhere, that our role is always to help the people of the country, not to do things for them and certainly not to do things instead of them. I'm not sure whether this will satisfy you, but that will have to do.

Yes, please. You have a mike now?

Q I have a mike. Joe Floto, BBC. On a related point, how different would this interim government had

looked without your involvement, if you just left it to the CPA and to the Governing Council?

MR. BRAHIMI: You ask them. I don't know.

Q Well, what --

MR. BRAHIMI: I don't know. I really don't know. How do I know? Maybe they would have done much better.

Q What I'm trying to quantify is the difference that you think the United Nations has made to the process.

MR. BRAHIMI: I think, you know, in situations like this, the United Nations is a catalyst. The United Nations brings in a voice that is independent, that has no stake, that has no enemies, that has no -- you know, as they say in this region -- (inaudible) -- no plan of its own, no dark intentions. I think that colors the process. And I think it helps you be the catalyst that the U.N. is.

Yes, please.

Q (Through interpreter.) Mr. Ambassador, you've said that there shall be a grand conference to be held at July. Can you give us more details about this conference and its participants and its goals?

MR. BRAHIMI: I have tried to say that this conference shall be prepared for by a supreme body which includes members from the previous IGC and also representatives from all the Iraqi provinces, and from certain unions, and some of the prominent personalities in Iraq, and also by academics. This conference -- this body will try to select about 1,000 people from all the spectrums of the Iraqi society. And also all the political trends should be represented in this conference that have not taken any place in the government. And also, we would like if representatives of the trends and movements that opposed this political process, we wish that they could take place in this conference also, because the final goal is national unity. It is to create the suitable circumstances that will lead to restoring stability and security in Iraq.

Also, one of its other goals -- one of its main goals is to build a temporary council that will monitor the activities of the interim government. It is more than a consultant body, but it is less than a legislative body. For example, they shall have the right to question the ministers. They will have the right to appoint a minister or any other official in the government. They shall have the right to agree upon the budget of the year 2005. They will have the right to oppose and veto on some of the decisions taken by the government. But this shall require the majority of two-thirds of them. They will have a very important role in the general elections cause they will include people from all different regions of Iraq and they will have permanent relations with the sides supervising the general elections.

In addition to this, I believe that, and my experience in other regions confirms this, that holding this conference and providing the opportunity for people from all different sides to talk together shall have a very great benefit. I believe that the government will be able to benefit from this conference in order to provide us vision regarding dealing with the security situation in specific.

Q All right. Anne Bernard from the Boston Globe. Sir --

MR. BRAHIMI: Of what?

Q The Boston Globe newspaper, American newspaper. I was wondering if you could give us a little bit more chronological detail about who was proposed when.

MR. BRAHIMI: Who what?

Q A little more detail about the chronology of the selection process for prime minister and president. I heard that at least one American faction may have settled on Sheikh Ghazi.

MR. BRAHIMI: One American who?

Q That at least some of -- that the Americans may have supported Sheikh Ghazi before you settled on Dr. Pachachi, and that there was some back and forth on that issue. If you could go into it. And how did the disclosure -- how did the media leaks actually affect the outcome?

And secondly, I just wonder if you could talk about security a little bit. Your consultations were limited by security constraints: the problem of holding meetings in places that were accessible to the general public, the constraints on travel. And how will elections and the national conference succeed with those kinds of security problems, and do you have any specific ideas about what needs to be done to facilitate that?

MR. BRAHIMI: On your first question, look, I really don't know and frankly don't care which American said what. The important thing now is that Sheikh Ghazi Yawar is the president of Iraq. And I think that -- I very much hope that Iraqis will rally around him, and that foreigners will support him and encourage him in working with his colleagues to help Iraq.

On security, yes indeed our movements were very, very restricted because of security. Had it not been for the security, I would have visited probably another six or seven cities. I would have gone a little bit, you know, in the streets of Baghdad. I would have met old friends and I would have met people I would have liked to meet. I didn't do that. I had to meet people in very, very difficult situations and in very limited number of places.

In 24 hours in Irbil, because there is security there, I saw hundreds of people, hundreds of people, and had real discussions with probably 300 or 400. So you see how constraining.

Security, I think the only thing I have been saying, and would like to repeat, is that the government will have to answer this difficult question: Why is there insecurity? Why is there what is -- I think, you know, to use a neutral term -- there is this insurgency? I think it's a little bit too easy to call everybody a terrorist. I think if you find out that there are people who are not terrorists, who are respectable, genuine Iraqi patriots, you must find a way of talking to them.

Yes, please? Sorry. She -- (inaudible).

Q Farad Asasi (sp) with The Wall Street Journal. I'm wondering if you could elaborate a little about the consultation with the Grand Ayatollah Sistani. I know that you initially had talked to them about this process, but once you --

MR. BRAHIMI: About?

Q About the process. But once you narrowed down the names, did you have to talk to them about it? Did they have to approve it? And what is your understanding of what they think about the interim government?

MR. BRAHIMI: Let me say again that I enjoyed very, very much the meeting I had with Ayatollah Sistani himself. Let me also say that we have kept in touch with him throughout this process.

And we did not submit to him the list of the government. And I think he made it very clear that it was not his role to participate in selecting the government in one way or another. I think what he was worried about were a number of things that had to do with the overall image that the government would have. But we certainly did

not discuss -- we did not negotiate with him the names.

Yes, now.

Q Thank you. Ilana Ozernoy from U.S. News and World Report.

MR. BRAHIMI: U.S. --

Q U.S. News and World Report. You mentioned in your opening remarks that an electoral commission has been formed. Can you tell us who is on that commission? And as a follow-up, how feasible is it, in the absence of security, that they will be able to get the elections going in such a short time?

MR. BRAHIMI: I said that Carina Perelli will be speaking here in a day or two. So I think she will be in a much better position to answer all these questions, except the one on security. I think that, you know, if security does not improve significantly over the next few months, there will be a problem.

But I think, you know, what I have been told is that there is every reason to believe and hope that security will improve significantly by the end of the summer. If it does, the time is long enough.

You know, this is a country where there is infrastructure; where, you know, roads are -- you know, you can't travel a road because of security, but otherwise you can travel very easily. It's a country that has records. It's a country that has tradition of -- you know, of -- people have identity cards. They have birth certificates.

So it is doable. It is not ample time. It is very, very tight. But then very, very often in situations like this, all the timelines are extremely short.

Yes, please.

Q (Through interpreter.) Kul al-Iraq (sp) newspaper. Mr. Ambassador, a lot of the IGC members have talked about handing over sovereignty to Iraq, and they talked about very important ministries for the Iraqis, such as the Ministry of Electrical Power and other ministries.

MR. BRAHIMI: (Through interpreter.) So I tell you that the hand-over of sovereignty shall be complete by the 30th of June. And as I said before, the difference between the nature of the authorities that will be enjoyed by the interim Iraqi government. Among the subjects that I believe that the government shall insist on having is for it to be free in using its natural resources, including oil.

Q Mr. Brahimi, you said that some of the people in the resistance are -- (inaudible).

MR. BRAHIMI: I didn't say that exactly. But it's all right. Go ahead.

Q Something like that. So were there any sort of -- were they included, even if indirectly, in the negotiations for the government? Do you have news that they are okay with the government, or something like that?

MR. BRAHIMI: No, I don't think I spoke about the resistance. What I said is that there may be people out there who are opposed, perhaps even violently, to what is happening, and who are perhaps not terrorists. What I know is that there are people who are not, you know, using weapons, who are not supporting this process, and the impression I have is that if a dialogue -- if they were involved in a dialogue, it will not be impossible to bring them under the tent.

Q But were they involved?

MR. BRAHIMI: Yes, please, Le Monde.

Q Le Monde again, yeah, sorry. It's just a detail. The Governing Council was supposed to dissolve itself at the end of June. I'm not very clear why it dissolved itself straightaway, because the day before, I met a number of them and they said they would be staying until the 30th of June.

And just a detail; I also wanted to know whether among your consultation whether you met anybody close to Muqtada al-Sadr?

MR. BRAHIMI: On your first question, you know, we are not involved in this at all; we had absolutely no role in the dissolution or not dissolution. But what we understand is that, you know, once you have formed a government that is going to exercise responsibility, you didn't want to have two areas of responsibility. But as I told you, I have not been involved.

Yes, we've had some contacts with some people from around Muqtada al-Sadr. And definitely we think that that, you know, what they call Aftayar (ph), the trend, that political family, I mean attempts should be made to include them in the political process.

You asked already a question? No? Go ahead. Yeah.

Q One question. I just wanted to clarify the --

MR. BRAHIMI: You are?

Q Oh, sorry. Yeah, Ned Parker with AFP news agency. The body that will be choosing the attendees of the conference, how big will it be? And then the actual council itself, once it's chosen, what will be the number of it?

And then relating to that, you speak about these people who are against the current state of affairs in Iraq and that some of them you would like to see them in dialogue. Is it possible that they will be invited to the conference?

MR. BRAHIMI: I hope so, but I don't know. You know, I think the process is, at least as far as discussions have gone until now, is that there will be something like 60 members in these preparatory commission, and that this commission will have a working group of I don't know, probably 10 or something. And those people are going to discuss the criteria for the selection and the process on how to go about it, and of course they will have to have the approval of the 60.

The council that will emerge -- you know, again, discussions are still ongoing, but I think the numbers that one hears is around a hundred, 75, 120, that kind of range.

Yeah. Last question.

Q Bruno Roba (ph), ABC News. Just as a final conclusion, I just wondered -- on a personal level you've obviously been very involved in this whole process -- are you happy with how things have gone? You seem somewhat reticent in some respects. Some of your descriptions have been ambivalent I think.

MR. BRAHIMI: I think that really what is important is what the Iraqis feel. I have done the job. I have done it to the best of my ability. I have done it with a great deal of feeling of respect and affection for the people of Iraq. My contacts with this country and this people is not -- did not start three months ago. So, you know, in that sense, I'm a little bit personally involved. And the job, it's finished now. The important thing is what the Iraqis

feel.

I think very sincerely that there is something good there, that there is something to build on. That is why I've been saying that this government should be given a chance.

Well, ladies and gentlemen, thank you very, very much for your patience and for being here.

(Through interpreter.) Thank you very much for attending this press conference. And thank you for your support, and see you on other occasions. Thank you very much.

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