Cultural Salon on “Iraqi Youth: The Future is For Us”
Baghdad, 30 April 2011

Recommendations

On April 30, 2011, the Iraqi Youth Conference was held in Baghdad at Safia Souhil Literary & Cultural Salon, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), under the motto (the Future is For us), with participation of more than 500 youth from different Iraqi groups. These groups represented pluralism and diversity in the society. Number of representatives of communities, youth organizations, students of the schools and universities, sports clubs, Academy of Fine Arts, artists, musicians, playwrights, movie stars, media persons and association of disabled also participated in the Conference.

The conference was attended by various and different groups, including ministers, members of the House of Representatives, members of the higher Judicial Council, a representative of the Baghdad Operations Command, representatives of local authorities and the diplomatic corps in Iraq, United Nations agencies, a representative of the European Union and businessmen and representatives of civil society organizations. The Conference included dialogue sessions and discussions (on the problems, challenges and aspirations of the youth, young men and women).

The event organized by UNDP-Iraq in collaboration with Safia Souhil Literary & cultural Salon is to open a separate window for national dialogue and create spaces for discussions, consultation and communication among youth and the government, parliament, security agencies, private sector, investors, civil society, United Nations and its agencies and the international community. This initiative is a way to support and contribute to international activities to enhance dialogue and understand and empower young people. The initiative comes in the course of the International Year of Youth announced by the General Assembly of the United Nations in the World Youth Day from August 2010 to August 2011.

Upon the speeches of the President of the Republic, members of the House of Representatives, Ministers, the Baghdad Operations Command, the Higher Judicial Council, representatives of the Investment Authority and the private sector, and presentations of representatives of all youth, cultural, student and professional groups, and on based on the discussions and feedbacks of the participants, the conference declares the following recommendations:

1. Calling upon all national institutions, in cooperation with civil society, the Higher Judicial Council, the private sector and cultural, media and sports institutions, to accelerate developing a national strategy on youth to integrate the issues of the youth into the agenda of national development;
2. Calling upon the government, the parliament, the Iraqi national institutions and the private sector to take national actions to improve and develop the conditions of youth, to take measures aiming to strengthen national capacities of youth and to increase the quality and quantity of the available opportunities so that they can fully, actively and constructively participate with the community;

3. Inviting organizations of youth worldwide to support and sustain the Iraqi youth and openness towards communication and networking between the "Iraqi - Iraqi" and "Iraq - international" institutions, with the assistance of the United Nations and the international organizations and institutions experienced in this field. It is also necessary to expand the participation of the Iraqi youth in the global student unions and seek to engage them in all fields and all specializations;

4. Working on activating a national comprehensive strategy focusing on youth development, directing the plans, legislation and resources of the state to care for the young people, and making it a central issue in the Iraqi development plans. It is also necessary to open channels for the real participation of the youth in preparing these strategic plans, through the stages of preparation and giving attention to the various channels of participation of civil society organizations and youth;

5. Creating a safe environment for youth, which guarantees freedom of effective participation and constant building of their energies in the areas of their choice to attain security, provide all the rights and freedoms and achieve the human rights;

6. Working towards providing basic services to all civil society, and directing the national resources towards achieving a decent standard of living suitable for youth to constructively develop and guide the youthful energies;

7. Focusing on the intellectual, scientific and cultural compositions, through the educational institutions at all levels and institutions, which the young people need to develop their scientific, intellectual, cultural, sports and artistic capabilities. It is also necessary to direct young people to constructively express their issues and to communicate with institutions and organizations to achieve their basic needs and aspirations to actively participate in construction of Iraq, integrate into the society, coexist and accept each other and develop a spirit of participation and initiative;

8. Supporting youth without discrimination on the basis of sex, race, nationality, religion, sect, belongingness to party, gender, disability or age across the country with balanced attention to urban and rural areas alike;

9. Providing decent employment opportunities youth in the institutions and the private sector, as well as rehabilitating young people to work in jobs and make their free business through establishing private institutions;

10. Focusing on the civil society organizations working with youth and intensifying the cooperation with international organizations to develop
1. Supporting the community through training, transfer of expertise, programs and technical cooperation;

11. Raising interest in addressing the social deviations of youth, including crimes, delinquency and drug abuse and rehabilitating the youth to integrate into and participate the community;

12. Giving real role for youth in political decision-making by reducing the age of youth participating in the House of Representatives to be 25 years old;

13. Supporting young talents in various educational facilities and applying this on the ground through studies and research and taking the necessary measures;

14. Requiring the government to train the security forces on respecting the human rights and constitutionally guaranteed freedoms in general;

15. Combating illiteracy spreading among the youth, giving them a special attention to comply with the national campaign of combating illiteracy, and developing programs capable to end the technological illiteracy;

16. Developing the curriculum in line with the latest modernized developments away from sectarianism, chauvinism and intolerance, while maintaining our privacy in Iraq;

17. Providing climates suitable for holding dialogues with the competent authorities and constantly searching for common solutions to the problems of youth and communicating to continuously hold such meetings and expand the framework of meetings with Arab and international youth;

18. Keeping the universities and educational institutions away from sectarian, political and partisan conflicts;

19. Supporting, encouraging and strengthening the dialogue between religions, civilizations and cultures, and making reconciliation between the categories and components of our people, in particular the youth group;

20. Encouraging youth to work in the private sector and supporting them to ensure their equality with the public sector in the tax exemption and guarantees of retirement and other opportunities;

21. Creating appropriate conditions and proper environment to enable disabled young people to complete the undergraduate and graduate studies and to provide opportunities and possibilities that facilitate this;

22. Providing all medical supplies, instruments and tools that enable disabled youth to engage in normal life with the others;

23. Catalyzing mass media to highlight the potential, creativity and energies of the disabled youth.
The Conference succeeded in opening new doors of dialogue between youth and the H.E President of the Republic, number of ministers and parliamentary committees, the private sector, as well as Baghdad Operations Command through its representative, Maj. Gen. Qassim Atta. It also gave rise to many ideas for future communication with the decision-makers and youth, including:

1. H.E the President of the Republic invited a group of youth attending the meeting to present their ideas, perceptions and the problems they face to facilitate and receive the recommendations of the Conference issued by youth directly;

2. Minister of Labour and Social Affairs and Minister of Education, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research and the heads of the committee of Youth and Sports, the Committee of Labor and Social Affairs and the committee of economic and human rights, women, family and child rights in the Iraqi parliament invited to the establish youth events to communicate and interact with the demands of representatives of youth in parliament;

3. Maj. Gen. Qassim Atta, spokesman for Baghdad Operations Command invited to find mechanisms to coordinate with the youth to ensure the protection of youth events, including places of gatherings, demonstrations in which they participate through forming youth operations room to coordinate with the Baghdad Operations Command. He also promised to transfer all the demands of the youth to the general commander of the armed forces, the Prime Minister. It was also agreed with Safia Souhil Literary & cultural Salon and representatives of youth to convene a special session for dialogue between the youth and the Baghdad Operations Command on security challenges facing youth.

4. The private sector interacted with the concerns and aspirations of the youth from the Iraqi National Business Council through Mr. Ibrahim al-Baghdadi, the chairman of the board of directors, who expressed his readiness to provide job opportunities for university graduates with different specialties through the Council, in coordination with fellow businessmen and investors;

5. The organizers of the Conference will held the 2nd Iraqi Youth Conference in Erbil (Kurdistan - Iraq), in cooperation and coordination with Bakhtiar Amin (Ex-minister of Human Rights) from Organization of the International Alliance for Justice on 8-9 May 2011. They will work with young people to participate in preparing the human development report of Iraq, supported by UNDP. The report will address the issue of youth in Iraq and will be launched in 2012.

6. Mr. Paolo Lembo, country director of UNDP-Iraq, asserted his support to the youth through supporting strategies of creating employment opportunities by developing and strengthening the Iraqi private sector. He also confirmed that a greater attention would be given to disabled youth in Iraq to integrate them into society and find means to create employment opportunities for them.

7. A documentary film for 50 minutes on the Iraqi Youth Conference was recorded, in cooperation with Safia Souhil Literary & cultural Salon and UNDP. The film is to be presented during the events of International Year of the Youth and elsewhere.
8. Naji Shalgam, ambassador of the Arab League in Baghdad, promised to convey to the league of the Arab states the demands and recommendations of the Conference regarding activation of youth cooperation between Iraq and the Arab countries. He also promised to convey request of the Iraqi youth to activate the Youth Council of the Arab League, exchange of experiences, networking and communication between organizations of youth and youth in the Arab world.

Conference requests all competent and relevant authorities to follow up seriously the implementation of these resolutions in order to ensure the role of youth in building their country and its development.