

**Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary General,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen:**

It is a great privilege to be here today and represent Kurdistan Democratic Party in this important meeting of Socialist International. SI and its member parties have always stood with the People of Kurdistan and supported their struggle for achieving their national rights and to live in peace and prosperity. The resolution adopted by the SI Council meeting in November last year to support the Kurds in all the parts of the divided Kurdistan and in particular in Iraqi Kurdistan during a very difficult and challenging period, is a clear manifestation of the will and commitment of the SI to the well-being and a brighter future of the People of Kurdistan

Distinguished delegates

Kurdistan Region conducted a successful referendum on 25 September 2017 in which more than 76% of the People of Kurdistan (KR and the disputed areas) participated and 93% of the participants voted yes for independence. Although the referendum was within the jurisdictions of the international law, the UN Charter and it was within the framework of the federal constitution, the reaction from the federal government was harsh and cruel. Encouraged by the aggressive position of the neighbouring countries and lack of international support for the referendum, Baghdad rejected repeated calls by the Kurdistan Regional Government for peaceful talks and took extraordinary measures to punish the People of Kurdistan through economic and diplomatic blockades and military offensives. Initially, the two main airports and the land border crossings between the Region and Iran were closed. If it was not for Turkey, which did not do what Iran did, the impact of the blockades would be disastrous while Kurdistan Region was hosting nearly two million IDPs and Refugees. On October 16, the Iraqi forces including

the Iranian backed PMF or Hashd Al-Shaabi attacked Kirkuk and other disputed territories some of which had been under KRG control since 2003. In the context of the operations, thousands of Kurdish families fled their homes as PMF forces looted and burned homes of the Kurds in particular in the town of Tuz Khurmatu. Many civilians died in Kirkuk, Tuz Khurmatu and other occupied towns and villages. While the Peshmerga Forces withdrew from most of the disputed areas without a fight, they repelled two major offensives by Hashd Al shaabi near Erbil and Dohuk on October 20 and 26 respectively. These two hard fought battles coupled with political and diplomatic pressures from the international community stopped the Hashd from further attempts to impose military solutions on the ground. The measures taken by Baghdad after the referendum were all unconstitutional and were an outright denial of the role the people of Kurdistan, KRG and the Peshmerga forces played during the war against a common enemy ISIS and the assistance they provided to nearly two million refugees and IDPs while Kurdistan Region was going through a deep economic recession. Even during these difficult and challenging times PM Abadi refused to resume the budget transfers to Kurdistan Region which were stopped by Mr Nuri Al-Maliki government in 2014 and provide any credible financial and military assistance to the Peshmerga.

Since then both Baghdad and Erbil have succeeded in making some modest progress, in particular reopening the airports and the border crossings between KR and Iran. But political and partisan considerations during the months before the 12 May Election hampered a real breakthrough in the relations between the two sides.

In the May election, our party performed very well and won 26 seats despite our boycott of the election in the governorates of Kirkuk and Salahadeen as a protest against the military operations and the gross human rights violations in these governorates by Hashd Al Shaabi. KDP contested the elections as single party and came first on both

Regional and Federal level. As an entity, KDP won the fourth place after the Victory Coalition of PM Abadi. The repeated allegations about irregularities in the election led the Federal Parliament on June 6 to amend the election law which paved the way for a manual ballot recounting which KDP has supported from onset but appealed against Article 3 of the amended law which cancelled the results of overseas voting, the votes of IDPs in some governorates and the votes of Peshmerga forces. The Federal Supreme Court on June 21 rejected the amended article on the basis of its contradictions with the Federal constitution.

KDP has made initial contacts with most of the winning lists to discuss options for forming the new government and it has joined forces with PUK to form a united platform, hoping that the other political parties in Kurdistan Region will join to establish a common agenda for negotiations with the Federal lists in order to form the kind of government which will implement the constitution and makes the three pillars of partnership, consensus and balance, guiding principles to govern Iraq.

Honourable participants

KDP has always emphasized that the only way to preserve the unity of Iraq and to make Iraq a country for all is through the implementation of the Federal Constitution. This has been our position before and after the referendum and it will remain so in the future. Our President Masoud Barzani has on numerous occasions stated that in order to create an inclusive society in Iraq, the political, judiciary and governance systems must rest on three important pillars; Partnership, consensus and balance. The absence of these important pillars in the past 100 years has deprived the Kurds from their basic political, cultural and social rights. At the same time it has brought violence, wars and destruction to the country. The Federal Constitution embodies these principles and on this basis the people of Kurdistan overwhelmingly voted for it in 2005. Although the KRG

PM, his deputy and KDP and PUK representatives have met the Federal government officials including the PM on several occasions, there are still a number of urgent and important issues that require urgent attention. The federal government should do more to resolve the outstanding issues between Erbil and Baghdad in particular the issues of revenue sharing, hydrocarbon law, implementation of Article 140 of the constitution and assisting Peshmerga who played a leading role in defeating ISIS. The Federal Government has not provided assistance to the IDPs and Refugees whose numbers reached two million and still nearly 1,400,000 of them live in Kurdistan.

Distinguished delegates

The SI Council meeting in November last year adopted the following text as part of its resolution on Kurdistan. We fully supported the resolution at the time and we remain so today. The paragraph on Iraqi Kurdistan of the Resolution states:

(In Iraqi Kurdistan, the SI supports the implementation of the Iraqi constitution and the stopping of all kinds of violence against the Kurdish people. It condemns the military measures taken by the Iraqi government in the Kurdistan region, which is a violation of the Iraqi constitution. We call on the Iraqi government to implement a peaceful solution and share power with the Kurds, allowing them to govern in Iraq in accordance with the framework of the Iraqi constitution, and to start non-preconditional negotiations with the KRG. We also call on the Iraqi government to protect the rights of the Kurdish people in disputed areas and to withdraw the militias from there). We hope that the council will adopt a similar resolution in its current meeting.

Last but not least, the November Council meeting in its aforementioned resolution supported the reactivation of the SI

Committee on the Kurdish Question and holding a meeting in the Kurdistan region.

KDP supports this move and is ready to provide all the necessary support to host the meeting and make the gathering a success.

Thank you.

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