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Security Council voices full backing for work of UN arms inspectors in Iraq



Amb. Jean-Marc de La Sablière

9 January – After hearing a briefing from the chief United Nations weapons inspectors on the international probe into evidence of Iraq’s weapons programme, Security Council members today voiced their full support for the work of the arms

experts.

“They listened with utmost attention and interest to the update of the assessment by Dr. [Hans] Blix and Dr. [Mohamed] ElBaradei had made of the Iraqi declaration and to their report on the progress of inspection activities in Iraq since they resumed on November 27, 2002,” the current President of the 15-nation body, Ambassador Jean-Marc de La Sablière of France, [said](#) in a [statement](#) to the press, referring to the Executive Chairman of the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) and the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Council members also "reiterated their full support for the work and action of Dr. Blix and Dr. ElBaradei and to the continuation of inspection activities of [UNMOVIC](#) and IAEA pursuant to resolution 1441 in order to achieve the

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disarmament of Iraq," Ambassador de La Sablière added.

Speaking afterwards in his national capacity, Ambassador de La Sablière said that France reiterated its full support to UNMOVIC and the [IAEA](#) in the fulfilment of their mandate, "with the view to achieve and verify the disarmament of Iraq through peaceful means, which is our common objective."

"It implies that all relevant information related to Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programme be made available to UNMOVIC and IAEA, so as to ensure the full efficiency of the inspections, and to enable the Council to assess the facts," Ambassador de La Sablière said. "It implies also, and above all, that Iraq comply fully in the implementation of resolution 1441, especially through an active cooperation with the inspectors. Iraq must in particular provide UNMOVIC and IAEA with additional information to answer the unresolved questions and lift uncertainty."

Ambassador Sergey Lavrov of the Russian Federation [said](#) the work of the UN inspectors was still in the early stages but that Mr. Blix and Mr. ElBaradei were encouraged with the access they had received to Iraqi facilities. "I do believe this should be seen as a professional exercise done by professional people presenting their views as they go, and that this should not warrant political agitation around briefings like this one and we will be supporting them," he said. "We have full confidence in what they are doing, and it is up to them to decide how they implement 1441 on the basis of their mandate."

For his part, the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom, Ambassador Jeremy Greenstock, [noted](#) that the message to emerge

from the briefing was that there is no doubt that the pro-active cooperation that the UK has been looking for on substance from Iraq has not been forthcoming. "I think Iraq is missing an important opportunity to clear up those remaining questions, which the declaration has failed to do, and a number of members of the Council were worried, as the UK is worried, by Iraq missing that opportunity," he said. "As the days go by, the failure of Iraq pro-actively to cooperate, if that is continued, will become an increasingly serious matter."

Ambassador Gunter Pleuger said Germany made it clear that it is up to Baghdad to make sure that the disarmament of Iraq can be done in a peaceful manner, by cooperation. He said Germany found large parts of the Iraqi declaration needed improvement and that it contained many questions left open that have to be dealt with by the Security Council and by further questioning of Iraq by the weapons inspectors. He also said that Berlin subscribed to the recent statement by Secretary-General Kofi Annan that the inspections should continue "and for that reason alone there are no grounds military action."

United States Ambassador John D. Negroponte said that on the basis of both its own review of Iraq's declaration and the first few weeks of inspections, there is still no evidence that Baghdad has fundamentally changed its approach "from one of deceit to a genuine attempt to be forthcoming in meeting the Council's demand that it disarm." He said the declaration represented a deliberate effort to deceive by material omissions "that in our view constitute a further material breach." How Iraq responds and the evidence it provides are important indicators of their cooperation, Ambassador Negroponte stressed. "It is not, however, UNMOVIC's or IAEA's obligation to provide verifiable evidence of disarmament," he said. "That is Iraq's responsibility."

Syria's Ambassador, Mikhail Wehbe, told reporters that his delegation reiterated its previous position that it did not participate in the discussion on the Iraqi declaration to protest the fact that the 10 non-permanent members of the Security Council did not receive the full text of the document and so could not evaluate it. "This is a great mistake being committed [and it] should be corrected," he said. Syria also "would not share in any conclusion, in any outcomes that would come out of the discussion today as far as the declaration of Iraq" is concerned.