

Brussels, 10 MAI 2016  
A(2016)1103558-1255086

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*Dear Colleagues,*

Thank you for your letter of 3 March in which you draw my attention to the pressing financial and other problems facing the Kurdistan region in Iraq, and to President Barzani's letters to President Tusk and President Juncker on the matter. I would like to inform you that I have replied to President Barzani's letter on behalf of the two Presidents.

I fully share your reading that the Kurdistan Region of Iraq merits and needs the support of the EU and other members of the international community in view of the multiple challenges that it faces in the fight against Da'esh. At the political level, the EU has clearly stated its support for the Kurdistan region in the fight against Da'esh on numerous occasions, not least through several Foreign Affairs Council conclusions. The situation in Iraq, including of course the Kurdistan Region, is a permanent concern for me, and one which I follow very closely.

As I highlighted to President Barzani, the EU is already engaged in supporting Iraq through the "EU Regional Strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the Da'esh threat". This has taken the form of non-military support to the Global Coalition and the fight against Da'esh, including counter-terrorism measures; humanitarian aid in support of the UN's humanitarian response plan; support for resilience for internally displaced persons and host communities; support for the stabilisation of liberated areas; the initiation of a dialogue on economic, trade and financial matters with the Iraqi government in view of the current budgetary and economic challenges, alongside support to other thematic areas. Much of this EU support also directly benefits the Kurdistan Region.

There are of course a number of areas in which the EU cannot deliver support, be it to the federal government or the government of the Kurdistan Region, as I pointed out to President Barzani. These include the delivery of military aid, which the EU supports politically, but which remains the sole prerogative of individual Member States, and the provision of direct budgetary assistance, a subject of on-going negotiations between the World Bank, the IMF and the Iraqi government.

On the question of development aid, the EU is in fact already providing substantial support to Iraq, and the Kurdistan Region in particular is a major beneficiary of this aid. The aid includes pre-crisis funding for ongoing programmes, as well as development funding foreseen under the EU's strategy. I am also pleased to inform you that the EIB is currently negotiating a framework agreement with the Iraqi government that, once signed, will release major loan funding for key infrastructure projects which should also benefit the Kurdistan region.

I do acknowledge, however, that the scale of the challenges facing Iraq are immense and are likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. This places a responsibility on my EU colleagues, the foreign ministers of the Member States, and me to mobilise further funding after 2016, and to make sure that the Kurdistan Region stands to benefit from this funding as well.

In the hope that I have addressed most if not all of your concerns, I remain

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Federica Mogherini', written in a cursive style.

Federica Mogherini