Sayyid Al-Hakeem at Middle East Research Institute Forum (MERI): Iraq at Crossroads, Upcoming Elections Key to Sustainable Stability, Fighting Corruption Requires Structural Reform



During his participation in the Middle East Research Institute Forum (MERI 2025) on Tuesday, October 7, 2025, Sayyid Ammar Al-Hakeem, Head of the National State Powers Alliance, stated that Iraq has endured political, social, security, and economic crises, as well as difficulties in gaining regional and international acceptance of the post-2003 order. His Eminence affirmed that Iraq today enjoys a state of stability on multiple fronts, along with notable economic progress and a clear Arab and regional openness.

H.E. highlighted the importance of the upcoming elections as the path toward transitioning from the current fragile stability to lasting stability.

H.E. explained the inverse relationship between external interference and the strength of the state: the stronger the state, the weaker the foreign interference—and vice versa. He noted a significant decline in external interventions, attributing it to Iraq's growing state strength, increased regional understanding of Iraq's sovereignty, and the will of Iraqis to shape their decisions independently according to their national interests.

H.E. stressed that the next phase will witness the integration of all forces within the framework of the Iraqi state, pointing out that the participation of groups described as armed forces in the elections and their defense of the process marks a major development, as these groups have now become part of the political process, competing alongside others for the trust of the electorate.

H.E. further stated that the Constitution represents a social contract reflecting the will and aspirations of Iraqis but has faced challenges in implementation, as many parties have focused on their rights while neglecting their obligations. He emphasized that what constitutes a right for one side is an obligation on the other, and vice versa. Accordingly, H.E. called for full commitment to the Constitution in all its provisions while acknowledging that, after twenty years, reviewing the political and social contract in light of evolving circumstances could be beneficial to ensure sound progress—particularly regarding strategic issues that require a two-thirds majority.

H.E. explained that much of the Constitution has already been implemented, though interpretations of its articles have varied. He cited the recent oil agreement between the federal government and the Kurdistan Regional Government as a sign of mutual understanding, potentially paving the way for passing the long-awaited Oil and Gas Law, which would bring greater organization to one of Iraq's most vital national sectors.

Addressing Iraq's federal system, H.E. observed that federal systems everywhere face challenges regarding the balance of authority between the central and regional governments, yet Iraq's political system continues to move in the right direction. He added that disagreements are natural, as long as they do not escalate into divisions or conflicts that harm social cohesion.

H.E. also explained that Iraq's revenues are predominantly oil-based and that the federal budget is distributed according to population ratios. He noted that the federal government deals with the provinces through employee registries, while its dealings with the Kurdistan Region are based on a percentage allocation of the budget—hence, the salaries of the Kurdistan Region's employees do not appear in the records of the Ministry of Finance. H.E. expressed hope that the recent agreement to export oil through SOMO would help achieve fair wealth distribution among all Iraqis.

On combating corruption, H.E. stressed the need for institutional frameworks that prevent corruption before it occurs, emphasizing transparency, clarity, and the elimination of bureaucratic bottlenecks that enable it.

He called for adopting a single-window system, digital transformation, and automation as crucial tools to combat corruption—especially in major files—while urging structural reform to address the phenomenon at its roots.

H.E. concluded by asserting that Iraq now stands at a crossroads, urging all to preserve and build upon the achievements made so far to reach sustainable stability. He underlined the crucial role of the upcoming elections and the values that must guide electoral competition, warning against practices that complicate the post-election scene. H.E. called for responsible conduct before the elections to enable political forces to expedite government formation, noting that forming the government swiftly would mark significant progress in Iraq's political process. H.E. expressed optimism that the upcoming elections will contribute to strengthening the country's stability.

Regarding the formation of regions, His Eminence clarified that regions are a constitutional matter, expressing his rejection of forming them on sectarian or ethnic bases and emphasizing that their establishment should be purely administrative. He noted that moving forward with regions at the present time would be premature, given the challenges experienced during previous phases and current regional developments, and renewed his call to grant local governments their constitutional powers in accordance with the principle of administrative decentralization.