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Remarks With Dr. Adnan Pachachi, President of the Iraqi Governing Council After Their Meeting

Secretary Colin L. Powell

C Street Entrance
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(3:00 p.m. EST)



SECRETARY POWELL: I've just had an excellent conversation with President Pachachi and members of the Governing Council, joined, of course, by Ambassador Bremer. I think we all are in agreement that the meetings in New York yesterday were very, very useful in opening a dialogue between the Governing Council, the United Nations, and the CPA and other interested parties for the UN to begin scoping out for itself the role that it can play.

I spoke to the Secretary General last night. He was also pleased with the meetings. And Secretary General Annan said that in the very near future he will come to a conclusion as to how best to play that role. And we hope that we will be able to send a team in to consult with the Governing Council, the Ayatollah Sistani and others as to how to go forward to implement the 15 November agreement.

We all remain committed the 15 November agreement with the desire and the goal and the deadline we put before ourselves of having an interim government in place by the 30th of June, but recognizing that that is not the end of the process; it is really just sort of halfway into the process of full elections for the democratically elected assembly and a government that comes from that assembly, and a constitution that will be ratified by the Iraqi people. And that will take us all the way into 2005.

As Dr. Pachachi and his colleagues heard from the President this morning, the United States, and especially the President, totally committed to provide the Iraqi people what they have dreamed and hoped for, and that is a democratic form of government. The United States will not find the road difficult. We will smooth it out. We will be with our Iraqi friends throughout this entire process.

One other point I might mention that was raised in our conversation was that we want to help Iraq as it works with its friends and neighbors in the region to internationalize the whole situation, not just with the UN, but with those nations who are neighbors of Iraq so that they can all have friendly relations and live in peace, with Iraq being an example of what peace can bring to people and what democracy can bring to people.

And so, Dr. Pachachi, it's a great pleasure to have you and your colleagues back in the United States. I appreciated your willingness to come over to the Department and continue our discussions, and I would invite you to say a word or two, sir.

DR. PACHACHI: Thank you very much, Secretary Powell.

We had a very good meeting with the Secretary this afternoon, and also with the President this morning.

We explained very clearly our position that we are committed to the November 15th agreement and we are committed very strongly to maintaining the deadline of June 30th for the transfer of sovereignty and power to a directed or a chosen

Iraqi government that reflects the desires of the Iraqi people and has a very broad representative base.

I think there was some misunderstanding at the press conference at the White House. So, for some reason, I said there would be no compromise about changing the date of June 30th, that we are committed to that date and we shall not compromise on it. I think the word "no" has been dropped for some reason, and people thought we are ready to compromise. That's not -- that's not the case at all.

Anyway, we are now proceeding very quickly towards achieving our goal of sovereignty and the transfer of power on June 30th. We are in the final stages of preparing a law, a fundamental law, for the transitional period, and we hope that very soon the process will culminate in the setting up of a provisional Iraqi government with full sovereignty, internationally recognized, and will take over all powers from the CPA.

And the United States has been our partner in all this effort, and we thank them very much for it.

SECRETARY POWELL: Thank you. I regret that, in the interest of time, I can only take perhaps one or two questions, and then we have meetings.



Barry.

QUESTION: Can I ask Dr. Pachachi if he thinks there is a way that you can somehow make the process -- it's so complex, I don't know who understands it. But is there a way to make the caucus process more agreeable to the clerics, to the Shiite clerics?

DR. PACHACHI: Let me say first that, in principle, we are all in favor of elections. We believe that elections are the normal way to choose legislators. But because of the shortness of the period available to us, and because of the necessity of preparing for elections, there have been some doubts that elections can be held. And that's why we have asked the United Nations to send a team to investigate the possibilities of elections.

Regarding the caucus, we hope to refine this process. I agree with you, it is a little complicated, but I think if it's well refined, if it's done properly, I think it will really enable the Iraqis to have a legislature that really represents their views and is widely representative. And that's what the United Nations asked. They said that sovereignty can -- will be restored to Iraq only if there was a representative government, internationally recognized. And that's what we hope will happen.

SECRETARY POWELL: We'll have to break it off because of schedules. Thank you very much.

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