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UNITED NATIONS
COMMUNICATIONS SECTION

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FROM: *fw* PASCOE, UNATIONS, NEW YORK

DATE: 16 OCTOBER 2007

NUMBER: **2372**SUBJECT: Possible UN role in Kirkuk issueCXZ-213
CXB-365

1. At his meeting with Prime Minister al-Maliki on 22 September, the Secretary-General raised the issue of Kirkuk as a potential flashpoint. Noting the constitutional deadline, he asked the Prime Minister about the prospects of holding a referendum on Kirkuk before 31 December. The Prime Minister said that his government was committed to implementing Article 140 of the Constitution and briefly gave the floor to Mr. Masoum, a member of his delegation. Mr. Masoum said the Article 140 Committee has made progress on the "normalization process", as required under Article 140, but one major step—a census—still remained uncompleted. He asserted that a full census might not be necessary and a "population count" would suffice instead. Both the Prime Minister and Mr. Masoum said Iraq would welcome UN views on how best to address the Kirkuk issue.

2. On 11 October I met with Mr. Fallah, Head of the KRG Foreign Relations Office. We discussed a number of issues related to the UN role in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region following the adoption of resolution 1770 (2007). Mr. Fallah noted that the KRG leadership would be interested in hearing UN ideas about various options that may exist regarding Kirkuk. He reiterated an invitation—extended to SRSG Qazi during his farewell visit to the North—for DSRSG Schulenburg to visit the Region and discuss options on Kirkuk with President Barzani and the KRG leadership.

3. It would appear that the Kurdish leadership now realizes that the referendum on Kirkuk may be postponed on technical grounds. They also appear more open to hearing UN views and may even consider some UN role in the Kirkuk issue, albeit in an advisory role. Given the mandate in resolution 1770 (2007), we should use this opportunity to explore possibilities for the UN role in Kirkuk and, possibly, in other internal boundary disputes. In that regard, we request that DSRSG Schulenburg plan a visit to the Kurdish Region to meet with President Barzani and other Kurdish leaders. Based on the outcome of initial talks in the Kurdish Region, a visit to Kirkuk and meetings in Baghdad on this issue could also be considered (e.g. Mr. Raid Jahid Fahim, Head of the Article 140 Committee).

4. We assume the discussions with the KRG would be based on the principles outlined in paragraph 3 of your cable CZX-204 of 27 August following a meeting with Mr. Barham Saleh. Please keep us informed on the preparations for the visit and any further developments on Kirkuk.

Best regards.