

For Six Month Period Ending 12-31-2010  
(insert date)

**I - REGISTRANT**

1. (a) Name of Registrant  
TS Navigations LLC

(b) Registration No.  
5943

(c) Business Address(es) of Registrant  
5205 Cathedral Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20016 USA

2. Has there been a change in the information previously furnished in connection with the following:

- (a) If an individual:
- |                           |                              |                             |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (1) Residence address(es) | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (2) Citizenship           | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (3) Occupation            | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
- (b) If an organization:
- |                          |                              |  |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| (1) Name                 | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| (2) Ownership or control | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| (3) Branch offices       | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
- (c) Explain fully all changes, if any, indicated in items (a) and (b) above.

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**IF THE REGISTRANT IS AN INDIVIDUAL, OMIT RESPONSE TO ITEMS 3, 4 AND 5(a).**

3. If you have previously filed Exhibit C<sup>1</sup>, state whether any changes therein have occurred during this 6 month reporting period.
- Yes  No
- If yes, have you filed an amendment to the Exhibit C? Yes  No
- If no, please attach the required amendment.

<sup>1</sup> The Exhibit C, for which no printed form is provided, consists of a true copy of the charter, articles of incorporation, association, and by laws of a registrant that is an organization. (A waiver of the requirement to file an Exhibit C may be obtained for good cause upon written application to the Assistant Attorney General, National Security Division, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, DC 20530.)

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4. (a) Have any persons ceased acting as partners, officers, directors or similar officials of the registrant during this 6 month reporting period? Yes  No

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name	Position	Date connection ended
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(b) Have any persons become partners, officers, directors or similar officials during this 6 month reporting period?

Yes  No

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name	Residence address	Citizenship	Position	Date assumed
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5. (a) Has any person named in item 4(b) rendered services directly in furtherance of the interests of any foreign principal?

Yes  No

If yes, identify each such person and describe his service.

(b) Have any employees or individuals, who have filed a short form registration statement, terminated their employment or connection with the registrant during this 6 month reporting period? Yes  No

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name	Position or connection	Date terminated
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(c) During this 6 month reporting period, has the registrant hired as employees or in any other capacity, any persons who rendered or will render services to the registrant directly in furtherance of the interests of any foreign principal(s) in other than a clerical or secretarial, or in a related or similar capacity? Yes  No

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name	Residence address	Citizenship	Position	Date assumed
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6. Have short form registration statements been filed by all of the persons named in Items 5(a) and 5(c) of the supplemental statement?

Yes  No

If no, list names of persons who have not filed the required statement.

N.A.

II - FOREIGN PRINCIPAL

7. Has your connection with any foreign principal ended during this 6 month reporting period?

Yes  No

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name of foreign principal

Date of termination

8. Have you acquired any new foreign principal<sup>2</sup> during this 6 month reporting period?

Yes  No

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name and address of foreign principal

Date acquired

9. In addition to those named in Items 7 and 8, if any, list foreign principals<sup>2</sup> whom you continued to represent during the 6 month reporting period.

Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq

10. EXHIBITS A AND B

(a) Have you filed for each of the newly acquired foreign principals in Item 8 the following:

Exhibit A<sup>3</sup> Yes  No   
Exhibit B<sup>4</sup> Yes  No

If no, please attach the required exhibit.

(b) Have there been any changes in the Exhibits A and B previously filed for any foreign principal whom you represented during the 6 month period? Yes  No

If yes, have you filed an amendment to these exhibits? Yes  No

If no, please attach the required amendment.

2 The term "foreign principal" includes, in addition to those defined in Section 1(b) of the Act, an individual organization any of whose activities are directly or indirectly supervised, directed, controlled, financed, or subsidized in whole or in major part by a foreign government, foreign political party, foreign organization or foreign individual. (See Rule 100(a)(9).) A registrant who represents more than one foreign principal is required to list in the statements he files under the Act only those principals for whom he is not entitled to claim exemption under Section 3 of the Act. (See Rule 208.)

3 The Exhibit A, which is filed on Form NSD-3 (Formerly CRM-157), sets forth the information required to be disclosed concerning each foreign principal.

4 The Exhibit B, which is filed on Form NSD-4 (Formerly CRM-155), sets forth the information concerning the agreement or understanding between the registrant and the foreign principal.

### III - ACTIVITIES

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11. During this 6 month reporting period, have you engaged in any activities for or rendered any services to any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, and 9 of this statement?                      Yes                       No

If yes, identify each such foreign principal and describe in full detail your activities and services:

Kurdistan Regional Government: speech writing, media relations, research, memo writing, media training, press interview creation, content creation for written materials and web sites, media strategy

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12. During this 6 month reporting period, have you on behalf of any foreign principal engaged in political activity<sup>5</sup> as defined below?                      Yes                       No

If yes, identify each such foreign principal and describe in full detail all such political activity, indicating, among other things, the relations, interests and policies sought to be influenced and the means employed to achieve this purpose. If the registrant arranged, sponsored or delivered speeches, lectures or radio and TV broadcasts, give details as to dates and places of delivery, names of speakers and subject matter.

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13. In addition to the above described activities, if any, have you engaged in activity on your own behalf which benefits any or all of your foreign principals?                      Yes                       No

If yes, describe fully.

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<sup>5</sup> The term "political activities" means any activity that the person engaging in believes will, or that the person intends to, in any way influence any agency or official of the Government of the United States or any section of the public within the United States with reference to formulating, adopting or changing the domestic or foreign policies of the United States or with reference to the political or public interests, policies, or relations of a government of a foreign country or a foreign political party.

## IV - FINANCIAL INFORMATION

### 14. (a) RECEIPTS - MONIES

During this 6 month reporting period, have you received from any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, or 9 of this statement, or from any other source, for or in the interests of any such foreign principal, any contributions, income or money either as compensation or otherwise? Yes  No

If no, explain why.

If yes, set forth below in the required detail and separately for each foreign principal an account of such monies<sup>6</sup>.

Date	From whom	Purpose	Amount
7-20-10	KRG	As detailed in question # 11	\$8,000.00
8-20-10	KRG	"	\$8,000.00
9-20-10	KRG	"	\$8,000.00
10-20-10	KRG	"	\$8,000.00
11-20-10	KRG	"	\$8,000.00
12-10-10	KRG	"	\$8,000.00

\$48,000.00

Total

### (b) RECEIPTS - FUND RAISING CAMPAIGN

During this 6 month reporting period, have you received, as part of a fund raising campaign<sup>7</sup>, any money on behalf of any foreign principal named in items 7, 8, or 9 of this statement? Yes  No

If yes, have you filed an Exhibit D<sup>8</sup> to your registration? Yes  No

If yes, indicate the date the Exhibit D was filed. Date \_\_\_\_\_

### (c) RECEIPTS - THINGS OF VALUE

During this 6 month reporting period, have you received any thing of value<sup>9</sup> other than money from any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, or 9 of this statement, or from any other source, for or in the interests of any such foreign principal?

Yes  No

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name of foreign principal	Date received	Description of thing of value	Purpose
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<sup>6</sup> 7 A registrant is required to file an Exhibit D if he collects or receives contributions, loans, money, or other things of value for a foreign principal, as part of a fund raising campaign. (See Rule 201(e).)

<sup>8</sup> An Exhibit D, for which no printed form is provided, sets forth an account of money collected or received as a result of a fund raising campaign and transmitted for a foreign principal.

<sup>9</sup> Things of value include but are not limited to gifts, interest free loans, expense free travel, favored stock purchases, exclusive rights, favored treatment over competitors, "kickbacks," and the like.

15. (a) **DISBURSEMENTS – MONIES**

During this 6 month reporting period, have you

(1) disbursed or expended monies in connection with activity on behalf of any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, or 9 of this statement? Yes  No

(2) transmitted monies to any such foreign principal? Yes  No

If no, explain in full detail why there were no disbursements made on behalf of any foreign principal.

If yes, set forth below in the required detail and separately for each foreign principal an account of such monies, including monies transmitted, if any, to each foreign principal.

Date	To whom	Purpose	Amount
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Total

**(b) DISBURSEMENTS – THINGS OF VALUE**

During this 6 month reporting period, have you disposed of anything of value<sup>10</sup> other than money in furtherance of or in connection with activities on behalf of any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, or 9 of this statement?

Yes  No

If yes, furnish the following information:

Date disposed	Name of person to whom given	On behalf of what foreign principal	Description of thing of value	Purpose
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**(c) DISBURSEMENTS – POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

During this 6 month reporting period, have you from your own funds and on your own behalf either directly or through any other person, made any contributions of money or other things of value<sup>11</sup> in connection with an election to any political office, or in connection with any primary election, convention, or caucus held to select candidates for political office?

Yes  No

If yes, furnish the following information:

Date	Amount or thing of value	Name of political organization	Name of candidate
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<sup>10, 11</sup> Things of value include but are not limited to gifts, interest free loans, expense free travel, favored stock purchases, exclusive rights, favored treatment over competitors, "kickbacks" and the like.

V - INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

16. During this 6 month reporting period, did you prepare, disseminate or cause to be disseminated any informational materials<sup>12</sup>?  
Yes  No

IF YES, RESPOND TO THE REMAINING ITEMS IN SECTION V.

17. Identify each such foreign principal.

Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq

18. During this 6 month reporting period, has any foreign principal established a budget or allocated a specified sum of money to finance your activities in preparing or disseminating informational materials? Yes  No

If yes, identify each such foreign principal, specify amount, and indicate for what period of time.

19. During this 6 month reporting period, did your activities in preparing, disseminating or causing the dissemination of informational materials include the use of any of the following:

- Radio or TV broadcasts
- Magazine or newspaper articles
- Motion picture films
- Letters or telegrams
- Advertising campaigns
- Press releases
- Pamphlets or other publications
- Lectures or speeches
- Internet
- Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

20. During this 6 month reporting period, did you disseminate or cause to be disseminated informational materials among any of the following groups:

- Public officials
- Newspapers
- Libraries
- Legislators
- Editors
- Educational institutions
- Government agencies
- Civic groups or associations
- Nationality groups
- Other (specify) television stations

21. What language was used in the informational materials:

- English
- Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

22. Did you file with the Registration Unit, U.S. Department of Justice a copy of each item of such informational materials disseminated or caused to be disseminated during this 6 month reporting period? Yes  No

23. Did you label each item of such informational materials with the statement required by Section 4(b) of the Act? Yes  No

<sup>12</sup> The term informational materials includes any oral, visual, graphic, written, or pictorial information or matter of any kind, including that published by means of advertising, books, periodicals, newspapers, lectures, broadcasts, motion pictures, or any means or instrumentality of interstate or foreign commerce or otherwise. Informational materials disseminated by an agent of a foreign principal as part of an activity in itself exempt from registration, or an activity which by itself would not require registration, need not be filed pursuant to Section 4(b) of the Act.

**VI - EXECUTION**

In accordance with 28 U.S.C. §1746, the undersigned swear(s) or affirm(s) under penalty of perjury that he/she has (they have) read the information set forth in this registration statement and the attached exhibits and that he/she is (they are) familiar with the contents thereof and that such contents are in their entirety true and accurate to the best of his/her (their) knowledge and belief, except that the undersigned make(s) no representation as to the truth or accuracy of the information contained in the attached Short Form Registration Statement(s), if any, insofar as such information is not within his/her (their) personal knowledge.

(Date of signature )

(Type or print name under each signature<sup>13</sup>)

1/11/2011



Tom Squitieri

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<sup>13</sup> This statement shall be signed by the individual agent, if the registrant is an individual, or by a majority of those partners, officers, directors or persons performing similar functions, if the registrant is an organization, except that the organization can, by power of attorney, authorize one or more individuals to execute this statement on its behalf.





U.S. Department of Justice

National Security Division

Washington, DC 20530

THIS FORM IS TO BE AN OFFICIAL ATTACHMENT TO YOUR CURRENT SUPPLEMENTAL  
STATEMENT - PLEASE EXECUTE IN TRIPPLICATE

SHORT-FORM REGISTRATION INFORMATION SHEET

SECTION A

The Department records list active short-form registration statements for the following persons of your organization filed on the date indicated by each name. If a person is not still functioning in the same capacity directly on behalf of the foreign principal, please show the date of termination.

**Short Form List for Registrant: TS Navigations, LLC**

<u>Last Name</u>	<u>First Name and Other Names</u>	<u>Registration Date</u>	<u>Termination Date</u>	<u>Role</u>
Squitieri	Tom	09/21/2009		

*N.A.*

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U.S. Department of Justice

National Security Division

Washington, DC 20530

SECTION B

In addition to those persons listed in Section A, list below all current employees rendering services directly on behalf of the foreign principals(s) who have not filed short-form registration statements. (Do not list clerks, secretaries, typists or employees in a similar or related capacity). If there is some question as to whether an employee has an obligation to file a short-form, please address a letter to the Registration Unit describing the activities and connection with the foreign principal.

Name	Function	Date Hired

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

*M.A.*

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TS NAVIGATIONS LLC

**FARA supplemental report, second half 2010**

Speeches, monthly newsletters

In addition to the enclosed materials, here is the address for the web site I continually update and provide content for the U.S. liaison office of the Kurdistan Regional Government ([www.knowkurdistan.com](http://www.knowkurdistan.com))

Media/ Reporter interviews and request handled:

Viewpoint with James Zogby, 11-23

Janet Ritz, Bloomberg, 11-19

Ben Birnbaum, Washington Times, 11-19

Ali Akel, Yeni Safak, 11-5

Tolga Tanis, Hurriyet, 10-29

Brian Bender, Boston Globe, 9-1

Melody Burns, WGDJ, Albany, NY, 8-17

New York Times editorial board, 8-3

Alex Spillius, The Daily Telegraph, 7-12

Jill Junnola, Energy Intelligence, 6-14

Tom Squitieri  
TS Navigations LLC  
Registration # 5943

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**Orlando Area Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**Westin Grand Bohemian Hotel**  
**Orlando, Florida**  
**September 9, 2010, 6:30 p.m.**

**Who are the Kurds (and Why You Will Like the Answer)**

Good evening. It is a pleasure to be here. Central Florida is a place that feels extremely close to me and many other Kurds. The University of Central Florida is the home of the first ever chair in Kurdish studies – an honor that has been thrilling to me and all Kurds since it was inaugurated two years ago. This part of Florida is also special since, just two hours down Interstate 4 is Tampa, is the home of Central Command. They are also our good friends; like many of you here, they care deeply about the Kurds and our shared values and shared dreams. So we Kurds look to Central Florida as a particularly heartfelt place, one with this unique confluence of cultural and creative commitment to the Kurdistan Region coming from the UCF.

I would like to thank the Orlando Area Committee on Foreign Relations for inviting me to join you this evening. I also wish to thank the Global Connections Foundation and the University of Central Florida's Global Perspectives Office for their work in making my day in Orlando pleasant and for ensuring we all have the chance to relax and exchange thoughts.

Since I was last in Central Florida in April 2008, we have seen a wonderful crescendo of news stories about the stability in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq – from tourists discovering its hidden joys to yet more businessmen and women realizing that the safety and progressiveness of the region offers a great opportunity for investment in Iraq and the Middle East.

We even have some brand new, very popular amusement parks. They are not quite on the scale of Disney World, but they have the same magical effect on visitor – laughter, smiles and enjoyment.

We are thrilled that the world is learning that our hard work is paying off, that we are steady in our march along the path of democracy. We are delighted that we in the Kurdistan Region have done our part to help move all of Iraq forward. We are committed to that task - to making a federal, democratic Iraq a shining example for the world.

For a long time, Kurds used to say we have no friends but the mountains. Thankfully, that is less the case today. Our greatest friends are here in the United States, but in the past few years we have made new friends in some of the most unlikely places. Those

friends are the product of our democracy, a system that we owe very much to the United States and others who believe in us and our friendship.

So who are we Kurds? I often am asked by people, somewhat bashfully, "Well, what is a Kurd?" And I am happy to respond.

The answer today is we are the strongest friend and ally the United States has in our part of Eurasia. Our home is the place with the most progressive press law in the region, the place with a higher percentage of women in our legislature than most of the nations in the world, the place where not one American nor foreigner has been killed in a hostile action, the place where Christians and others fleeing religious persecution from elsewhere in Iraq come to find sanctuary and a future.

We are the place where those seeking to invest – from some of our newest friends like the Koreans to neighbors like Turkey – find our new economy vibrant, promising and full of opportunity.

And we are just outside your door. For example, a little later this evening – at 8:05 p.m. to be precise -- **Lufthansa** flight #465 is scheduled to leave Orlando International Airport, bound for Frankfurt, Germany. Tomorrow morning, when you land in Germany, you can have a coffee and pastry and then board a second Lufthansa flight

non-stop to Erbil, the capital off the Kurdistan Region. By tomorrow night, you will be in my homeland enjoying a savory kebab and having a much tastier tea.

Yes you really can. And I urge you to do it !

Don't just take my word for it. Here is what *Time* magazine wrote in early August week about Kurdistan:

**“Foreigners can go about freely, crimes and violence against visitors are unheard of, and the most daunting tasks are finding one's way through labyrinthine local bazaars and keeping pace with the legendary Kurdish hospitality.**

**“In Kurdistan, against the backdrop of the snow-capped Qandil Mountains, a frenetic frontier economy is being driven by the promise of petrodollars from the region's estimated 25 billion barrels of proven oil reserves. Development is intense. New hotels, shopping malls and housing tracts are springing up to meet Arbil's surging population of more than 1 million. The bars in Ankawa, the city's laid-back Christian quarter, are a heady mixture of oilmen, contractors, journalists, security teams, aid workers and, increasingly, tourists.”**

Likewise, here is what *Foreign Affairs* magazine noted in August:

**“Landing at the international airport in Erbil, the capital of Kurdistan, one is immediately struck by the high level of economic activity that pervades all parts of**

the city. New highways, high-rises, and construction cranes punctuate the city's skyline, which now includes modern office towers and the frame of a Kempinski luxury hotel. Traffic fills the streets, which bustle with pedestrians shopping for new cell phones and imported designer clothing. The city has a large amusement park, replete with roller coasters, bumper cars, and a large Ferris wheel. A nearby go-kart racing facility—recently built by an American from Galveston, Texas— attracts a steady stream of young adventure-seekers, while the bookish crowd can take refuge in a brand-new, multi-level public library. Sulaimaniyah and Dohuk, respectively the second and third largest cities in Kurdistan, have seen a similar flurry of economic development.”

Obviously, we are pleased with the progress any visitor can immediately see upon coming to Kurdistan. After decades of oppression, our citizens deserve the chance to have their most dangerous moment come as a roller coaster races down a track – even if the G-force is not quite up there yet with the **Aerosmith Rock N Roller Coaster**. (*This is the fastest coaster in the Disney World complex .*) We want these good times to stay and multiply, not just in Kurdistan but through all of Iraq.

That is in part why I am here today.

We are in a crucial time in Iraq and we are both optimistic and concerned. As the U.S. formally ended its combat operations in Iraq in August – or, as President Obama has called it “turning the page” -- other nations have already started to try to fill the vacuum. Native abhors a vacuum and so do we Kurds. While we are reveling in our efforts to democratize and develop, we must remember we are part of Iraq. Much of our progress is contingent on what happens throughout Iraq.

So how the U.S. leaves – and remains – in Iraq – is crucial to the stability of the nation and the region. We hope that as the U.S. leaves militarily, it will increase its diplomatic effort. We are thrilled, for example, that the U.S. plans to open a diplomatic counsel in Erbil – following the lead of other nations – as well as putting a consulate in Basra and keeping open offices in Mosul and Kirkuk in the short term. An increased U.S. diplomatic engagement in the Kurdistan Region will cement the gains we have all made working together.

We fear, however, that the U.S engagement may be tentative and diminished, that attention is being diverted elsewhere when some of it still needs to be in Iraq and in Kurdistan. To lose focus now would be detrimental, to say the least; we need to cement and ensure the hard-fought gains remain.

Fulfilling our democratic aspirations is the key to us. I am quite proud of how democracy is finding a welcome in the Kurdistan Region. None of us had any experience in building a democracy before the opportunity presented itself. But from the moment the political dynamic changed in Iraq in 1991, and then again in 2003, we have been taking steps to ensure that our opportunity is not wasted.

Just over a year ago, we held regional elections that were all about the maturing of our society, the emphasis on the nuts-and-bolts domestic issues that affect people every day of their lives. Turnout was more than 80 percent. On key national issues there was not much difference between the slates. Instead it was perspectives on government performance, roads, education, concerns regarding corruption, economic development, water and electricity that shaped the debates and decisions that led up to that vote. It was a clear marker in the shift from where Kurdish leaders were once hailed for their revolutionary skills to now, where they are chosen on their visions of governance and ability to make each person's life better each day.

That was a clear indication that we do "get" democracy – right down to having a vocal and vibrant opposition. That was an important moment in our history.

Kurdistan, in many ways, seems a world apart from the rest of Iraq. Situated in the northern part of the country and bordering Turkey, Iran, and Syria, the Kurdish region of Iraq has a distinct history and topography. We Kurds are a unique ethnic group,

different from Arabs, Persians, and Turks. About 4 million Kurds are in Iraq. We speak our own Indo-European language, Kurdish, which is now one of two official tongues in Iraq. Parts of Kurdistan are lush, but an austere series of mountains has defined the region, supporting a nomadic culture in the past and providing sheltered areas in the days of our persecution and genocide from the venom of Saddam Hussein.

It is from our homeland that religious historians say the Three Wise Men set forth on their journey to Jerusalem. In fact, one of the world's ancient languages – Aramaic -- is still spoken in parts of Kurdistan. There is much more: Atop a prominent hill in Erbil sits the Citadel, the oldest continuously inhabited settlement on Earth. It is in Kurdistan where archeologists found some of the oldest human fossils ever, in the Shanidar cave, that now are a centerpiece attraction in the Smithsonian Natural History Museum. And Kurdistan is where the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates are found, which of course helped form the breadbasket that became Mesopotamia, one of the world's first great civilizations.

The shape of Kurdish territory and power has shifted over the centuries, reaching imperial heights during medieval times, sharing and contesting power in the modern era, and intermittently experiencing political marginalization, ethno-linguistic suppression, and outright oppression. At times, the Kurds seemed close to achieving statehood—as in 1920 when they unsuccessfully proposed autonomy in the Treaty of

Sèvres, or in 1946 when they declared a short-lived republic inside Iran. In these and other instances, many Kurds felt that the Western powers ultimately “sold them out” in the name of Great Power politics, and this sense of betrayal still tinctures Kurdish-Western relations.

That is where we came from. Now we look to where we are today and – crucially – where we are heading for the future.

Thanks to the intervention of the U.S. and others in the 1991 Gulf War, and then the final liberation in 2003, Kurds have a region of Iraq that is safe and semi-autonomous. Many of us feel we are living the dream – while not an independent country, we are part of a nation that is learning how to be a democracy, where our experiences are helping shape the new Iraq.

I realize the strong feelings and the differences of opinion in the U.S. regarding the war in Iraq. I know what the steep cost has been to Americans, in your sons and daughters, husbands and sisters, to your national treasure and to the sharp politics it has created within this great nation. As a Kurd, however, I am thankful for what the U.S. did – it was our liberation and that of all Iraq.

Perhaps one of the lines from the Steven Spielberg film “Saving Private Ryan” is appropriate here. As the dying American squad leader sees Private Ryan for the first

time, and explains the mission and the sacrifices made to save him, he says to young Ryan, "Earn It."

We realize the sacrifices you have made for us. We intend to honor them and to "earn it."

I think we have already begun - and that is one of the reasons I was pleased to receive your invitation to come to meet with you today. The website for our U.S. office is called "Know Kurdistan" and that is what I urge you and all others to do - to know Kurdistan. You will like what you discover. I know that once you learn about us you will find ways to invest in us - not just economic investment, which of course we would love. I also seek your moral investment, in our democracy that is fashioned after yours and in our drive to hammer the horrors and frustrations of the past into the plowshares for a more benevolent and engaging future.

We now must see how Iraqi leaders deal with the new found freedom that has been handed to her. It is more than six month since the federal election and we have yet to form a national government. There remain tough internal issues that we Iraqis must work out - revenue sharing, a hydrocarbons law, the future of the dispute territories. These issues will not go away by themselves. Solving them is a great priority to our

friends in the United States. We realize this and look to whatever guidance and support they can give us. But solving these issues is even a greater priority to us.

While Iraqis of all walks of life have stood up to overcome the gravest of challenges, including terrorism, sectarian violence, political stalemates and regional interference, we remain well aware that in order for the U.S. to stand down, and Iraqis to stand up, in a sustainable and viable federal democracy, continued U.S. engagement, and more importantly, continued U.S. interest in Iraq is paramount.

A stable, relatively democratic Iraq, one that manages her vast natural resources responsibly, and utilizes the monumental income the country will receive from them, one that plays a productive and moderating role in an ever radicalizing region MUST be in the interests of the United States.

Ironically, it is we the Kurds, who have for years while fighting to gain our basic human rights, were always trying to bring down the brutal government in Iraq. Today, however, we are playing a leading role in building the new Iraq – a new Iraq based on new principles.

Knowing where we want to go – where we insist we MUST go – and persevering and pursuing that destination. Our journey to a democracy is not in a vacuum – it is shaped

by the tragedies of the past, the opportunity of the present, and the aspirations of the future.

As many of you know, Kurds have been oppressed for most of the last century and most likely before that. So we are wary of too much power concentrated in the hands of a central government. We see the Iraqi constitution, which mandates federalism and a devolution of power to the regions and local governments, as the best way to ensure that ALL Iraqis feel safe as well as empowered. And importantly, the constitution is the law of the land – we follow it and expect others to do so as well.

Kurdish political demands are limited, but are fair, deserved and reasonable. Regional and Western policy-makers need to appreciate the role of the Kurds in Iraq, our sacrifices and our contributions. Kurdistan's commitment to being part of Iraq is unshakable and is not hedged. All we ask is to be treated fairly and to work WITH us.

Here is how we are earning your sacrifices.

We know corruption and its allies are dangerous enemies of democracy, because they eat at much of what we in the KRG and those living in Iraqi Kurdistan desire. They make the public cautious about believing in democracy. Corruption and its allies can be an acid that disintegrate democratic progress – and we will not let that happen.

That is why we made a good governance initiative a priority. To that end, we teamed up with world-renowned consultants PriceWaterhouseCoopers to review current conditions, the way our government works and all governance related issues – to help us develop a clear-eyed, blunt critique and action plan to address the crucial issues of good governance, anti corruption and transparency.

Good governance is a major pillar to securing our democracy. We are confident the strategy outlined by our government, will help us tackle this vital issue.

We've made our region safe and secure. We've overcome our internal conflicts. We've established a system to provide improved services for our citizens. Now we're moving to guarantee that all of this progress is maintained and built upon. The benefits of this strategy are clear and vital for our future. It will help to ensure that public funds are used properly, and make government more efficient and more effective. It will improve the delivery of services to the people of the Kurdistan Region. And it will help improve international and domestic confidence and increase investment and job development, while helping to raise the living standards of our Region.

We understand that democracy is an evolutionary process, both in Iraq and elsewhere. And it is more than just a philosophy. But key to securing our people's trust will be how we deliver services.

For example, large-scale power generation and water delivery progress cannot be bought off the shelf. We have been working for several years to implement effective power and water distribution projects for the key cities. In 2008 the KRG had to deal with TWO failing hydroelectric dams, with the result that government generated electricity fell to only three hours a day in the region.

Of course we found that unacceptable.

Today, our energy projects are nearing completion. We now will have close to 20 hours of power in major cities in the region – far more than much of Iraq.

We know there are 24 hours in a day. But we also know that what we have now is far better than 3 hours. It is the right direction.

Likewise, recent completion of large scale water projects in our two largest cities will combine with existing systems to provide clean water to much of our region. So that too is getting better.

These are significant accomplishments that have been accomplished by the KRG, and Kurdistan's developing private sector. These are the fundamental critical issues that need to be addressed so that those living in Iraqi Kurdistan have the basic needs to start each day with hope and freedom from want.

Providing such essential services is only part of good governance. While that is going on, we have also taken determined steps to strengthen the judiciary and the rule of law -- another vital element needed to build a strong democracy.

In 2008 the judiciary was separated from the rest of the government to create an independent judiciary in Iraqi Kurdistan. That judiciary now is learning how to stand on its own feet, be objective and to uphold the rule of law.

I am the first to admit that we have a ways to go, and that's why we need the continued engagement of our friends in the United States.

While we are not a perfect democracy, we are democratizing. We have a vibrant civil society, a free press, and an emerging market oriented private sector. We are recognizing our shortcomings and addressing them, including some issues that were once culturally taboo.

Now I must say clearly and bluntly that I am not making excuses about the challenges we face in the Kurdistan Region. I am not justifying or rationalizing our less than perfect system, nor am I pretending that problems do not exist. I know we have, on occasion, stumbled, made mistakes and misread circumstances.

Now, we all must govern wisely and fairly.

Democracy is a living concept. It is not always the same in each nation. Those differences do not devalue it - they actually strengthen it. Many different voices toward a common, important goal.

Quite frankly, I get tired of these folks who pick the smallest thing wrong and make it into the proverbial mountain out of a molehill. Enough. Look at our history – when we are cornered, we fight to survive. Just like any normal human community. When we are offered the hand of friendship, of cooperation, we accept and work together.

It is not just Kurds who feel this way, although our history in Iraq is more challenged than others. Millions of Iraqis suffered harm under Saddam and suffered harm from the policies of the world that let him fester in the region and feast on us.

We say never again.

It has often been declared that Kurds and Arabs are like oil and water, in that they do not mix. Well, Iraq is an artificially created country that has both the assets of oil and water – and both of those assets, the natural and the human oil and water, must mix to help us build a truly great nation. Mix they shall.

For decades we Kurds saw ourselves as David, struggling against a multitude of Goliaths. Then in 2003 after the fall of Saddam, some began calling us kingmakers.

Today we have moved beyond such metaphors and are working to fulfill our constitutional role as a regional government within a healthy, stable and thriving Iraqi democracy. We are men and women who have endured many years of oppression and are now working to ensure that Iraq stays on its path of promise. We will stand for what is right, to make fair compromises to move our nation forward, do whatever we can do that is proper to protect what we have in Kurdistan and what we all CAN have in Iraq. We ask for the hand of equality and cooperation, and then the stability we all desire will arrive.

Democracy is hard work, but the destination is worth it. Difficult issues remain and the journey faces tough terrain. However, we are still moving forward. This is not a sprint and it should not be. This is the foundation of our future, for our children and grandchildren, for Kurdistan, and Iraq.

And we deeply wish that the United States stand with us, in Kurdistan, and Iraq, as we continue on the journey.

Thankfully, many recognize this imperative. In a column earlier this month Jim Hoagland, the highly respected foreign policy columnist for *The Washington Post*, urged the Obama administration to work with Kurdistan and to, quite bluntly, pay attention to our efforts to establish strong and direct security relations between the Kurdistan Regional Government and the U.S.

**"It is a good time, Mr. President, to get to know the Kurds – and their ambitions," Mr.**

**Hoagland wrote.**

We could not agree more.

Thank you very much. I look forward to your comments and questions.

-END-

**University of Central Florida  
Student Union, Garden Key Room  
Orlando, Florida  
September 9, 2010, 3 p.m.**

**Peering Around The Corner**  
**The Next Steps for the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq's  
Political Evolution**

Good afternoon and thank you for having me participate in this timely and important discussion. I like to think that I am in a room with many, many like minded individuals. Young, determined professionals – educators - veterans of the world - and individuals who are driven to change, to stimulate discussion and to create action. I, of course, count myself among those ranks – so I look forward to a discussion with much good give-and-take and some wonderful takeaway ideas.

I want to thank those who invited me to be here and who helped organized this event, especially John Bersia, the Special Assistant to the university President for Global Perspectives, and Gabriela Othon, the Program and Research Coordinator. We all share a love of knowledge and education that makes these events so very compelling and meaningful.

This is a very special place to me. UCF is the home of ONE of the first ever chair in Kurdish studies – an honor that has been thrilling to me and all Kurds since it was inaugurated two years ago. Here is where the first steps were taken toward greater cooperation and knowledge between our two unique regions, one that generates understanding and opportunity for Florida and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

It is also special since just two hours down Interstate 4 is Tampa, which is the home of Central Command. They are also our good friends; like many of you here, they also care about the Kurds and our shared values and shared dreams. So we Kurds look to Central Florida as a particularly heartfelt place, one with this unique confluence of cultural and creative commitment to the Kurdistan Region coming from the UCF, as well as the military creativity and determination of Central Command. These are elements that helped secure the liberation and freedom of the Kurdistan Region and of Iraq and then worked to ensure that the democracy that has emerged continues to be strong and a good political and economic partner with the United States.

Since I was last here on campus in April 2008, we have seen a wonderful crescendo of news stories about the stability and progress in the Kurdistan

Region of Iraq – from tourists discovering its hidden joys to yet more businessmen and women realizing that the safety and progressiveness of the region offers a great opportunity for investment in Iraq and the Middle East.

We are thrilled that the world is learning that our hard work is paying off, that we are steady in our march along the path of democracy. We are delighted that we in the Kurdistan Region have done our part to help move all of Iraq forward. We are committed to that task - to making a federal, democratic Iraq a shining example for the world.

Now, of course, comes one of those benchmark moments – the formal end of U.S. combat operations in Iraq. President Obama has called it “turning the page.” It is a keen observation of this moment as to what is happening in Iraq, as in every story, one must turn the page to continue.

Crucially, however, IT IS vital to remember that turning the page is not the same as writing the next chapter. All of us in the Kurdistan Region know **HOW** we want this story to end. What concerns us is who the main characters are going to be, what those story elements are and, of course, if the story will unfold to the end in the way we wish.

We must also always remember that when one turns the page carelessly, one can get a severe paper cut. We wish to avoid that. We have had many sorrowful chapters in the history of Iraq; we have drawn enough blood. Now, we are determined to have new authors to our book of freedom.

So today, instead of turning the page – I suggest we all peer around the corner. To see where we are in this book and focus on which chapters make best sense to illustrate for our future.

The guarded language used to mark the end of the combat phase of America's adventure in Iraq is appropriate since the reality is that much of Iraq post-liberation is still unfinished.

For example, it is more than six months now since our national election and we still have no government. Why is that? Why does Iran have such prominent political sway in Iraq? Why is the status of Kirkuk and other disputed territories still unresolved? Why cannot Iraqis, who sit on one of the largest untapped sources of oil reserves in the world, finalize and implement a hydrocarbons law and a revenue sharing law? What if the political vacuums of today cause security

gains to unravel? Will insurgents wait until the U.S. force is so diminished they can again become a daily terror?

Kenneth Pollack, the director of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, recently noted that it is possible to imagine Iraq muddling on toward real peace, pluralism and even prosperity – but only “if it gets the right breaks and a fair amount of continuing help from the United States, the United Nations and its neighbors.”

More ominously, Pollack warned that extensive research on inter-communal civil wars – essentially wars like Iraq’s in which a breakdown in governance prompts different communities to fight one another for power – find a dangerous propensity toward returning to conflict. The studies show that roughly 50 percent of the time – half the time – war will reoccur within five years of any “ceasefire” – more so if the country has major lootable resources, such as gold, diamonds – or oil.

However – and this is crucial – if a great power is willing to make a long term commitment to serve as peacekeeper and mediator, the rate drops to one in three. “That is why an ongoing American commitment to Iraq is so important,” Pollack wrote.

And this is why we all must turn that page very carefully.

Our story from the Kurdistan Region has been uplifting. For much of the last seven years people throughout Iraq have voted with their feet every day and come to the Kurdistan Region because of what we have today and what will be there tomorrow. We are on a right path; we are writing the compelling chapters in the book.

Here is what *Foreign Affairs* magazine noted in August:

**“Landing at the international airport in Erbil, the capital of Kurdistan, one is immediately struck by the high level of economic activity that pervades all parts of the city. New highways, high-rises, and construction cranes punctuate the city’s skyline, which now includes modern office towers and the frame of a Kempinski luxury hotel. Traffic fills the streets, which bustle with pedestrians shopping for new cell phones and imported designer clothing. The city has a large amusement park, replete with roller coasters, bumper cars, and a large Ferris wheel. A nearby go-kart racing facility—recently built by an American from Galveston, Texas— attracts a steady stream of young adventure-seekers,**

while the bookish crowd can take refuge in a brand-new, multi-level public library. Sulaimaniyah and Dohuk, respectively the second and third largest cities in Kurdistan, have seen a similar flurry of economic development.”

Obviously, we are pleased with the progress any visitor can immediately see upon coming to Kurdistan. After decades of oppression, our citizens deserve the chance to have their most dangerous moment come as a roller coaster races down a track or they dodge a go-kart or bumper car – even if the G-force is not quite up there yet with the **Aerosmith Rock N Roller Coaster**. (*This is the fastest coaster in the Disney World complex*). We want these good times to stay and multiply, not just in Kurdistan but through all of Iraq.

Yet we – like many others – are uncertain of that foundation.

The U.S. military is leaving, but the stability that will define the U.S. success in Iraq cannot and must not leave. That is why we were thrilled when U.S. officials announced they plan to open a diplomatic consulate in Erbil, the capital of the Kurdistan Region, and in Basra, as well as maintain temporary facilities in Mosul and Kirkuk. We see this decision as one in a series of steps by the United States to honor the pledges of President Obama and others for renewed and continued

support to the Kurdistan Region as part of its desire to ensure that stability stays in Iraq.

The implications of stability – or lack of it – are clear.

As I noted, there remain tough internal issues that we Iraqis must work out – revenue sharing, a hydrocarbons law, the future of the disputed territories. Solving these issues is a great priority to our friends in the United States. We realize this and look to whatever guidance and support they can give us. But solving these issues is even a greater priority to us.

Some of the positive changes in the Kurdistan Region are the result of old fashioned hard work and determination, to get to the next goal. Some are the result of help from old friends like the United States and surprisingly newer friends, like Turkey. I must be honest – I would have never predicted that by my next visit here Turkey would have opened a diplomatic consular office in Erbil. Two years ago, Turkey would not even acknowledge our existence as a constitutionally recognized region of Iraq! Their officials would not talk to our officials, despite close economic ties that existed and a vivid need for political dialogue to solve important problems.

The Kurdistan Region has been called many things, depending on if the caller is a friend or a foe. But it is indeed the one entity that, through fits and starts, has moved forward in fulfilling its pledges of democracy. It has not been easy and it certainly has not always been neat and tidy. But it is happening and Congress and the Obama administration should reflect on just how important this is for all of Iraq and the region and avoid actions – intentional or otherwise – that would impede or diminish this laudable progress.

Our Region remains the gateway for both democratic and economic development for all of Iraq. It has been almost two decades since the first glimmers of democracy began to shine in Iraqi Kurdistan, thanks in large part to the no-fly zone protection offered to us by the U.S., Britain and France after the 1991 Gulf War. Kurds have used those years wisely in planting the roots of free enterprise and democracy in the parts of Iraq where they live – ready for the day that all Iraqis would be liberated from the tyranny of Saddam Hussein.

Today the government and political parties in the Kurdistan Region have moved from opposition to a dictator to full participants in an emerging democracy.

When those in Iraqi Kurdistan speak of democracy, they know of what it means in its challenges and its triumphs. Here are just a few examples:

- In the seven years since the 2003 U.S. intervention, the Kurdistan Region has taken steps to further secure the religious freedom of ALL who chose to live in the region.
- In the seven years since the U.S. intervention, the Kurdistan Region has moved to ensure that the press is freer -- including the passage of arguably the most progressive free press law in the region.
- Seven years after our liberation, we are the strongest friend and ally the United States has in our part of Eurasia. Our home is the place where not one American nor foreigner has been killed in a hostile action, the place where Christians and others fleeing religious persecution from elsewhere in Iraq come to find sanctuary and a future, the place where those seeking to invest find our new economy vibrant, promising and full of opportunity.
- In our regional election last year, more than 80 percent of those eligible to vote did so. In the results, 30 percent of the seats elected that day went to women, a new benchmark for democracy in the region -- and a higher percentage than any other nation or region in the Middle East and much of the world. It is even better than Iraq, where the national constitution

requires 25 percent female representation. Voters also sent representation from EVERY constituency within the Kurdistan Region -- Turkoman, Christians, and Armenians. And for the first time, we have a vibrant opposition with the legislature.

The American president John Adams wrote that "(legislatures] should be an exact portrait, in miniature, of the people at large, as it should think, feel, reason, and act like them." That is what the KRG assembly is on path to become.

Those are good accomplishments for seven years. But they are not enough.

Thanks to the intervention of the U.S. and others in the 1991 Gulf War, and then the final liberation in 2003, Kurds have a region of Iraq that is safe and full of hope. Many of us feel we are living the dream – while not an independent country, we are part of a nation that is learning how to be a democracy, where our experiences are helping shape the new Iraq.

I realize the strong feelings and the differences of opinion in the U.S. regarding the war in Iraq. I know what the steep cost has been to Americans, in your sons and daughters, husbands and sisters, to your national treasure and to the sharp

politics it has created within this great nation. As a Kurd, however, I am thankful for what the U.S. did – it was our liberation and that of all Iraq.

We realize the sacrifices you have made for us. We intend to honor them and to “earn it.”

Here is some of the ways we are shaping our new society.

The KRG has acknowledged shortcomings in governance, in transparency and the important need to address corruption. To act on its good governance pledge, the KRG has teamed up with world renowned consultant Price Waterhouse Cooper to review the way their government works and present an action plan to address these crucial issues.

While that is going on, the KRG took determined steps to strengthen the judiciary and the rule of law -- another vital element needed to build a strong democracy. Since I was last here, the judiciary was separated from the rest of the government to create an independent judiciary in Iraqi Kurdistan. That judiciary now is learning how to stand on its own feet, be objective and to uphold the rule of law.

Also since I was last here, the KRG has been working to implement effective power and water distribution projects for the key cities, including dealing with TWO failing hydroelectric dams in 2008. Today, their energy projects are nearing completion and there will be an average of 20 hours of power in major cities in the region – up from three hours last year. Now we know there are 24 hours in a day – but we certainly are closer and moving in the right direction.

Likewise, recent completion of a large scale water project in Suleimani complemented a similar project completed in 2008 in Erbil. Those projects will combine with existing systems to provide clean water to Erbil, Dohuk and Suleimani cities – almost 3 million people out of a population of 3.8 million. So that is also getting better.

Some pundits are eager to declare that the Kurdistan Region is a mess because it is not perfect after 17 years. That is nonsense. There are no shortcuts to democracy. It is hard work, but the destination is worth it.

The same is true throughout all of Iraq. As we work to form a national government, the Kurdish bloc is united. We may represent different political parties but we all represent the Kurds.

Now I must say clearly and bluntly that I am not making excuses about the challenges we face in the Kurdistan Region. I am not justifying or rationalizing our less than perfect system, nor am I pretending that problems do not exist. I know we have, on occasion, stumbled, made mistakes and misread circumstances.

Democracy is hard work, but the destination is worth it. Difficult issues remain and the journey faces tough terrain. However, we are still moving forward. This is not a sprint and it should not be. This is the foundation of our future, for our children and grandchildren, for Kurdistan, and Iraq.

Thankfully, many recognize this imperative. In a column in August Jim Hoagland, the highly respected foreign policy columnist for *The Washington Post*, urged the Obama administration to work with Kurdistan and to, quite bluntly, pay attention to our efforts to establish strong and direct security relations between the Kurdistan Regional Government and the U.S.

**“It is a good time, Mr. President, to get to know the Kurds – and their ambitions,” Mr. Hoagland wrote.**

We agree and hope the White House listens.

We insist the next Iraqi government be fair to all of us, to respond to long-made – and long-ignored – promises to the Kurdistan Region. In many regards, Iraq has less services than it did just three years ago. As the U.S. military departs its “To Do” list still is longer than its “Completed” list. We need to get to the place where we can celebrate our country living in peace, where there is electricity and clean water, when people go to the park and feel safe, when children on the street look clean and are wearing new clothes, and when people can earn a living.

Now, at the start of these remarks I posed a series of questions -- why there is no national government in Iraq, when the status of Kirkuk and other disputed territories will be settled, and other very crucial issues. It is our wish that part of those answers will come from the next steps the KRG promotes in Iraq’s political evolution.

Most independent observers, including American military and diplomatic officials, said the possibility of a Kurd-Arab conflict is atop the list of dangers for the new Iraq. Such a conflict would be disastrous, of course. Such a conflict is NOT preordained – and it becomes less a possibility if we find the compromises needed to tackle our pressing challenges.

Let's start with revenue sharing and a national hydrocarbons law. We are now pumping oil in the Kurdistan Region – and those revenues, under the proposed sharing plan, will go FIRST into the national treasury. Then we will get our share, as will other parts of Iraq. This concept has not changed; we all seem to agree – yet some few details need to be solved. Here is what we propose: **(You have to fill it in).**

Likewise, for the hydrocarbons law, there are some facts on the ground – including that Iraqi is only extracting a scant amount of oil and natural gas that is could be producing and exporting. We all know the many values of oil and natural gas, in acquiring needed revenues for the nation and giving Iraq more political balance in the region. Here is what we proposed: **(AGAIN, fill in).**

Now, here is how it is important for other issues – notable Kirkuk. Many people like to cast the stalemate over Kirkuk as a battle for control of the oil that is in the ground in that province. That is a simplistic framing of the issue, but nevertheless that argument disappears if you have a national hydrocarbons law and a revenue sharing law. Why? Because no matter who is pumping the oil, the revenues flow into the national treasury. The Kurdistan Region will get its percentage share in the same amount from oil that comes from Kirkuk as well as oil that comes from Basra – as will everyone else.

Now, think of the other questions I raised, notable the influence of Iran or others. Without major issues to divide the people of Iraq, with a unifying economic force of oil production underway and revenues being shared, the potential for unwanted influence – for political mischief – is greatly reduced. That may not be the storyline some wish for Iraq, but we are the ones who should be writing those next chapters.

Alas, compromise is not a trait that has been in much evidence in Iraq. Now, as we try to form this new national government, Kurds remember the compromises

we made after the last national election. Today, the same major issues that pressed in on us then are still there, looming larger than before.

We need to bring those chapters to a close.

The Kurdistan Region can show how to do that. As John Bersia himself has said, and which we are pleased to repeat and repeat, Kurdistan has become known as “the Iraq that works” – developing a model government with increasingly democratic features and an economy based on free-market principles.

We completely concur.

Let’s work together to write those next chapters.

Thank you all very, very much.

**--END--**

**World Affairs Council of Columbia, S.C., August 18, 2010**

**The Palmetto Club**

**Columbia, S.C.**

**Who are the Kurds (and Why You Will Like the Answer)**

Good afternoon. It is a pleasure to be here. I want to thank the Columbia World Affairs Council for inviting me to join you today. A special thanks to your executive director, Sabrina Mandanas, for her work and efforts to make my stay here pleasant and for ensuring we all had the chance to relax and exchange thoughts.

If I may, I would like to start by asking you all a question:

What is it about the energy at this latitude of the 33rd parallel? What effect does this particular swath of Earth have on the people who live along this latitude in creating the character that is inside of them and the way they deal with the world?

I ask this for the obvious reason, in that both South Carolina and Kurdistan are in this same 33<sup>rd</sup> parallel latitude zone. We are almost the same size in land mass. In fact, minus its high mountains and adding some bodies of water, Kurdistan would be very similar to your state with regard to physical geography.

There are other remarkable similarities that I have found between us. For example, humans arrived in the area of South Carolina around 13,000 BC. These people were hunters with crude tools made from stones and bones and are considered among the earliest of traces of humans in North America. In Kurdistan, archeologists found some of the oldest human fossils ever, in the Shanidar cave, that now are a centerpiece attraction in the Smithsonian Natural History Museum. It seems we both were at the starting point in human evolution.

And look how we both have evolved. Arguably, there are not likely two more feisty groups of people in the world.

That is one similarity that continues to resonate today. Your history is marked by an enduring attachment to political independence, no matter what the configuration of the government. You were the first colonists who were a thorn to the British and once they

departed you were a thorn to the U.S. government, the Confederacy and then the U.S. government again! That sounds like us Kurds. Be it Persians or Turks or Arabs or anyone else, no matter who ruled us, they never really ruled us – certainly not our minds nor hearts nor souls.

Sound familiar?

In short, if I may be so bold, I say we Kurds are the gamecocks of our part of Eurasia. And as anyone in the SEC can tell you, one does not want to tangle with a gamecock.

For a long time, Kurds used to say we have no friends but the mountains. Thankfully, that is less the case today. Our greatest friends have long been here in the United States, including four from this state.

Sen. Lindsey Graham visited last year, around the time of our historic regional election. So has your congressman, Joe Wilson, who is co-chair of the Congressional Kurdish American Caucus. Congressmen James Clyburn and Gresham Barrett have also visited – meaning that half of the South Carolina congressional delegation has been to Kurdistan. That is better than any other state.

So I was eager to come to Columbia, to both speak to you and to pay homage to those from your state who have visited my home. Family, friends and loyalty are enduring traits of Kurds, along with hospitality. We feel our friends in South Carolina are family. I wanted to thank them in their homeland.

In the past few years we have made new friends in some of the most unlikely places. Those friends are the product of our democracy, a system that we owe very much to the United States and others who believe in us. We thank you for that.

So who are we Kurds? And what will happen next in Iraq and Kurdistan? I say the first question with a slight smile, because it is asked more frequently than you may expect, where people say, somewhat bashfully, “Well, what is a Kurd?” And I am happy to respond.

The answer today is we are the strongest friend and ally the United States has in our part of Eurasia. Our home is the place with the most progressive press law in the region, the place with a higher percentage of women in our legislature than most of the

nations in the world, the place where not one American nor foreigner has been killed in a hostile action, the place where Christians, Jews and others fleeing religious persecution from elsewhere in Iraq come to find sanctuary and a future.

We are the place where those seeking to invest – from some of our newest friends like the Koreans to those who were once foes, like Turkey – find our new economy vibrant, promising and full of opportunity.

Don't just take my word for it. Here is what *Time* magazine wrote in early August week about Kurdistan:

**“Foreigners can go about freely, crimes and violence against visitors are unheard of, and the most daunting tasks are finding one's way through labyrinthine local bazaars and keeping pace with the legendary Kurdish hospitality.**

**“In Kurdistan, against the backdrop of the snow-capped Qandil Mountains, a frenetic frontier economy is being driven by the promise of petrodollars from the region's estimated 25 billion barrels of proven oil reserves. Development is intense. New hotels, shopping malls and housing tracts are springing up to meet Arbil's surging population of more than 1 million. The bars in Ankawa, the city's laid-back Christian quarter, are a heady mixture of oilmen, contractors, journalists, security teams, aid workers and, increasingly, tourists.”**

Likewise, here is what *Foreign Affairs* magazine noted, also this month:

**“Landing at the international airport in Erbil, the capital of Kurdistan, one is immediately struck by the high level of economic activity that pervades all parts of the city. New highways, high-rises, and construction cranes punctuate the city's skyline, which now includes modern office towers and the frame of a Kempinski luxury hotel. Traffic fills the streets, which bustle with pedestrians shopping for new cell phones and imported designer clothing. The city has a large amusement park, replete with roller coasters, bumper cars, and a large Ferris wheel. A nearby go-kart racing facility – recently built by an American from Galveston, Texas – attracts a**

steady stream of young adventure-seekers, while the bookish crowd can take refuge in a brand-new, multi-level public library. Sulaimaniyah and Dohuk, respectively the second and third largest cities in Kurdistan, have seen a similar flurry of economic development.”

Obviously, we are pleased with the progress any visitor can immediately see upon coming to Kurdistan. After decades of oppression, our citizens deserve the chance to have their most dangerous moment come as a roller coaster races down a track. We want these good times to stay and multiply, not just in Kurdistan but through all of Iraq.

And that is in part why I am here today.

We are in a crucial time in Iraq and we are both optimistic and concerned. As the U.S. begins its military withdrawal this month, other nations have already started to try to fill the vacuum. Nature abhors a vacuum and so do we Kurds. While we are reveling in our efforts to democratize and develop, we must remember we are part of Iraq.

How the U.S. leaves – and remains – in Iraq – is crucial to the stability of the nation and the region. We hope that as the U.S. leaves militarily, it will increase its diplomatic effort. We are thrilled, for example, that the U.S. plans to open a diplomatic counsel in Erbil – following the lead of other nations. An increased U.S. diplomatic engagement in Kurdistan will cement the gains we have all made working together.

We fear, however, that the U.S. engagement may be tentative and diminished, that attention is being diverted elsewhere when some of it still needs to be in Iraq and in Kurdistan. To cement and ensure the hard-fought gains of all of us remain.

Thankfully, many recognize this imperative. In a column earlier this month Jim Hoagland, the highly respected foreign policy columnist for *The Washington Post*, urged the Obama administration to work with Kurdistan and to, quite bluntly, pay attention to our efforts to establish strong and direct security relations between the Kurdistan Regional Government and the U.S.

**“It is a good time, Mr. President, to get to know the Kurds – and their ambitions,” Mr. Hoagland wrote.**

We could not agree more.

Fulfilling our democratic aspirations is the key to us. I am quite proud of how democracy is finding a welcome in the Kurdistan Region. None of us had any experience in building a democracy before the opportunity presented itself. But from the moment the political dynamic changed in Iraq in 1991, and then again in 2003, we have been taking steps to ensure that our opportunity is not wasted.

Just over a year ago, we held regional elections that were all about the maturing of our society, the emphasis on the nuts-and-bolts domestic issues that affect people every day of their lives. Turnout was more than 80 percent. On key national issues there was not much difference between the slates. Instead it was perspectives on government performance, roads, education, concerns regarding corruption, economic development, water and electricity that shaped the debates and decisions that led up to that vote. It was a clear marker in the shift from where Kurdish leaders were once hailed for their revolutionary skills to now, where they are chosen on their visions of governance and ability to make each person’s life better each day.

That was a clear indication that we do “get” democracy – right down to having a vocal and vibrant opposition. That was an important moment in our history.

Kurdistan, in many ways, seems a world apart from the rest of Iraq. Situated in the northern part of the country and bordering Turkey, Iran, and Syria, the Kurdish region of Iraq has a distinct history and topography. We Kurds are a unique ethnic group, different from Arabs, Persians, and Turks. About 4 million Kurds are in Iraq. We speak our own Indo-European language, Kurdish, which is now one of two official tongues in Iraq. Parts of Kurdistan are lush, but an austere series of mountains has defined the

region, supporting a nomadic culture in the past and providing sheltered areas in the days of our persecution and genocide from the venom of Saddam Hussein.

It is from our homeland that religious historians say the Three Wise Men set forth on their journey to Jerusalem. In fact, one of the world's ancient languages – Aramaic -- is still spoken in parts of Kurdistan. There is much more: Atop a prominent hill in Erbil sits the Citadel, the oldest continuously inhabited settlement on Earth. And Kurdistan is where the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates are found, which of course helped form the breadbasket that became Mesopotamia, one of the world's first great civilizations.

The shape of Kurdish territory and power has shifted over the centuries, reaching imperial heights during medieval times, sharing and contesting power in the modern era, and intermittently experiencing political marginalization, ethno-linguistic suppression, and outright oppression. At times, the Kurds seemed close to achieving statehood—as in 1920 when they unsuccessfully proposed autonomy in the Treaty of Sèvres, or in 1946 when they declared a short-lived republic inside Iran. In these and other instances, many Kurds felt that the Western powers ultimately “sold them out” in the name of Great Power politics, and this sense of betrayal still tinctures Kurdish-Western relations.

That is where we came from. Now we look to where we are today and – crucially – where we are heading for the future.

Thanks to the intervention of the U.S. and others in the 1991 Gulf War, and then the final liberation in 2003, Kurds have a region of Iraq that is safe and semi-autonomous. Many of us feel we are living the dream – while not an independent country, we are part of a nation that is learning how to be a democracy, where our experiences are helping shape the new Iraq.

I realize the strong feelings and the differences of opinion in the U.S. regarding the war in Iraq. I know what the steep cost has been to Americans, in your sons and daughters, husbands and sisters, to your national treasure and to the sharp politics it has created within this great nation. As a Kurd, however, I am thankful for what the U.S. did – it was our liberation and that of all Iraq.

Perhaps one of the lines from the Steven Spielberg film "Saving Private Ryan" is appropriate here. As the dying American squad leader sees Private Ryan for the first time, and explains the mission and the sacrifices made to save him, he says to young Ryan, "Earn It."

We realize the sacrifices you have made for us. We intend to honor them and to "earn it."

I think we have already begun - and that is one of the reasons I was eager to come to meet with you today. The website for our U.S. office is called "Know Kurdistan" and that is what I urge you and all others to do - to know Kurdistan. You will like what you discover. I know that once you learn about us you will find ways to invest in us - not just economic investment, which of course we would love. I also seek your moral investment, in our democracy that is fashioned after yours and in our drive to hammer the horrors and frustrations of the past into the plowshares for a more benevolent and engaging future.

We now must see how Iraqi leaders deal with the new found freedom that has been handed to her. For it is close to five months since the federal election and we have yet to form a government. There remain tough internal issues that we Iraqis must work out - revenue sharing, a hydrocarbons law, the future of the dispute territories. These issues will not go away by themselves. Solving them is a great priority to our friends in the United States. We realize this and look to whatever guidance and support they can give us. But solving these issues is even a greater priority to us.

While Iraqis of all walks of life have stood up to overcome the gravest of challenges, including terrorism, sectarian violence, political stalemates and regional interference, we remain well aware that in order for the U.S. to stand down, and Iraqis to stand up, in a sustainable and viable federal democracy, continued U.S. engagement, and more importantly, continued U.S. interest in Iraq is paramount.

A stable, relatively democratic Iraq, one that manages her vast natural resources responsibly, and utilizes the monumental income the country will receive from them, one that plays a productive and moderating role in an ever radicalizing region MUST be in the interests of the United States.

Ironically, it is we the Kurds, who have for years while fighting to gain our basic human rights, were always trying to bring down the brutal government in Iraq. Today, however, we are playing a leading role in building the new Iraq – a new Iraq based on new principles.

Knowing where we want to go – where we insist we MUST go – and persevering and pursuing that destination. Our journey to a democracy is not in a vacuum – it is shaped by the tragedies of the past, the opportunity of the present, and the aspirations of the future.

As many of you know, Kurds have been oppressed for most of the last century and most likely before that. So we are wary of too much power concentrated in the hands of a central government. We see the Iraqi constitution, which mandates federalism and a devolution of power to the regions and local governments, as the best way to ensure that ALL Iraqis feel safe as well as empowered. And importantly, the constitution is the law of the land – we follow it and expect others to do so as well.

Kurdish political demands are limited, but are fair, deserved and reasonable. Regional and Western policy-makers need to appreciate the role of the Kurds in Iraq, our sacrifices and our contributions. Kurdistan's commitment to being part of Iraq is unshakable and is not hedged. All we ask is to be treated fairly and to work WITH us.

Here is how we are earning your sacrifices.

We know corruption and its allies are dangerous enemies of democracy, because they eat at much of what we in the KRG and those living in Iraqi Kurdistan desire. They

make the public cautious about believing in democracy. Corruption and its allies can be an acid that disintegrate democratic progress – and we will not let that happen.

That is why we made a good governance initiative a priority. To that end, we teamed up with world-renowned consultants PriceWaterhouseCoopers to review current conditions, the way our government works and all governance related issues – to help us develop a clear-eyed, blunt critique and action plan to address the crucial issues of good governance, anti corruption and transparency.

Good governance is a major pillar to securing our democracy. We are confident the strategy outlined by our government, will help us tackle this vital issue.

We've made our region safe and secure. We've overcome our internal conflicts. We've established a system to provide improved services for our citizens. Now we're moving to guarantee that all of this progress is maintained and built upon. The benefits of this strategy are clear and vital for our future. It will help to ensure that public funds are used properly, and make government more efficient and more effective. It will improve the delivery of services to the people of the Kurdistan Region. And it will help improve international and domestic confidence and increase investment and job development, while helping to raise the living standards of our Region.

We understand that democracy is an evolutionary process, both in Iraq and elsewhere. And it is more than just a philosophy. But key to securing our people's trust will be how we deliver services.

For example, large-scale power generation and water delivery progress cannot be bought off the shelf. We have been working for several years to implement effective power and water distribution projects for the key cities. In 2008 the KRG had to deal

with TWO failing hydroelectric dams, with the result that government generated electricity fell to only three hours a day in the region.

Of course we found that unacceptable.

Today, our energy projects are nearing completion. We now will have close to 20 hours of power in major cities in the region – far more than much of Iraq.

We know there are 24 hours in a day. But we also know that what we have now is far better than 3 hours. It is a journey.

Likewise, recent completion of large scale water projects in our two largest cities will combine with existing systems to provide clean water to much of our region. So that too is getting better.

These are significant accomplishments that have been accomplished by the KRG, and Kurdistan's developing private sector. These are the fundamental critical issues that need to be addressed so that those living in Iraqi Kurdistan have the basic needs to start each day with hope and freedom from want.

Providing such essential services is only part of good governance. While that is going on, we have also taken determined steps to strengthen the judiciary and the rule of law -- another vital element needed to build a strong democracy.

In 2008 the judiciary was separated from the rest of the government to create an independent judiciary in Iraqi Kurdistan. That judiciary now is learning how to stand on its own feet, be objective and to uphold the rule of law.

We did this our own. We knew it was the right thing to do. We took these initiatives because this is part of what democracy entails.

I am the first to admit that we have a ways to go, and that's why we need the continued engagement of our friends in the United States.

While we are not a perfect democracy, we are democratizing. We have a vibrant civil society, a free press, and an emerging market oriented private sector. We are recognizing our shortcomings and addressing them, including some issues that were once culturally taboo.

Now I must say clearly and bluntly that I am not making excuses about the challenges we face in Iraqi Kurdistan. I am not justifying or rationalizing our less than perfect system, nor am I pretending that problems do not exist. I know we have, on occasion, stumbled, made mistakes and misread circumstances.

Now, we all must govern wisely and fairly.

Democracy is a living concept. It is not always the same in each nation. Those differences do not devalue it - they actually strengthen it. Many different voices toward a common, important goal.

Quite frankly, I get tired of these folks who pick the smallest thing wrong and make it into the proverbial mountain out of a molehill. Enough. Look at our history - when we are cornered, we fight to survive. Just like any normal human community. When we are offered the hand of friendship, of cooperation, we accept and work together.

It is not just Kurds who feel this way, although our history in Iraq is more challenged than others. Millions of Iraqis suffered harm under Saddam and suffered harm from the policies of the world that let him fester in the region and feast on us.

We say never again.

It has often been declared that Kurds and Arabs are like oil and water, in that they do not mix. Well, Iraq is an artificially created country that has both the assets of oil and water – and both of those assets, the natural and the human oil and water, must mix to help us build a truly great nation. Mix they shall.

For decades we Kurds saw ourselves as David, struggling against a multitude of Goliaths. Then in 2003 after the fall of Saddam, some began calling us kingmakers. Today we have moved beyond such metaphors and are working to fulfill our constitutional role as a regional government within a healthy, stable and thriving Iraqi democracy. We are men and women who have endured many years of oppression and are now working to ensure that Iraq stays on its path of promise. We will stand for what is right, to make fair compromises to move our nation forward, do whatever we can do that is proper to protect what we have in Kurdistan and what we all CAN have in Iraq. We ask for the hand of equality and cooperation, and then the stability we all desire will arrive.

Democracy is hard work, but the destination is worth it. Difficult issues remain and the journey faces tough terrain. However, we are still moving forward. This is not a sprint and it should not be. This is the foundation of our future, for our children and grandchildren, for Kurdistan, and Iraq.

And we deeply wish that the United States stand with us, in Kurdistan, and Iraq, as we continue on the journey.

Thank you very much. I look forward to your comments and questions.

-END-

**World Affairs Council of Denver, August 9, 2010**

**Denver, Colorado**

***Who are the Kurds (and Why You Will Like the Answer)***

Good evening. It is a pleasure to be here. I want to thank you for the invitation to join you. I had to smile when one of my staff suggested I fly out here a day early to acclimate to the higher elevations of your mountains. Perhaps one of the first things that is important to know about the Kurds is that our mountains are the backbone of our soul and of our history. Like your Rockies, they give us majesty and strength – and distinguish us in ways that you who live in Colorado can fully appreciate.

Now, if you could just assist us in developing a few world class ski resorts as you have, we will indeed be the best of friends forever.

For a long time, Kurds used to say we have no friends but the mountains. Thankfully, that is less the case today. Our greatest friends are here in the United States, but in the past few years we have made new friends in some of the most unlikely places. Those friends are the product of our democracy, a system that we owe very much to the United States and others who believe in us and our friendship.

So who are we Kurds? I say this question with a slight smile, because it is asked more frequently than you may expect, where people say, somewhat bashfully, “Well, what is a Kurd?” And I am happy to respond.

The answer today is we are the strongest friend and ally the United States has in our part of Eurasia. Our home is the place with the most progressive press law in the region, the place with a higher percentage of women in our legislature than most of the nations in the world, the place where not one American nor foreigner has been killed in a hostile action, the place where Christians, Jews and others fleeing religious persecution from elsewhere in Iraq come to find sanctuary and a future.

We are the place where those seeking to invest – from some of our newest friends like the Koreans to those who were once foes, like Turkey – find our new economy vibrant, promising and full of opportunity.

And we are just outside your door. For example, just a few minutes ago (5:59 p.m. MST) Lufthansa flight #447 left Denver International Airport bound for Frankfurt, Germany. Tomorrow morning, when you land in Germany, you can have a coffee and pastry and then board a second Lufthansa flight non-stop to Erbil, the capital on Kurdistan region. By tomorrow night, you will be in my homeland enjoying a tasty kebab and having a much tastier coffee.

Kurdistan, in many ways, seems a world apart from the rest of Iraq. Situated in the northern part of the country and bordering Turkey, Iran, and Syria, the Kurdish region of Iraq (constitutionally organized into a formal association of three provinces) has a distinct history and topography. Kurds are a unique ethnic group, different from Arabs, Persians, and Turks. Spread across Arab and Persian nations alike, they number close to twenty-five million. Kurds speak their own Indo-European language, Kurdish, which is now one of two official tongues in Iraq. Parts of Kurdistan are lush, but an austere series of mountains has defined the region, supporting a nomadic culture in the past and providing sheltered areas in the days of our persecution and genocide from the venom of Saddam Hussein.

It is from our homeland that religious historians say the Three Wise Men set forth on their journey to Jerusalem. In fact, one of the ancient languages of Christianity (name it) is still spoken in parts of Kurdistan. It is here where the headwaters of the Tigris and Euphrates are found, which of course helped form the breakbasket that became Mesopotamia, the world's earliest civilizaiton.

The first mention of the Kurds in historical records was in cuneiform writings from the Sumerians (3,000 B.C.), who talked of the "land of the Karda." It would appear that from the earliest times the Kurds were generally unaffected by shifts in the empires around them, as they tended their flocks and obeyed their tribal leaders with a minimum of interference from outsiders. This lack of interference was very probably due to the inaccessibility of the area in which they lived, although they early on gained a reputation for being excellent fighters. At one time or another in their early history, some or all of them came under the dominance of the Sumerians, the Akkadians, the Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Parthians, the Persians, the Romans, and the Armenians.

In the 7th century A.D., the Arabs conquered the area and in time converted everyone in it including the Kurds to Islam. The Kurdish area became a border area between the

Muslim Caliphate and the Christian Byzantine Empire, and the Caliphate utilized Kurdish troops in securing the frontier area against the Byzantines based in Istanbul.

In the centuries that followed, the Kurds withstood the invasions from Central Asia which brought the Turkic peoples as far west as Asia Minor (now Turkey), again probably because they occupied an area too difficult for outsiders to reach.

As the Ottoman Empire rose to power in the 13th through 15th centuries; it extended its territory to what is roughly now the border between Iran and Iraq. From then until World War I, the area inhabited by the Kurds was about three-fourths subject to the Ottomans and one-fourth subject to the Persians. Under both, the Kurds enjoyed a considerable amount of autonomy: The Kurdish princes who had allied themselves with the Ottoman Sultan, for example, were set up as vassals of the Ottoman Empire, and the areas under their command became autonomous principalities.

Both empires made extensive use of Kurdish military prowess, and as a consequence Kurd often fought Kurd on behalf of the Ottoman or Persian government. The Kurdish areas in present-day Turkmenistan and Khorasan in northeastern Iran were originally settled as military colonies to protect border areas of the Persian Empire.

The Kurdish principalities in both empires cultivated literature and arts to a considerable extent, and small educated Kurdish elite gradually developed. In the 19th century, the same drive toward national identity that was spreading among the Arabs also influenced the Kurdish elite, but for the most part the several small Kurdish rebellions against the Ottomans were prompted by a sense of injustice on the part of local tribal leaders. These rebellions were promptly suppressed by the Ottoman government, and, as they threatened the weakening empire, led to the imposition of direct Turkish rule on the previously autonomous Kurdish principalities.

### **The Kurds in Modern Iraq**

In the days of the Ottoman and Persian empires, the Kurds of the area bordering the two had been an intermittent irritant to both the Ottoman Sultans and the Persian Shahs. After World War I, however, Kurdish antagonism more seriously threatened Iran and the new nations of Turkey and Iraq, as their governments struggled to free themselves of foreign domination and maintain control over their territories.

In the dividing up of the old Ottoman Empire that took place after World War I, the new country of Iraq was formed from the Ottoman wilayets of Baghdad, Basra, and also

Mosul with its Kurds and its oil fields. The disposition of Mosul was the cause of much skirmishing among the powers involved, but the British who were to administer the new Iraq prevailed, and in 1925 it was finally attached to Iraq. The Kurds had no voice in the discussions.

The shape of Kurdish territory and power has shifted over the centuries, reaching imperial heights during medieval times, sharing and contesting power in the modern era, and intermittently experiencing political marginalization, ethno-linguistic suppression, and outright oppression. At times, the Kurds seemed close to achieving statehood—as in 1920 when they unsuccessfully proposed autonomy in the Treaty of Sèvres, or in 1946 when they declared a short-lived republic inside Iran. In these and other instances, many Kurds felt that the Western powers ultimately “sold them out” in the name of Great Power politics, and this sense of betrayal still tinctures Kurdish-Western relations.

Now – thanks to the intervention of the U.S. and others in the 1991 Gulf War, and then the final liberation in 2003 – Kurds have a region of Iraq that is safe and semi-autonomous. Many of us feel we are living the dream – while not an independent nation, we are part of a nation that is learning how to be a democracy, where our experiences are helping shape the new Iraq.

We represent what many have declared is impossible – a moderate region which practices Islam but believes in the hope and history of democracy.

We intend to build on the opportunity that has finally reached us and that is one of the reasons I was eager to come to meet with you today. I urge you to learn about us and, of course, to find ways to invest in us – not just economic investment, which of course we would love. I also seek your moral investment, in our democracy that is fashioned after yours and in our drive to hammer the mistakes of the past into the plowshares for a more cheriable future.

Fulfilling our democratic aspirations is the key to us. I am quite proud of how democracy is finding a welcome in the Kurdistan Region. None of us had any

experience in building a democracy before the opportunity presented itself. But from the moment the political dynamic changed in Iraq in 1992, and then again in 2003, we have been taking steps to ensure that our opportunity is not wasted.

Just over a year ago, we held regional elections that were all about the maturing of our society, the emphasis on the nuts-and-bolts domestic issues that affect people every day of their lives. On key national issues there was not much difference between the slates. Instead it was perspectives on government performance, roads, education, concerns regarding corruption, economic development, water and electricity that shaped the debates and decisions that led up to the July 25 vote. It was a clear marker in the shift from where Kurdish leaders were once hailed for their revolutionary skills to now, where they are chosen on their visions of governance and ability to make each person's life better each day.

Those elections produced a vibrant opposition within the Kurdistan parliament, the first ever. It resulted in more than 30 percent of women being elected to our parliament.

The Kurdistan Region showed the rest of Iraq and the world what we all knew: that we know how to take strong steps to make our country better — that we know how to stand up for democracy. We are capable to lead Iraq to a new era, as we have proven. We overcame our internal conflicts to establish a Regional government that united the warring political parties. We have worked hard to secure our area from the scourge of terrorism and extremism. We are proud today that not one American has been killed, injured in combat or kidnapped in the Kurdistan Region.

How the U.S. leaves — and remains — in Iraq — is crucial to the stability of the nation and the region. There remain tough internal issues that we Iraqis must work out — revenue sharing, a hydrocarbons law, the future of the dispute territories. Solving these issues is a great priority to our friends in the United States. We realize this and look to whatever

guidance and support they can give us. But solving these issues is even a greater priority to us.

While Iraqis of all walks of life have stood up to overcome the gravest of challenges, including terrorism, sectarian violence, political stalemates and regional interference, we remain well aware that in order for the U.S. to stand down, and Iraqis to stand up, in a sustainable and viable federal democracy, continued U.S. engagement, and more importantly, continued U.S. interest in Iraq is paramount.

When we talk about the future of Iraq, here are some points that we feel need to be recognized and appreciated:

- We seek a long term, positive and growing relationship with the United States. We represent what many have declared is impossible – a moderate region which practice Islam but believes in the hope and history of democracy. A coalition of moderate Islam nations and moderate Islam populations, of which the KRI and Iraq is a part, would be a major step forward to a more peaceful world. US strategic interests are best served by close, true working relationships with a coalition of moderate nations.
- The Kurdish people, as well as the KRG, want to continue to build the democracy that we started in 1991 and then accelerated after 2003. We see Iraqi Kurdistan as the gateway for both DEMOCRATIC development and ECONOMIC development for all of Iraq. As citizens of Iraq, we are grateful to have this opportunity to help the nation move forward.
- As many of you know, Kurds have been oppressed for most of the last century and most likely before that. So we are wary of too much power concentrated in the hands of a central government. We see the Iraqi constitution, which mandates federalism and a devolution of power to the regions and local governments, as the best way to ensure that ALL Iraqis feel safe as well as empowered. And importantly, the constitution is the law of the land – we follow it and expect others to do so as well.
- We have a democracy. It is a new democracy. It is an imperfect democracy – but indeed, it is a true foundation for a strong, vibrant democracy. We have a new press freedom law, which no one else has. When we had our regional elections in July, more than 30 percent of those elected were women – far, far better than anywhere else. EVERY religion and sect that lives in Iraqi Kurdistan is represented and voting in our parliament. All independent observers declared

our election free and without incidents – a gold standard, according to some U.S. politicians. We agree. We are not a perfect democracy, but we are on the right path.

- Kurdish political demands are limited, but are fair, deserved and reasonable. The intricate web of relationships between Kurds and regional states means that the future of the Middle East is closely tied to Kurdish futures. Regional and Western policy-makers need to appreciate the role of the Kurds in Iraq, our sacrifices and our contributions. All we ask is to be treated fairly and to work WITH us.
- Article 140 needs to be understood clearly.
- Kurdistan's commitment to being part of Iraq is unshakable and is not hedged.
- It is not accurate (nor fair) to deny the progress being made in Iraqi Kurdistan on a plethora of key benchmark issues – free elections, rights for women and minorities, transparency, security and the war against terrorism, press freedom and democratic principles.

As I look at the journey of democracy that is underway in the Kurdistan Region, something the Greek poet Homer once said keeps returning to my mind – “It is not the journey but the destination.” In 17 years since the first elected Regional Government of Kurdistan, those of us who believe in democracy have mapped out our journey and know the destination to which we head. The path has been bumpy – at times very bumpy – and sometimes the route has been obscured. On occasion, the journey has faced roadblocks, some that we have placed for ourselves. But each day, each week, each month, the journey moves forward toward that destination of democracy.

That, to me, is the key.

Knowing where we want to go – where we insist we **MUST** go – and persevering and pursuing that destination.

The elections last year, our commitment to transparency and reform, are just the latest ingredients of this fervent desire for democracy, peace and opportunity in Iraqi Kurdistan. Decades of oppression and persecution, years of calculated destruction of our homes and genocide of our

people, a civil war – all have steeled us with resolve to ensure a better life for our children, our grandchildren and our homeland.

This journey to a democracy is not in a vacuum – it is shaped by the tragedies of the past, the opportunity of the present, and the aspirations of the future.

That is why the world saw so much excitement and passion in the weeks leading up to the July election and in the turnout for the vote. The people of Iraqi Kurdistan are committed to their vision of the future. We have only had 17 years in order to build the foundations for a democratic society. We all know we have much to do. There are many changes to come; just as we have made important progress already, so we will continue to make progress in the future.

We also want to see what we have started blossom throughout Iraq.

Delivery of services, transparency of government and concerns over possible corruption were much talked about issues in the campaigns and rallies and the votes cast at the ballot boxes sent us a clear message – it cannot be business as usual in our approach to tackling these important concerns.

July also was the month when the KRG took another major step to ensuring it can be even more transparent and efficient in its governing. We made a good governance initiative a priority. To that end, we teamed up with world-renowned consultants PriceWaterhouseCoopers to review current conditions, the way our government works and all governance related issues – to help us develop a clear-eyed, blunt critique and action plan to address the crucial issues of good governance, anti corruption and transparency.

We know corruption and its allies are dangerous enemies of democracy, because they eat at much of what we in the KRG and those living in Iraqi Kurdistan desire. They make the public cautious about believing in democracy. Corruption and its allies can be an acid that disintegrate democratic progress – and we will not let that happen.

Good governance is a major pillar to securing our democracy. We are confident the strategy outlined by our government, will help us tackle this vital issue.

We've made our region safe and secure. We've overcome our internal conflicts. We've established a system to provide improved services for our citizens. Now we're moving to guarantee that all of this progress is maintained and built upon. The benefits of this strategy are clear and vital for our future. It will help to ensure that public funds are used properly, and make government more efficient and more effective. It will improve the delivery of services to the people of the Kurdistan Region. And it will help improve international and domestic confidence and increase investment and job development, while helping to raise the living standards of our Region.

We understand that democracy is an evolutionary process, both in Iraq and elsewhere.

A young America saw political turmoil through trial and error. Only after a few years of uncertainty and eventual stability, and a decreased threat from outside, did its leaders produce the Constitution of the United States – a document whose noble ideals have been embraced for centuries by freedom seeking people around the world.

Democracy takes time, and the U.S. is more than aware of this fact. That is why we began to act long before the outside world wagged their fingers at us.

For example, large-scale power generation and water delivery progress cannot be bought off the shelf. We have been working for several years to implement effective power and water distribution projects for the key cities. In 2008 the KRG had to deal with TWO failing hydroelectric dams, with the result that government generated electricity fell to only three hours a day in the region.

Of course we found that unacceptable.

Today, our energy projects are nearing completion. We now will have more than 18 hours of power in major cities in the region.

We know there are 24 hours in a day. But we also know that 18 hours is far better than 3 hours. It is a journey.

Likewise, recent completion of a large scale water project in Suleimani complemented a similar project completed in 2008 in Erbil. Those projects will combine with existing

systems to provide clean water to much of the Erbil, Dohuk and Suleimani provinces. So that is also getting better.

These are significant accomplishments that have been accomplished by the KRG, and Kurdistan's developing private sector, as the fundamental critical issues that need to be addressed so that those living in Iraqi Kurdistan have the basic needs to start each day with hope and freedom from want.

Providing such essential services is only part of good governance. While that is going on, we have also taken determined steps to strengthen the judiciary and the rule of law -- another vital element needed to build a strong democracy.

In 2008 the judiciary was separated from the rest of the government to create an independent judiciary in Iraqi Kurdistan. That judiciary now is learning how to stand on its own feet, be objective and to uphold the rule of law.

We did this our own. We knew it was the right thing to do. We took these initiatives because this is part of what democracy entails.

This is how we stand up and lead.

These are not the only priorities being pursued. A new press freedom law was passed; religious freedom was strengthened, health care, infrastructure, education reforms are being addressed -- and many more.

Now I must say clearly and bluntly that I am not making excuses about the challenges we face in Iraqi Kurdistan. I am not justifying or rationalizing our less than perfect system, nor am I pretending that problems do not exist. I know we have, on occasion, stumbled, made mistakes and misread circumstances.

Democracy is hard work, but the destination is worth it. Difficult issues remain and the journey faces tough terrain. However, we are still moving forward. This is not a sprint and it should not be. This is the foundation of our future, for our children and grandchildren, for Kurdistan, and Iraq.

Earlier in these remarks, I quoted Homer's view of the journey and the destination. Homer has relevance not for just the statement. It was the Greeks who first developed the principles of democracy that the world has then built upon. Developed by the Greeks and idealized by Americans, democracy in all of its forms remains the most promising form of government ever developed. We in Iraqi Kurdistan are on that journey to the destination of democracy.

Thank you very much. I look forward to your comments and questions.

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Kurdistan can act as a bridge for international trade between the United States and Europe for Iraq and the Middle East. It provides excellent investment opportunities and already some companies (name some if you wish) have found that it is indeed profitable to do business in Kurdistan. We would hope that the ties between Central Florida and Kurdistan lead to formal cooperative ventures, to foster growth in areas of mutual benefit, including tourism, trade and investment and the advancement of technologies and to enhance educational, research, economic and cultural exchanges between Florida and Kurdistan, with out shared values and mutual interests.