

every ethnic religious and political grouping in Iraq, elected a national council. And I pledge to you today, we will prove them wrong again over the elections.

Our Independent Electoral Commission is working with the United Nations and our security forces to make these elections a reality. In 15 out of our 18 Iraqi provinces, we could hold elections tomorrow. Although this is not what we see in your media, it is a fact.

Your government, our government, and the United Nations are all helping us mobilize the necessary resources to fund voter registration and information programs. We will establish up to 30,000 polling sites, 130,000 election workers, and all other complex aspects of mounting a general election in a nation of 27 million before the end of January next.

We already know that terrorist and former regime elements will do all they can to disrupt these elections. There would be no greater success for the terrorists if we delay, and no greater blow when the elections take place, as they will, on schedule.

The Iraqi elections may not be perfect. They may not be the best elections that Iraq will ever hold. They will, no doubt, be an excuse for violence from those that despise liberty, as were the first elections in Sierra Leone, South Africa, or Indonesia. But they will take place, and they will be free and fair. And though they won't be the end of the journey towards democracy, they will be a giant step forward in Iraq's political evolution. They will pave the way for a government that reflects the world and has the confidence of the Iraqi people.

Ladies and gentlemen, this is our strategy for moving Iraq steadily towards security and democracy and the prosperity our people crave. But Iraq cannot accomplish this alone. The resolve and will of the Coalition in supporting a free Iraq is vital to our success.

The Iraqi government needs the help of the international community, the help of countries that not only believe in the Iraqi people, but also believe in the fight for freedom against tyranny and terrorism everywhere.

Already, Iraq has many partners. The transition in Iraq from brutal dictatorship to freedom and democracy is not only an Iraqi endeavor, it is an international one. More than 30 countries are represented in Iraq with troops on the ground in harm's way. We Iraqis are grateful for each and every one of these courageous men and women.

United Nations Resolution 1546, passed in June 2004, endorsed the Iraqi interim government and pledged international support for Iraq's upcoming elections.

The G8, the European Union, and NATO have also issued formal statements of support. NATO is now helping with one of Iraq's most urgent needs, the training of Iraqi security forces. I

am delighted by the new agreement to step up the pace and scope of this training.

The United Nations has reestablished its mission in Iraq. A new United Nations special representative has been appointed and a team of United Nations personnel is now operating in Baghdad. Many more nations have committed to Iraq's future in the form of economic aid.

We Iraqis are aware how international this effort truly is. But our opponents, the terrorists, also understand all too well that this is an international effort. And that is why they have targeted members of the Coalition.

I know the pain this causes. I know it is difficult, but the Coalition must stand firm. When governments negotiate with terrorists, everyone in the free world suffers. When political leaders sound the sirens of defeatism in the face of terrorism, it only encourages more violence. Working together, we will defeat the killers and will do this by refusing to bargain about our most fundamental principles.

Ladies and gentlemen, goodwill aside, I know that many observers around the world honestly wonder if we in Iraq really can restore our economy, be good neighbors, guarantee the democratic rule of law, and overcome the enemies who seek to tear us down.

I understand why, faced with the daily headlines, there are these doubts. I know, too, that there will be many more setbacks and obstacles to overcome. But these doubters underestimate our country, and they risk fueling the hopes of the terrorists.

Despite our problems, despite our recent history, no one should doubt that Iraq is a country of tremendous human resources and natural resources. Iraq is still a nation with an inspiring cultural tradition and an educated and civilized people. And Iraq is still a land made strong by its Islamic faith which teaches us tolerance, love, respect, and duty.

Above all, they risk underestimating the courage and determination of the Iraqi people to embrace democracy, peace and freedom, for the dreams of our families are the same as the dreams of families here in America and around the world.

There are those who want to divide our world. I appeal to you, who have done so much already to help us, to ensure they do not succeed. Do not allow them to say to Iraqis, to Arabs, to Muslims that we have only two models of government, brutal dictatorship or religious extremism. This is wrong.

Like Americans, we Iraqis want to enjoy the fruits of liberty. Half of the world's 1.5 billion Muslims already enjoy democratically elected governments. As Prime Minister Blair said to you last year when he stood here, "Any where, any time ordinary people are given the chance to choose, the choice is the same: freedom, not tyranny; democracy, not dictatorship; and the rule of law, not the rule of the secret police."

Do not let them convince others that the values of freedom, of tolerance and democracy are for you in the West but not for us. For the first time in our history, the Iraqi people can look forward to controlling our own destiny. This would not have been possible without the help and sacrifice of this country and its Coalition partners.

I thank you again from the bottom of my heart. And let me tell you as we meet our greatest challenge by building a democratic future, we the people of new Iraq will remember those who have stood by us.

As generous as you have been, we will stand with you, too. As stalwart as you have been, we will stand with you too. Neither tyranny nor terrorism has a place in our region or our world. And that is why we Iraqis will stand by you, America, in a war larger than either of our two nations: the global battle to live in freedom.

God bless you and thank you.

[Applause, the Members rising.]

At 10 o'clock and 39 minutes a.m., His Excellency Ayad Allawi, Interim Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, accompanied by the committee of escort, retired from the Hall of the House of Representatives.

The Assistant to the Sergeant at Arms escorted the invited guests from the Chamber in the following order:

The members of the President's Cabinet;

The Acting Dean of the Diplomatic Corps.

JOINT MEETING DISSOLVED

The SPEAKER. The purpose of the joint meeting having been completed, the Chair declares the joint meeting of the two Houses now dissolved.

Accordingly, at 10 o'clock and 45 minutes a.m., the joint meeting of the two Houses was dissolved.

The Members of the Senate retired to their Chamber.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

The SPEAKER. The House will continue in recess until approximately 11:15 a.m.

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AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. SHAW) at 11 o'clock and 15 minutes a.m.

PRINTING OF PROCEEDINGS HAD DURING RECESS

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the proceedings had during the recess be printed in the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Indiana?

There was no objection.