**The speech of his Excellence Dr. Walid Hamed Shiltag, Ambasador of Iraq**

* Thanks to the organizer of this event, the International Chamber of Commerce, and to the Czech Republic in general for its military and humanitarian aid to Iraq. I appreciate the role of such events (workshops) in opening the prospects for trade and investment.
* In our efforts to develop trade and investment cooperation it is good to build on the long tradition and potential of the two countries and the good level of their relationships, which is reflected in some important reciprocal visits (Mr. Stropnický to Iraq, The 1st deputy chairman of the Iraqi Parliament shaikh Humam Hammoudi and the minister of foreign affairs of Iraq Dr. Ibrahim al-Jaafari to Prague).
* There is a long-time tradition of cooperation and important Czech role in the construction of large projects in Iraq, including oil refineries, and the supply of equipment, machineries and production requirements. Also there are promising possibilities to the Czech companies in Iraq, especially with the approach of the military victory over the terrorist organization called (Daesh=ISIS=Islamic State).
* The current and future Iraq's priorities are: 1. To get support for the military effort across the International Coalition, or through bilateral relations with various countries, including the Czech Republic, which is also an active member of the Coalition, 2. The rehabilitation of the liberated areas for the return of displaced persons and providing of their daily requirements for electricity, drinking water and sewage, medical and educational facilities, 3. The reconstruction of damaged infrastructure in these areas.
* Other priorities: The reconstruction of Iraq as a whole, the expansion of its capacities of oil and natural gas production and processing, the exploitation of its agricultural potential and other natural wealth, the modernization and development of infrastructure for the transport and communication sector, and improving the level of health, education and social services.
* Security and stability are prerequisites for development and investment, Iraq is already safe in the vast majority of its provinces. The south of Iraq is in stable conditions, as well as the central parts, including the capital, Baghdad. Also Kurdistan, which provides security and stability and Czech companies are already active there. Development in addition requires restructuring of the Iraqi economy to restrict the dependence on oil and increase the role of other sectors and branches, which create high added value: industry, agriculture and tourism. At the same time Iraq is looking forward to a greater role for the private sector in economic life.
* Encouraging foreign and domestic investment and business opportunities is a part of the economic strategy of our government. Our state provides facilities and incentives for foreign investors. For example, Iraqi prime minister issued the day before yesterday a new governmental decision that enable leasing of cultivated agricultural land for investors to establish agricultural projects. There is a new investment law in Iraq and the possibility of providing customs and tax facilities or exemptions.
* We need to complete the Iraqi - Czech agreements to establish encouraging and dynamically growing trade and investment relations. The last two Iraqi visits emphasized the mutual interest in signing two important documents: the Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Agreement on the Protection and Promotion of Mutual Investments, especially since the Iraqi - Czech Intergovernmental Commission will hold a new meeting this year in Baghdad. In this context I invite the Czech companies to organize a mission to visit Iraq concurrently with the meeting of the Commission, to discover the urgent and future needs of Iraq through meetings with potential Iraqi partners. There are promising companies already collaborating or can cooperate with Iraq in the future, such like Strojexport, Strojprojekt, UNIS, Prokop Engineering, Zetor, Pražská strojírna or Tatra Kopřevnice.
* Particular areas of cooperation are: 1. the infrastructure in all branches (energy, water, sewage, transport and communications, telecommunications, medical services, educational services… etc), 2. oil and natural gas refineries and associated industries (petrochemicals sector, fertilizers, plastics… and so on), 3. renewal of Iraqi factories, 4. assembly production lines and full investment units, 5. production equipments (like machinaries, techniques and technologies), 6. land cultivation requirements and irrigation systems, 7. ecological protection technologies in association with the expected growth of the industrial activities, 8. the development of tourism with a focus on religious and cultural visits, 9. restoration of ancient buildings and protection and restoration of historic monuments, and last but not least, 10. the export of "Know How" to Iraq in vital areas such as sustainable development planning, economy, and education.
* **Conclusion**: Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank for your participation in this meeting, hoping to contribute significantly to open new horizons for trade between Iraq and the Czech Republic, and prospects for Czech companies to seize the best investment opportunities in Iraq, which is a country with large natural and human wealth, a country that does not forget its friends who supported it in difficult times, and the Czech Republic occupies a front position among these friendly countries. Thank you.