



United Nations Association of Australia

(VICTORIAN DIVISION INC)

Patron: His Excellency the Governor of Victoria

MEDIA RELEASE

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Dr Hans Blix to visit Melbourne

One of the most controversial figures in the lead-up to the war in Iraq, Dr. Hans Blix, is to visit Melbourne in August.

He will be here as guest of the United Nations Association of Australia (Victoria) and will address a public forum as chairman of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission (WMDC) (www.wmdcommission.org).

Dr Blix, 79, will speak at the forum on Monday, August 27.

His visit was welcomed today by Patricia Collett, Executive Director of UNAA (Vic), who said: "We are very pleased to be able to host Dr Blix. We know many people will want to hear from him first-hand, particularly at a time when there is so much international discussion on the danger of countries such as Iran and North Korea building nuclear weapons. "Dr Blix will have much to add to the debate."

Dr Blix also heads the World Federation of UN Associations. Established in 1946, it has consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council and formal relations with many UN Departments, Agencies and programmes.

Background:

The Swedish Government invited Dr. Blix to set up and chair the WMDC in 2003 and he continues to play a key role in shaping the role and mission of this organisation.

Its main purpose is to seek international cooperation in reducing and containing the proliferation and threat posed by weapons of mass destruction. It also seeks to stimulate an informed public debate about international and national efforts against weapons of mass destruction, and undertake outreach activities within its capacity to engage civil society and non-governmental organisations.

The Commission is a fully independent, non-governmental organisation and operates with complete autonomy, and is funded by the Swedish government. The Commission recently submitted a report to the United Nations via the Swedish Ambassador entitled 'Freeing the World of Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Arms'.

Dr. Blix had made it clear that US and UK – particularly in the latter's famous statement that Saddam Hussein could deploy chemical and biological weapons within 45 minutes -- had "exaggerated and over-interpreted the case for war in Iraq."

During a CNN interview at the end of March 2004, Dr Blix who then oversaw IAEA's investigation into whether Iraq had chemical and biological weapons said, "I think it's clear that in March, when the invasion took place, the evidence that had been brought forward was rapidly falling apart. I think they [the US government] chose to ignore us." He said the Bush administration tended "to say that anything that was unaccounted for existed, whether it was sarin or mustard gas or anthrax."

On October 25, 2006, Dr Blix said that the war in Iraq is a "pure failure" that has left Iraqis in a worse state than when they lived under Saddam Hussein.

"Iraq is a pure failure" he said in the Danish newspaper Politiken. "If the Americans pull out, there is a risk that they will leave a country in civil war. At the same time it doesn't seem that the United States can help to stabilise the situation by staying there."

Blix, in comments that were seen as unusually critical for a diplomat, said the US is facing a situation where neither staying to fight nor pulling its troops out of Iraq are good decisions. He said Iraq would have been better off if the war had not happened. "Saddam would still have been sitting in office. OK, that is negative and it would not have been joyful for the Iraqi people. But what we have gotten is undoubtedly worse," he was quoted as saying.

History

January 2000 – June 2003

Dr. Blix was hand-picked by Kofi Annan and called out of his retirement to become Head of the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC).

UNMOVIC was in charge of finding weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. He was against the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and frequently questioned the case for war as put forward by the US and its allies.

1981 - 1997

Dr. Blix was Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in charge of overseeing Iraq's nuclear weapons program.

He personally made many inspections of the Iraqi nuclear reactor Osiraq before it was attacked by the Iranians in 1980 and ultimately destroyed by the Israeli Air Force in 1981.

1978 -1979

Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs.

1962 to 1978

Member of the Swedish Delegation at the Disarmament Conference in Geneva.

1961 to 1981

Member of the Swedish delegation to the United Nations. Campaigned in favour of the Swedish nuclear energy program.

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