

has repeatedly argued, we have to right the wrongs, in Palestine and elsewhere, which are exploited so skilfully and relentlessly by the preachers of hatred and violence. And, as Condi Rice has said, we need also to acknowledge that for sixty years the United States has pursued stability at the expense of democracy in the Middle East without achieving either. They are her words – courageous sentiments with which I fully agree.

But the more recent facts speak for themselves. In the past five years the United Kingdom has provided well over £5 billion in development assistance to countries in the Muslim world. From Darfur to Aceh, we are helping Muslim communities realise a more peaceful future. The British people and government gave generously to the victims of the tsunami and of the earthquake in Pakistan. In Israel and the Occupied Territories we are working as part of the Quartet to achieve the goal of a viable Palestinian state alongside a secure Israel. And whatever your views

on the war in Iraq, a large majority of Muslims in that country are now seizing the opportunity provided by Saddam Hussein's downfall to give their nation a free and democratic future. Much more remains to be done. We have to help the Iraqi people achieve for themselves security and stability and to defeat and drive out the men of violence.

As someone who was in Iraq just ten days ago and has been backwards and forwards to that country, I have seen – amid the continuing violence – something remarkable happening. The small seeds of democracy have seen a fantastic flowering over the last 13 months. This time last year there was a high level of scepticism in advance of the first set of national elections – reinforced by a Sunni boycott. Those elections went ahead with a 60 per cent turnout. Then, against expectations, the constitution was drafted and put to the people on time on October 5. The Sunnis made the brave decision to participate in that referendum and in the elections in December.



**With AXA
Be Life Confident**

**Better insurance
solutions.
Better future for
your business.**



Be Life Confident

Riyadh: 01 477 6706
Jeddah: 02 263 5566
AlKhubar: 03 882 2813
www.axa-gulf.com