

UN-HABITAT Iraq Launches Joint Country Programme to Improve Service Delivery, Reduce Poverty and Create Employment

Press Release

For Immediate Release

Baghdad, 27 July 2009- The Ministry of Planning & Development Cooperation and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) jointly launched today the HABITAT Iraq Country Programme for 2009-2011. The launch was attended by several senior representatives of Iraqi ministries, representatives of the international community in Baghdad including UN agencies and donors.

The Country Programme covers key sectors of urban governance, housing and infrastructure and basic services. It focuses on providing technical assistance and capacity building support to ministries and local authorities in Iraq. The Programme will be delivered in close partnership with a number of key ministries in Iraq including : Planning & Development Cooperation, Construction & Housing, Municipalities & Public Works, Education, Displacement & Migration, Amanat Baghdad & counterpart authorities of the Kurdistan Regional Government in addition to local authorities, civil society organizations and sister UN agencies. The Programme costs 70 million US\$ of which 49 million remain unfunded.

At the launch, Dr. Ali Baban, Minister of Planning & Development Cooperation reiterated the commitment of the National Unity Government to the implementation of a National Programme of Development. "This programme aims to stimulate growth, deliver better services to all, especially the poor and the most vulnerable, create employment, reduce poverty and maintain social and political stability in Iraq" he said. "I welcome the partnership with UN-HABITAT in modernizing the Iraqi institutions of Housing & Urban Governance" he added.

At the ceremony The Ministry of Planning signed a joint declaration with UN-Habitat reaffirming partnerships for implementing Habitat's Agenda and achieving The Millennium Development Goals through the Country Programme. Mrs. Anna Tibaijuka, Under-Secretary General and Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, in her televised address said: "This is a historical moment in marking the partnership between the Government of Iraq and UN-HABITAT." She reminded the International Community of its obligation to help Iraq achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

"The UN is increasingly engaged in ensuring a high level of consultation and concrete action with the Government of Iraq to rebuild housing throughout the country and further develop Iraq's urban planning infrastructure with an emphasis on overcoming climate change challenges." said Dr. Naeema al-Gasseer, Acting UN Resident Coordinator in Iraq. "Hand in hand with Iraq, the UN's goal will be to continue improving the lives of ordinary Iraqis" she added.

Mr. Istabraq Al-Shouk, Senior Deputy Minister of Construction & Housing and Chair of the Iraq National Human Settlements Committee said "Sustainable urban development is a major challenge for Iraq with most city councils unable to provide the desperately needed basic services including housing and jobs. This jointly developed programme, with excellent coordination between the Government and UN-HABITAT will be key in identifying priorities to overcome some of the challenges that Iraq is facing at the moment".

Towards the end of the ceremony Dr. Alioune Badiane, UN-HABITAT Regional Director, welcomed future partnerships and stressed on the need for continued engagement for effective delivery of the Country Programme. He also announced the appointment of Mr. Charaf Moulali, a French National, as Habitat's Representative in Baghdad, a position that was generously funded by the Norwegian Government.

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