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PRESS RELEASE

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**The Government of Iraq and WHO Joint Program Review Mission (JPRM), the first round discussions held inside Iraq since 2001**

**Baghdad, 6 July 2009 --** For the first time since 2001 inside Iraq, the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Health acting on behalf of the Government of Iraq (GOI) launched the fourteenth round meeting of the WHO-GOI Joint Program Review Mission (JPRM) for the biennium 2010-2011. This date marks an important milestone, six years after the UN agencies operating in Iraq were constrained to move from the country to operated from Jordan and two days after all Multinational Forces in Iraq (MNFI) combat troops withdrew from all of Iraq's cities and towns.

WHO reaffirms its commitment to support for the people of Iraq and to the Government of Iraq, as well as to assist the country to strengthening national health system, Dr. Naeema Al-Gasseer, WHO Representative for Iraq, Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator a.i. stated. She also added: " It is a historical moment of collaboration and coordination in placing health at the heart of development agenda, it's the beginning of new Iraq, new era of well health, peace and prosperity ... it's a joint responsibility towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals".

More than 20 International and national WHO experts are in Baghdad to participate in the JPRM meeting together with over 100 decision makers and national programme managers from the ministry of health, other line ministries Parliamentarians and civil society and partner institutions and donors community. During the JPRM sessions which are scheduled to continue until 9 July 2009, the participants will agree on the joint collaborative programme for the next biennium (2010-11) and will identify operational activities and propose financial resources requirements.

This important joint exercise which usually takes place every two years, is an integral part of the regular programme management process between the Government of Iraq and WHO. It highlights Iraq national priorities in the Health Sector and identifies WHO strategic directions for technical collaboration to support the government of Iraq and to coordinate the work of the United Nations and other partners engaged in the health and nutrition sector in Iraq.

On the occasion of JPRM launch, Dr. Saleh Al-Hasnawi, the Iraq Minister of Health stated that "Moving away from narrowly defined areas of work to strategic objectives will provide a more flexible health care delivery programme that better reflect the needs of Iraq and facilitate more effective coordination between the World Health organization and the Government of Iraq"

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