



PRESS RELEASE

**UN Works to Strengthen Justice and Integrity in Iraq**

VIENNA, 29 SEPTEMBER 2008 – The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) today launched a five-year programme to fight corruption in Iraq.

“By ratifying the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) last March, the Government of Iraq demonstrated its commitment to fight corruption. The UN is providing the tools to do the job”, said the Executive Director of the UNODC, Antonio Maria Costa.

The anti-corruption programme gives teeth to the Iraqi Government’s goal of preventing and combating corruption as agreed upon in the International Compact with Iraq.

“In the past, Iraq’s national wealth was stolen, its public assets were squandered, and its common wealth was dished out to cronies of the regime. The anti-corruption system needs a complete overhaul”, said Mr. Costa.

The programme is designed to strengthen Iraq’s main anti-corruption bodies, like the Commission on Public Integrity, the Board of Supreme Audit, the Inspector General, and the Parliamentary Integrity Committee. It will also promote greater cooperation among these bodies, particularly through the Joint Anti-Corruption Council. A national anti-corruption law is currently being drafted.

“Iraq’s anti-corruption efforts need and deserve our support”, said Mr. Costa. “I pay tribute to the courageous efforts of all those who, under difficult and dangerous conditions, are dedicated to strengthening integrity in Iraq”.

A range of projects will be carried out to strengthen prevention, transparency, accountability and integrity in the private and public sectors, in line with the measures contained in the UN anti-corruption Convention. “The aim is to put in place the legal framework and build capacity to deter corruption at all levels of government, improve internal and external oversight, and strengthen anti-corruption law enforcement”, said UNDP Country Director Mr. Paolo Lembo.

Reforms will also enable asset recovery. “Under the old regime, billions of dollars were stolen from the Iraqi people. As a party to the UN anti-corruption Convention, it will be easier for the new Government of Iraq to recover those assets”, said UNODC head Mr. Costa. The programme will also strengthen the capacity of Iraqi anti-corruption officials to prevent, detect and investigate money-laundering.

The programme will be implemented jointly by the Government of Iraq, UNDP and UNODC in cooperation with other relevant international organisations and bilateral donors. It will be partly funded with resources from the United Nations Iraqi Trust Fund.

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