

## **UNESCO Delegation Visits Iraq**

Baghdad-6 October 2007--In response to an invitation sent by the Iraqi Government, a delegation from UNESCO Iraq Office headed by the Office Director arrived in Baghdad on Thursday, 27 Sept to follow-up on the restoration of the Al Askari Shrine project in Samarra as a step towards achieving national reconciliation in the country. The project is funded by the Government of Iraq and the European Commission.

The Turkish company contracted by UNESCO for the implementation of Phase I of the project, senior Iraqi officials and members of Samara Shrine Committee visited Al-Askari Shrine in Samara city on 28 Sept 07 for the first time to have a first hand look of the site of the project.

On Saturday 29 Sept 07, UNESCO and the Turkish company representatives met with the Prime Minister, Mr. Nuri Al Maliki to discuss the timeframe and implementation modalities of the project. The implementation of the project is intended to begin in one month if the necessary security measures are put into place by the Government of Iraq. After the meeting, a press conference was held on the sideline of this visit.

During the three-day mission, UNESCO Iraq delegation attended several meetings with Dr. Khudhayyir al-Khuza'I, Minister of Education and Acting Minister of Culture, and senior officials from the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. UNESCO delegation also met with Iraqi officials from the Ministry of Culture and Mr. Mufid Al-Jazairi, Member of the Iraqi Parliament & Chairman of Media and Cultural Committee in the Iraqi Parliament.