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ANNEX D

ENVIRONMENTAL RECONSTRUCTION IN IRAQ

1. State of the environment in Iraq

Iraq is confronted with a range of environmental problems. These are linked to successive conflicts, the absence of effective environmental management under the previous regime, economic sanctions in the 1990s and limited regional cooperation on the management of shared natural resources. Environmental vulnerabilities and risks are particularly associated with:

- Water resources: including the effects of dams, sanitation, water supply, irrigation and salinity issues
- Waste management: including domestic, clinical and hazardous industrial waste
- Tackling the legacy of Iraq's conflicts: clean-up of unexploded ordnance and depleted uranium (DU)
- Environmental problems relating to the oil industry
- Ecosystem degradation, including the destruction of the Mesopotamian Marshlands, desertification and drought, and deforestation
- Biodiversity: including the status of protected areas and protected species
- Institutional and administrative issues: including the lack of effective infrastructure for environmental management

Environmental contamination and degradation represent a threat to human health and the sustainable livelihoods of Iraqi citizens as well as an impediment to economic stability and growth, both within Iraq and across the region.

2. UK approach and policy on environmental reconstruction in Iraq

Post-conflict development in Iraq must consider all three pillars of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental – if it is to be of lasting benefit to the Iraqi people. A Cabinet Office ad hoc officials' committee was set up in April 2003 specifically to consider environmental reconstruction. This group has underlined the need for the environment to be fully integrated into the wider reconstruction effort. Remedial action on environment-related issues should not only include short term clean-up measures and the restoration of public services (energy, waste and water), but also longer term actions such as building a sound knowledge base and institutional capacities for environmental management in Iraq. Coordination between donors, the international system, such as UN agencies and IFI's, the future Iraqi Administration and other major players is essential to ensure effective action. The Iraqi people need to be consulted and engaged in the reconstruction effort.

This interdepartmentally agreed line was set out by Margaret Beckett in her 11 June letter to the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Dr Klaus Toepfer, on post conflict environmental assessment. **UK officials should continue to factor this approach to environmental reconstruction into strategic and operational policy.** At the international level, it needs to inform the UK contribution to the CPA Strategy and the work of other relevant actors, such as UN agencies and IFI's. This is necessary not only to secure the best possible outcomes on the ground, but also to demonstrate consistency with relevant UK international commitments.

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3. UK action to implement policy on environmental reconstruction

Work with UN agencies

The UN and World Bank formally launched a 'needs assessments' process for Iraq on 24 June in New York, to identify next steps in 14 priority areas. The UK strongly supports this approach. Small teams, each led by either the World Bank or a UN agency, will carry out short sectoral assessments in Iraq. The environment has been identified as one of four cross-cutting themes to be incorporated into the work of these teams. UNEP has been chosen to lead on this theme, and will be represented on a number of the other sectoral teams. The results of the 'needs assessment' will feed into preparations for the Donor Conference in October.

UNEP's Post Conflict Assessment Unit (PCAU) published their 'Desk Study of the Environment in Iraq' in April 2003. It provides an overview of the pressing environmental challenges in Iraq and makes recommendations for achieving environmentally sustainable reconstruction. The PCAU aims to conduct a full environmental field assessment between September and December 2003, subject to security considerations, and publish a report in March 2004. The assessment will build upon the recommendations in the Desk Study and will provide information on which effective reconstruction decisions and actions can be based. (Two issues to be considered by the assessment include DU and the restoration of the Mesopotamian Marshlands. These have a high public profile and are considered further below).

In welcoming the work of UNEP's PCAU, Margaret Beckett's letter made clear that UK support to the PCAU was likely to be chiefly **practical**. She said that HMG officials would continue to share information with the PCAU and indicated that UK civil servants seconded to the CPA, and our armed forces, could provide the assessment team with information and practical assistance on technical, operational and sustainable development issues. **UK officials should provide the PCAU with contact details for relevant experts and any available information on environmental issues as required. Subject to an appropriate post being identified, and to security considerations, a UK civil servant with environmental expertise should be seconded to the CPA in Iraq.**

The PCAU have estimated the total cost of the assessment and reporting to be around US\$1.35m. They requested US\$850,000 in the revised OCHA Flash Appeal on 23 June (to cover calendar year 2003). According to the PCAU Canada, the Netherlands, Italy, Switzerland and Germany have so far expressed a strong interest in part-funding the assessment. **DFID have provisionally agreed to provide 50% funding but are unlikely to be a major donor in this sector in the long-term.**

UK support for UNEP work on Depleted Uranium (DU)

See also MOD paper on DU

The PCAU field mission will include a scientific assessment of sites struck with weapons containing depleted uranium (DU) during recent and past conflicts. The PCAU has suggested that a preliminary assessment be carried out in or around Basra. **Officials are considering this proposal and will respond shortly.** The MOD have provided the PCAU with coordinates for DU firing points for UK Challenger II tanks from the recent conflict, but no data is available on firing points or target sites from the 1990/91 Gulf war. The MOD have stated their willingness to offer a secondees for the PCAU assessment team subject to agreeing the terms

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of reference for this official. They have offered to meet with the PCAU in July in order to agree complementary ways forward.

UK support for work on the marshland restoration

There has been considerable media interest in the destruction of the Mesopotamian Marshlands in Iraq. The marshlands have been reduced in area by over 90% since the 1980s, due to large scale drainage works and up stream damming. This has had severe environmental, economic and social impacts. A holistic and integrated approach to marshland restoration will be required. UNEP have indicated that their field mission will include an assessment of the problem and are seeking to consult with other agencies, including UNDP, who are also undertaking work in this area. In addition, US AID are sponsoring work to assess requirements for marshland restoration. Although, the US have expressed their wish to dovetail with other players as far as possible, they are sceptical of the UN role on the marshlands issue and have taken the lead in developing a strategy for marshland restoration and economic development in the region, to issue in 6-12 months time. A US team has recently undertaken a preliminary scoping visit in Iraq, which will inform the writing of this strategy. US interest in the marshlands has been driven by media interest and the personal interest of Natsios (US AID administrator) who publicly announced that marshland restoration would be a high priority.

There appears to be a lack of coordination between the various interested parties engaged in work on the marshlands, and on environmental reconstruction more generally. **Officials should continue to encourage the US, UN agencies and other major players to share information and work closely together on environmental reconstruction issues to ensure the most effective action. Officials should also consider what UK support, information and expertise can be provided.**

UK collaboration with the US

The US Department of State (DOS) established an Inter-Agency Team in March 2003 to consider environmental challenges in Iraq. An EPA official was seconded to the CPA in Baghdad in April, but was withdrawn in early June due to security considerations. US DOS have indicated to UK officials their intention to establish an intergovernmental 'coalition of the willing' to consider environmental issues in Iraq. Their suggested coalition partners include UK, Italy (EU presidency), the Netherlands, Australia and Canada. The objectives, structure and timing of this coalition are unclear. The US have proposed an initial meeting of embassy representatives in July to discuss the process, and a meeting of partners in October to discuss areas of interest, identify technical expertise, set priorities and decide how best to take these forward. **Officials will be seeking further clarification on this proposal and will be developing a response. HMG will need to ensure that the work of any such coalition is consistent with the UK approach to environmental reconstruction and does not cut across other structures for co-ordination of the reconstruction effort. The potential resource implications will also need to be considered.**

UK collaboration with the EU

At the recent European Council on 19-20 June, where Heads agreed the importance of sustainable reconstruction in Iraq, Javier Solana presented the European security strategy

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which highlighted the links between diplomatic efforts, security, conflict, development and environment policies. In addition, at the GAERC in Luxembourg on 16 June, there was general agreement to Papandreou's (Presidency) proposal that the European Commission be mandated to pursue a more active role for the EU in reconstructing Iraq. It was also agreed that there needed to be closer and more systematic co-ordination among Member States. **UK officials should work closely with the Netherlands and Italy (who have responsibility for security in part of the UK's Area of Operations in southern Iraq) and other Member States as appropriate, to promote our approach to environmental reconstruction in Iraq.**

DEFRA

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