

Expanded Meeting of the Donor Committee
of the
International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq (IRFFI)

Statement by Mark Malloch Brown, UNDP Administrator
Chair of the United Nations Development Group

Tokyo, Japan
13 October 2004

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to begin by thanking our host, the Government of Japan, for convening this third meeting of the Donor Committee of the International Reconstruction Trust Fund Facility for Iraq, IRFFI. You have been its most generous donor and so where better than Tokyo to review progress.

We meet nearly a year on from the International Donor Conference in Madrid, when the IRFFI was launched. What brought us to Madrid brings us here today: consolidating democracy, stability, and prosperity in Iraq.

I. The path to democracy in Iraq

First, democracy. Like in Afghanistan at the weekend, democracy is for most Iraqis the treasured way forward. In the forthcoming elections, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1546, the United Nations is committed to doing everything we can to support the authority in charge of organizing the elections, the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq. The Commission is in charge. This is not a UN managed election but we recognise our role is vital to its legitimacy and credibility.

And the time table is very tight. A complex process of registration, vetting, training and equipping must unfold on time. At the same time everything must be done between now and January to foster a political environment that is conducive to open, free and fair elections. We urge the Interim Government to continue expanding the space and drawing all Iraqis into the electoral process. And we remain, through the Secretary-General's Special Representative in Iraq, ready to encourage and facilitate this.

We would, however, be short-sighted to look only at a timetable that takes us to January. We must ensure that by January there is a momentum to our broader reconstruction activities so that so that when a democratically-elected government takes office in Baghdad, people will see an improvement in their lives.

We must ensure that after the elections the Iraqi people start to have choices about lifestyle, education, and jobs. And that these can be made in an environment of human security and the full restoration of everyday services – such as electricity and water supply. Democracy also means a normal – and a safe – life.

The recent UNDP Arab Human Development Report has echoed what we have long known in other war-affected parts of the world, namely, that peace-building is most effective when international support is grounded in the cultural, political, and economic context of the country in question. Under the leadership of the Minister of Planning, who is with us today, the Iraqi Interim Government has prepared a far-sighted National Development Strategy. We need to recognize

this strategy as the blueprint for ensuring that the electoral result is translated into a tangible improvement in people's lives. Donors should be ready to support this strategy, recognizing that the recovery process will take time.

II. UN support to Iraq

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The experience with IRFFI has been encouraging, despite formidable constraints. The political and security environment in Iraq has shaped the need for a different approach to reconstruction and development. First and foremost, we have been forced to undertake our activities in recognition that we are not only at risk, but among the targeted. This is a huge drawback that awaits progress on security before it can be fully overcome. We are not in Iraq in the numbers we should be. We work through a dedicated national staff and partners, together with a current ceiling of 35 international colleagues in Baghdad. It is not enough and we know it. Elections alone require a significant increase in numbers.

However, it has led the UN Country Team in Iraq, under the leadership of Ross Mountain, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, to develop a new cluster approach for planning and implementation across a broad range of sectors. This approach allows the UN programmes, funds and agencies to have a unified voice for planning and implementing programmes with Iraqi ministries, in particular, the Ministry of Planning, which has been our lead interlocutor. Local authorities, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector have also been crucial partners in the planning and delivery of support. I should also add that the UN has continued to play a key role in coordinating the humanitarian response to flash point emergencies throughout Iraq. With full recognition that policy issues do not and can not await full restoration of security, the UN has been actively engaging with the Iraqi Interim Government on the policy dialogue to ensure a people-centred approach to policy formulation. Iraq needs human development – not just development.

You may recall that at the Doha meeting earlier this year, we shared with you a range of projects that had been formulated and approved. Many of these projects are now up and running despite security constraints that, as you know, have severely limited the scope of implementation.

UNDP, as IRFFI's administrative agent, has transferred US\$ 402 million to UN implementing organisations for 40 approved projects. Commitments and disbursement rates for project activities by the end of the year are estimated to amount to US\$ 240 million (60 percent of the total approved budget) and US\$ 143 million (36 percent of the approved budget) respectively. This is together with more than US\$ 100 million of humanitarian assistance and about \$1 billion of food aid that we have delivered this year.

A few examples of tangible assistance provided through IRFFI give reason to anticipate substantial benefits once circumstances permit: a nationwide vaccination campaign has been undertaken with IRFFI support, resulting in the immunisation of 5 million children. At this time, millions of kits for school children are ready for distribution, waiting only for the green light to deliver to schools when they open. Houses are under construction for the reintegration of displaced persons in rural areas of Basra, Thi-Qar and Meysin. Major preparatory work is underway for infrastructure projects in the electricity sector, and the port dredging has proceeded. Also the UN is providing support for capacity building and institutional development across a wide range of sectors essential for the recovery and reconstruction effort. (Not a bad track record, but imagine how much better still we could do if we were fully back.) This assistance offers Iraqi ministers tangible successes, policy choices and flexible support. And amidst the violence, it offers some modest seeds of peace. With your help, the seeds will take root and grow and provide the visible evidence of Iraqi sovereignty and progress, and above all, self-determination. For these are the best answers to today's violence.

Thank you.