

Conference on the Restoration and Development of the Iraqi Marshlands

Amman, Jordan
16 – 19 September, 2006

Synthesis Report

Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide a synthesis of the Conference on the Restoration and Development of the Iraqi Marshlands to form the basis of future Iraqi-Canadian cooperation on the Iraqi Marshlands.

The Iraqi Marshlands is the largest wetlands in southwest Asia and has been recognized as one of the world's most exceptional ecosystems. Over the past two decades, there was a deliberate draining of the wetlands by the previous regime that resulted in significant ecological, social and economic impacts to the region. By 2000, the surface area of the Marshlands had been reduced to 14% of its original size. The international community, together with the Iraqi people, has placed great emphasis on the restoration of the Iraqi Marshlands as part of the overall reconstruction of Iraq. The purposes of the Conference were to bring Iraqi stakeholders together to contribute to decision making processes in the new Iraq and to identify the main strategic issues regarding the Marshlands over the next four years.

Strategic Issues

It is recognized that there exists a fundamental need in the Marshlands for:

1. The provision of potable water, health, education and other social services;
2. The advancement of economic and productive opportunities, including those related natural resource use, tourism, heritage industries, and oil development and revenue;
3. The development of infrastructure, including adequate housing and modern communication systems; and
4. The equitable allocation of resources throughout the region, including a continuity of water supply from within Iraq and internationally;
5. A policy to address issues of resettlement of persons displaced in the draining of the Marshlands;
6. Improved scientific and technical knowledge about the social, economic and ecological aspects of the Marshlands; and
7. Protection of archeological sites of national and international importance.

Goals and Objectives

Further Canadian contribution to the restoration of the Iraqi Marshlands should consider supporting the establishment of a coordinating mechanism that will:

- Coordinate decisions regarding restoration and development of the Marshlands that meet the immediate needs of people, provide alternative livelihoods, and facilitate the sustainability of the Marshlands.
- Support the development and implementation of a comprehensive plan for the restoration of the Marshlands.
- Support the development of a strategy for attracting foreign investment into the Marshlands; and
- Encouraging Iraqi involvement in multi-lateral environmental agreements that relate to the Marshlands.

Directions

1. Strengthen the capacity of individuals, governments and other institutions in the Marshlands in a sustainable manner:
 - a. To participate fully in decisions on the future development of the marshlands;
 - b. To improve the livelihoods of individuals living in the Marshlands;
 - c. To use the goods and services from the Marshlands ecosystem in a legal sustainable manner.
2. Ensure the active engagement of women in training, decision-making and policy formulation;
3. Ensure that development efforts in the Marshlands are complimentary to those initiated by other governments or donor agencies; and
4. Support Iraqis in their efforts to promote the social, humanitarian and economic well-being of residents in the Marshlands.

Recommended Actions and Next Steps

The Conference for the Restoration and Development of the Iraqi Marshlands held in Amman, Jordan, in September, 2006, established the following key priority areas for action, based on a strategic partnership between Canadian and Iraqi participants:

Canadian partners will:

1. Develop a proposal in collaboration with Iraqi partners to address the strategic issues listed above;
2. To ensure that other donor agencies are made aware of the results of the Conference; and
3. To continue dialogue with Iraqi partners on issues related to the Marshlands.

Iraqi Partners will:

1. Establish local multi-stakeholder entities to address the strategic issues noted above;
2. To continue dialogue with Canadian partners on issues related to the Marshlands; and
3. To ensure that other agencies and organizations interested in the Marshlands are aware of the results of the Conference.

Implementation of these recommendations will depend on the mobilization of resources from Canadian and other sources.