

**Closing Address: Dr. Naeema Al-Gasseer
UN Resident/Humanitarian Coordinator for
Iraq a.i
Iraq National Planning Workshop,
Baghdad 21 May 2009**

Excellencies, colleagues and friends,

As we close this important national planning workshop, I would like to thank the Government of Iraq and in particular the Ministry of Planning for giving the United Nations System and the World Bank the opportunity to be of support and to be your “partners in hope”.

The challenges ahead for us are immense as highlighted in the presentations on the Millennium Development Goals and Human Development. As you have heard, 23% of Iraqi's are living below the poverty line, with nearly 40% in rural areas under the poverty line. With over half of the population under 18 years of age, by investing in children and youth of Iraq, we can contribute significantly in ensuring that Iraq's vision of growth is inclusive. Therefore, now is the time for child friendly budgeting, for which the UN has proven expertise.

In the presentation of the MDGs, it was indicated that two national targets that are difficult to achieve by 2015 are the adequate shelter needs and reducing unemployment.

Boosting the housing sector can to a large extent help address both, as housing has one of the highest economic multipliers and can create jobs locally for both the skilled and unskilled.

We have noted with interest and appreciate the work being done on the health services including addressing chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardio vascular diseases and mental diseases. Addressing them is critical in terms

of the burden to society and its productivity. In the wake of major public health threats, the legislation and laws related to communicable diseases must be reinforced. In this regard, the international health regulations are instruments which can be reinforced to strengthen disease prevention and control programmes.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the UN System and the World Bank, I would like to propose the following recommendations for your consideration:

1. The UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes, are at your service in supporting the finalization of the National Development Plan
2. We very much welcome the inclusion of UN Agencies to be part of the technical and sectoral committees that are providing the necessary inputs for the finalization of the national plan.
3. We strongly encourage and support the inclusion of all line ministries in the development of the National Plan so it is fully

integrated in a national vision of development.

4. The integration of vital cross cutting areas such as human rights, gender, environment and employment is key to the development of a holistic people centred national development plan. In that light, the UN System is ready to support the technical committees and the Ministry of Planning on integrating essential cross cutting areas.

5. The UN is embarking on its Common Country Assessment which will be fully

coordinated and government owned process. Our intentions are to compliment the analysis that has already been undertaken by Ministry of Planning and various national and international partners. I very much welcome the decision to include the collaboration between MoPDC colleagues and the UN Interagency Information Analysis Unit to validate, review and access existing data. This will further reinforced our collaboration with the World Bank on the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

6. The UN Heads of Agencies endorsed yesterday the organization of a Common Country Assessment / UN Development Assistance Framework Planning Meeting. I have informed his Excellency the Minister of Planning of this decision today and will be officially inviting all line Ministries to attend the UN's CCA/UNDAF meeting to be held on 16 and 17 June in Baghdad. In addition to the line Ministries, we intend to invite academia, non-governmental organizations, donors, parliamentarians, provincial partners, and the World Bank. The purpose over the next few months is to undertake a

comprehensive assessment process on the needs and the gaps in full coordination with the Ministry of Planning.

In closing, I want to reaffirm the UN and the World Bank's commitment to support the Government of Iraq to meet our commonly defined challenges and join vision. We have now embarked on this road and we intend to be with you on this journey grounded in justice, human rights and human dignity for every Iraqi man, women, boy and girl.

I thank you.