

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE  
WEEKLY MEETING

**Summary Note**

11 April 2007  
Geneva

**I Briefing on the Iraq Conference on 17-18 April, 2007**

*Ms. Shaden Khallaf (UNHCR), Public Affairs Officer*

Ms. Khallaf briefed the participants on the upcoming International Iraq Conference on 17-18 April 2007 in Geneva. The main rationale underlying the conference is that the broader humanitarian challenges of the situation in Iraq have yet to be fully appreciated and adequately addressed. The objective of the Conference is, consequently, to sensitize the international community to the immediate and foreseeable humanitarian needs of refugees and displaced persons, as well as affected States, and to promote concrete actions to address these needs. It is hoped that expressions of international solidarity and burden sharing with principal host countries, IDPs and refugees will take the form of commitments to assist the displaced, the Government of Iraq and the host countries neighboring Iraq. Such commitments could include increasing resettlement opportunities for the most vulnerable groups, providing bilateral support to hosting countries, funding of humanitarian programmes, as well as improving prospects for durable solutions. The Conference will also emphasize that action at the political level is urgently needed to improve the humanitarian situation and address its underlying causes.

Ms. Khallaf distributed the agenda of the upcoming Conference, explaining that the morning of the first day will be composed of four main parts, i.e. an opening ceremony, a presentation on the international perspective, followed a presentation on the regional perspective and a general debate. The second day will be attributed to statements by governments, as well as UN and inter-governmental organisations and NGOs. In addition, there is the possibility of having separate sessions with NGOs in the afternoon of the second day. Ms. Khallaf also pointed out that the outcome will most likely be a document in the form of a chair's summary with inputs from participants. In addition, Ms. Khallaf said she was pleased to see that the participation will be numerous, as well as high level.

During the open-floor discussion, participants commended UNHCR for organising this conference and underlined the need for drawing the attention of the international community to the humanitarian needs in Iraq and its neighbouring countries. With regards to the organisation of the conference, several participants pointed to the fact that they thought not enough time had been attributed to NGOs and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and that much of the conference will be devoted to statements given by governments. Moreover, there were several suggestions on modifying the agenda by changing the line-up of speakers in order to facilitate engagement by all participants. Several participants suggested it would be better to not let only states speak first, but also give the floor to other participants. It was, however, acknowledged among participants that it was too late to do so, and participants instead suggested this option for later meetings of a similar nature and scope.

To questions regarding the intended practical outcomes of the conference, Ms. Khallaf replied by expressing that UNHCR would like this to be a forum for addressing the humanitarian situation. The emphasis will be placed on finding immediate solutions for the most vulnerable, but participants will also have the possibility to envisage a humanitarian follow-up mechanism.

During the discussion, OCHA clarified that the Strategic Framework for Iraq is at this moment being finalised and that it will be presented before the upcoming conference.

## Participants

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