Dynamic Start in 2012

During the first three months of 2012, prominent occasions of special importance animated the life of Iraqis, showing very promising signs on the shorter and longer terms.

On behalf of UNESCO, I would like to congratulate the Iraqi government and citizens for their successful organization of the Arab Summit in Baghdad. With its many implications, this event showed the readiness of Iraq to restore its international and regional function.

On 8 March, the country lively celebrated with the whole world the International Women’s Day. This occasion recalls the urgent need to take courageous steps to promote gender equality in Iraq.

22 March of every year marks also a special occasion: World Water Day. With its warning scarcity, raising individual awareness among households remains one of the most effective tools to maximize water usage, and avoid vain exploitation of resources. In partnership with local NGOs, UNESCO seized this major occasion to raise communitarian awareness and generate the required wide scale impact.

On a more programmatic level, UNESCO signed a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Ministry of Education in Baghdad to establish 125 additional community learning centres. During this same period, as I visited Kurdistan region where I had the privilege to meet and discuss with the first Lady of Iraq Her Highness Hero Ibrahim Ahmed on cultural and education challenges of Kurdistan. I also had the chance to examine the progress of UNESCO work in the Sulaymaniyyah Museum, and had an important meeting with H.E. Minister Falah Mustafa, Head of the Department of Foreign Relations in Kurdistan. Finally, I met with the directors of Salahaddin University and discussed with students about the main challenges they are facing.

We share with you in this issue our main activities during the first quarter of 2012, as they are the true indicator of an eventful year ahead.

Director
Mohamed Djelid
Within its efforts to expand UNESCO activities in Iraq, Mohamed Djelid, director UNESCO Iraq office, accompanied by UNESCO expert Dr. Stuart Gibson, held a prolonged meeting with the First Lady of Iraq H.E Hero Ibrahim Ahmed on Tuesday 24 January 2012 to discuss the scope of cooperation between UNESCO and Iraq in the Sulaymaniyah region.

The meeting presented a great chance to discuss the progress of the Sulaymaniyah museum modernization project, and UNESCO possible involvement in future initiatives in the governorate.

UNESCO Iraq will be studying closely the implementation of a project suggested by H.H Hero Ibrahim Ahmed for launching an electronic Encyclopaedia on Sulaymaniyah in the form of Wikipedia, initially in Kurdish, made open for free contributions from the audience and managed by a high level cultural committee.

UNESCO to expand activities in Kurdistan Region

In a high level visit to the Department of Foreign Relations (DFR) in Kurdistan last January, UNESCO Iraq Director Mohamed Djelid announced the organization’s plans to expand its ongoing operations in the Kurdistan Region.

After his meeting with H.E. Minister Falah Mustafa, Mr. Djelid said that UNESCO is committed to its role in the redevelopment of both Kurdistan and the Iraqi society, and that the organization hopes to provide the knowledge and skills necessary to support the institutions of a flourishing democratic system.

Minister Mustafa welcomed this announcement and reassured Mr Djelid that the Kurdistan Regional Government will offer its full support in order to facilitate the implementation of UNESCO’s projects in the Region.

“UNESCO has been an important contributor to the reconstruction of our society,” said Minister Mustafa, recalling that “Kurdistan has significantly benefitted from UNESCO’s programmes in a number of areas”. "From the progress of the restoration work on the Erbil Citadel, to the improvement of our education sector their (UNESCO) efforts have made a distinctive mark on the Region”, he added.

UNESCO already operates on a wide range of projects in the Region, and the expansion will deal with the new rising challenges in the fields of education, culture, sciences, and Communication and Information.

Checking needs at Salahaddin University

Within his field trip to Kurdistan region, UNESCO Iraq office director Mohamed Djelid visited last January the Salahaddin University campus where he met the university president Dr. Ahmed Dzayee, academic relations Director Dr. Mohammed Aziz Saeed, and the University students.

Mr. Djelid highlighted UNESCO future events and programmes in the field of teacher training and other components related to statistics and planning. Discussions also included the possibility to start an e-learning pilot project, and launch an Avicenna Virtual Campus in the University’s information, communication and technology centre, enabling it to share knowledge and be a part of the UNESCO network of Iraqi and international universities.

UNESCO Director then met with several groups of students from different departments to hear their priorities concerning facilities’ shortage in the campus, lack of academic equipment, and other challenges that encounter them in the University.

Sulaymaniyah Museum: Phase II to be launched soon

Guided by Director of Sulaymaniyah Museum Mr. Hashim Hama, UNESCO Iraq Director Mohamed Djelid accompanied by the organization’s experts took a detailed tour in the museum and were briefed on the progress of the Sulaymaniyah Museum’ Modernization project.

Concluding the visit, Mr. Djelid revealed that phase I of the project, that includes the introduction of state-of-the-art management practices and an educational component, is being completed, ensuring UNESCO eagerness to launch phase II of this special project in the coming months.

After training the museum staff to the most recent museological practices; opening the education department; and finalizing the museum’s Collection inventory in 2011, UNESCO Iraq office in cooperation with the Iraq Trust Fund and the Department of Antiquities in the Kurdistan Regional Government, will extend its support to the managerial committee of the museum in order to finalize the Museum Master plan and set the educational programme that will include an educational kit and teacher training modalities.

First lady of Iraq in a conversation with UNESCO Iraq Director during his visit to Sulaymaniyah last January © UNESCO Iraq 2012

Mr. Djelid (left) discussing UNESCO expected projects in Kurdistan region with H.E Minister Mustafa last January © UNESCO Iraq 2012

Mr. Djelid with a group of students in Salahaddin University © UNESCO Iraq 2012

Mr. Djelid with a group of students in Sulaymaniyah © UNESCO Iraq 2012

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**Education at UNESCO Iraq**

Since 2004, UNESCO Iraq Office has been working on rehabilitating the Education Sector in Iraq after the damage caused by the previous wars and the imposed economic sanctions. The office aims, through all its initiatives and programmes, to provide technical assistance to the Iraqi government in order to enhance the sector by rehabilitating the educational institutions, building the institutional, administrative, and human capacities at all levels, fighting illiteracy, and formulating plans and policies for better planning for the future of Education in Iraq.

### 125 new community learning centres for literacy and life skills training

The government of Iraq and UNESCO took a major step towards eradicating illiteracy and improving access to education in the country. His Excellency the Minister of Education, Dr. Mohamed Tamim and UNESCO Iraq office Director Mr. Mohamed Djelid signed on 19 March a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will enable the establishment of additional 125 community learning centres (CLCs) throughout Iraq in partnership with 25 national non-governmental organizations, providing literacy and life skills training for vulnerable communities. During the coming school year, some 7,000 people from Iraq's different regions will benefit from programmes offered by these centres. The MOU also ensures the sustainability of the CLCs within targeted communities, making them a component of the current educational programmes offered by the Ministry of Education. These established centres will also play a vital role in local development and the improvement of the living standards of targeted beneficiaries.

### Government of Iraq endorses reform recommendations in key sectors

In the framework of the "Iraqi Public Sector Modernization" (IPSM) programme, the Steering Committee for Public Administration Reform in Iraq chaired by Dr. Thamir Ghadban, ex minister and top advisor in the prime minister office, approved at its last meeting on 8 February the functional reorganization of the country's public institutions in the health, education, and water and sanitation sectors. The programme funded by the European Union brings together eight UN Agencies (UNDP, UNESCO, UNESCWA, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHABITAT, UN WOMEN and WHO).

### Higher expectations in higher education

UNESCO Iraq is benefiting from its network of partner universities around the world to expose Iraqi professors to the best practices in the different regions of the world, supporting linkages between universities in Iraq and elsewhere. In the framework of the project support to Higher Education funded by Her Highness Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser Al Missned (HHO), First Lady of Qatar and UNESCO special Envoy for basic and higher education., UNESCO in collaboration with the Directorate of Research and Development and the Division of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in the Ministry of Higher Education and Research in Iraq organised a custom-made course on "Modern Teaching and Research Techniques" at Lulea University of Technology (LTU) in Sweden for 14 Iraqi participants representing different universities. The course provided Iraqi participants with a broad overview on teaching and research methodologies to enhance their capacities in international level research.

### Advancing Quality Education

Having a common vision towards quality education, UNESCO, UNICEF, the Government of Iraq are joining efforts to promote the global education framework in the country through building the public sector capacities in the field of planning, data management and delivery. UNESCO and UNICEF organized 4 workshops in Erbil during January and February 2012 with the aim to improve ministries' staff statistical skills and planning ability. Assembling more than 140 statisticians and planners, educational ministries and directorates' officials, and representatives from universities and governorates, these workshops will have a direct positive impact on the global educational scheme.

### 2011: a Milestone in Education

UNESCO head officials and representatives from Her Highness Sheikha Moza Bint Nasser Office (HHO), First Lady of Qatar and UNESCO special Envoy, attended with Iraqi and Palestinian representatives the second steering committee in UNESCO headquarters in Paris to discuss the progress achieved on the projects funded by HHO in Iraq and Gaza during 2011. The Iraqi projects conducted by UNESCO - Literacy, Teacher training, Curriculum development, and Higher education - delivered meaningful results and had tangible impacts on education and literacy rates in the country.

For 2012, project managers expressed their high prospects anticipating that the projects' implementation' rate will more than double in comparison to 2011.
Women in Iraq: Facts and Figures

Gender equality is a fundamental human right, a commonly shared value and a necessary condition for the achievement of the internationally agreed development objectives, including all Millennium Development Goals. Gender equality has been designated as one of UNESCO’s global priorities to ensure that designated programmes and initiatives contribute fully and actively to the pursuit of women’s empowerment and gender equality efforts.

“Across the world, women marginalization is weakening societies and holding back their development”

UNESCO’s Director General Irina Bokova

Priority Needs of Assessed Female Headed Households

Years of conflict have deteriorated the lives of Iraqi women. Many women had to undertake the responsibility to become heads of households despite the difficulties in accessing the labour market. In addition to suffering from food insecurity, inadequate shelter, abuse and exploitation, women are particularly affected by gender based violence and insecurity.

Gender Based Violence

One in five married Iraqi women has been a victim of physical domestic violence, while one in three has been subject to emotional violence. Of the women victims of physical domestic violence, 14% were subject to violence during pregnancy.

There is a long way to go before women and girls can be said to enjoy the fundamental rights, freedom and dignity that are their birthright and that will guarantee their well-being.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

Labour Force Participation by Gender and level of education (in %)

Access to work was identified as the main priority for women in Iraq as well as all over the world. However, only 18% of Iraqi women participate in the labour force compared to 81% of men.

“Due to the harsh living conditions we did not go to school as it would have kept us from the house. We live in Basra. My sister and I have always dreamt of learning reading and writing like other girls do. .... We have learnt reading and writing. Our intention is to complete our learning because education is interesting and adds value to human life.”

Roua, a female student in a Community Learning Centre

Source: WHO Iraq Family Health Survey 2007

Source: IOM special Report on Female Headed Household – October 2011

Source: WFP VAM 2007
Towards Gender Equality in Iraq

Promoting Equality in Education, Science, and Culture

In Iraq, UNESCO mainstreams gender across all its programmes aiming to ensure that women and men participate equally in the reconstruction process of their country in order to build a more sustainable and inclusive society. Gender equality in education remains a major challenge both in terms of equal access and attendance, particularly in rural areas. To address these challenges, UNESCO is actively supporting the Government of Iraq in improving women's access to education and employment, with targeted gender responsive interventions that cover all levels of education including adult and continuing education.

Through the Promotion of Civic Values and Life-skills project UNESCO works directly with teachers and young Iraqi girls and boys to raise awareness on gender equality and women's human rights in partnership with local NGOs and ministries of education in Baghdad and Erbil.

Within its Culture Sector, UNESCO aims to integrate gender equality considerations into cultural policies. The office strives to ensure that gender parity among participants in capacity building activities and other schemes, and encourages its Iraqi partners to nominate qualified women to positions of leadership within project activities.

In the fight against Women illiteracy, UNESCO has achieved tangible and promising results that will definitely improve Iraqi Women situation. These accomplishments include:

- The approval of the Literacy Law that will scale up literacy and life skills interventions for 2.5 million illiterates by 2015;
- Provision of technical assistance and capacity building for the development of national literacy strategy focusing on women’s access to quality literacy and life skills programs;
- Launching of awareness raising activities for 30,000 vulnerable beneficiaries in rural and poor urban areas on the importance of girls’ education;
- And development of new Literacy textbooks to avoid gender bias and include life skills training relevant to women.

Through its science programme UNESCO has allowed Iraqi women to be engaged in economic and education activities by reducing their workload. By restoring and preserving of 20 karez systems across northern Iraq, female beneficiaries have benefitted from closer access to water resources as primary water providers for the household.

UN celebrating International Women's Day

In line with this year’s theme: “Connecting girls, inspiring futures”, UNESCO Iraq together with sister UN agencies, Iraqi Civil Society Organizations and the Ministry of Education organized a series of activities in Community Learning Centres throughout the country to highlight the importance of gender equality in education. The centres became sceneries for seminars, roundtables, lectures and concerts, with a large participation of women as spectators, leaders and performers. Through this set of activities UNESCO seeks to underline that education does not only ensure that the basic needs of Iraqi girls and boys are met, but that they have the opportunity to achieve their full potential and realize their human rights.

Women experts participating in a UNESCO-organized roundtable to discuss the National Literacy strategy in Baghdad © UNESCO Iraq

Women taking part in one of this year events in a community learning centre © CDO Iraq
**Culture at UNESCO Iraq**

As the only UN agency with a mandate for culture, UNESCO has been keen on preserving and showcasing the rich cultural heritage of Iraq. The Office’s culture projects concentrate on safeguarding heritage and rehabilitating institutions. UNESCO also provides the Iraqi Government with technical expertise to fight against the looting of artifacts, protect intangible heritage, promote tourism and prepare Iraqi sites for nomination to the World Heritage List.

### World Heritage nomination to protect the Marshlands

UNESCO Iraq Office, in close collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), organized the First Drafting Workshop for the World Heritage Nomination File of the Iraqi Marshlands. This event, held in Amman on 18-19 February 2012, is the first of a series of workshops to take place over the next 11 months within the framework of the UNEP-UNESCO project “World Heritage inscription process as a tool to enhance natural and cultural management of the Iraqi Marshlands”.

Twenty participants drawn from various Iraqi public institutions (Ministries of Environment, Planning, Water Resources, Municipalities and Public Works, Science and Technology, Natural History Museum, and State Board of Antiquities and Heritage) together with one member of the NGO Nature Iraq, were introduced to the requirements of World Heritage inscription. The workshop focused on criteria for outstanding universal value, requirements of authenticity and integrity, and management planning for World Heritage sites.

### Baghdad Eye Festival: films for human rights

On Saturday 25 February, the Iraqi Cultural Support Association launched the Baghdad Eye – Human Rights Film Festival. The films selected were documentaries and feature films, addressing human rights issues in three major areas: violence and discrimination against women; children's rights and freedom of thought and expression. Screenings was followed by discussions involving academics, researchers, and those specializing in Iraq’s human rights issues. Baghdad Eye has been launched with the support of the Czech NGO, People in need, as well as UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, and UNHCR.

### High level discussions on new law, tourism, and artefacts looting

UNESCO Iraq Director Mohamed Djelid and Culture Programme Specialist Geraldine Chatelard met with the Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Dr. Lewa’a Smaysim and his advisor Mr. Baha’a Al Mayah to discuss the new scope of cooperation between UNESCO and the ministry under the new law approved by the Parliament to regulate the ministry. Within the new outlook, UNESCO suggested a set of recommendations to improve the overall management of the country’s heritage under the supervision of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH). UNESCO officials discussed with their Iraqi counterparts the projected activities to develop a national tourism strategy and other initiatives – including supporting the Iraqi Government recover trafficked artefacts, and raising awareness among youth on artefacts looting and trafficking.

### SRSG calls for Culture promotion as he visits Iraqi National Museum

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Iraq, Mr. Martin Kobler, paid a visit to the Iraqi Museum in Baghdad where he was escorted by UNESCO officials, Iraqi experts, and Dr. Ali Al-Shalah, the Chairman of the Cultural and Media Committee of the Iraqi Council of Representatives.

After taking a tour inside the museum’s halls, Mr. Kobler stressed the United Nations’ keenness to continue its support for the protection and promotion of culture and cultural heritage in Iraq. “The power and role of culture are often underestimated, but culture is crucial for the development of society and should be supported and strengthened,” he said. “Culture is the basis of every healthy and developed society. It builds dialogue, and cultural activities should be supported and receive adequate funding”, added Mr. Kobler.

Through the past years, UNESCO has led a vast rehabilitation operation inside the National Museum. It provided the Museum labs with advanced equipments, and launched diversified initiatives to build managerial and technical capacities of the Museum’ staff and experts.
The Sciences at UNESCO Iraq

UNESCO is contributing to the natural science sector’s development, especially through water resource management and protection of biodiversity.

Natural Sciences activities of UNESCO Iraq contribute to both short and long term reconstruction efforts by building institutional and technical capacities for water resources management, supporting science and technology institutions, development of environmental policy and networking Iraqi scientists with local and international communities.

Water in Iraq: facts and figures

Three decades of war, armed conflict, sanctions and neglect of infrastructure – combined with limited environmental awareness – have undermined Iraq’s water resource management system. Improvements in management of the country’s water resources will have a profound effect on Iraq’s efforts to reduce poverty and hunger, reduce child mortality, and ensure environmental sustainability.

Iraq faces difficulties in meeting the target of 91% of households using a safe drinking water supply by 2015. Iraq relies on precipitation falling outside its borders for more than half of its water, making it vulnerable to climate change and storage projects in neighbouring countries. Reservoirs, lakes and rivers are diminished to critical levels and water levels in the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, Iraq’s primary sources of surface water, have fallen to less than a third of normal capacity. Today, more people are relying on groundwater; although these are showing signs of decline. Management of aquifers and their recharge have been minimal, impacting the level and quality of these groundwater supplies.

Currently 20% of households in Iraq use an unsafe drinking water source, while only 43% of inhabitants in rural areas have access to safe drinking water, and water for agriculture is often scarce and of poor quality.

This deteriorating situation has caused many to leave their rural communities in search of water and livelihoods.

UNESCO: restoration, knowledge, and advocacy

Recognizing these facts in Iraq, UNESCO Iraq is playing a significant supporting role in strengthening technical, institutional and managerial capacities of the Iraqi stakeholders in this field, enabling them to develop and implement integrated water resource management plans and eco-hydrological approaches for sustainable water use. Through its intervention to restore destroyed Karez (traditional water canals) in rural areas in Northern Iraq, UNESCO in collaboration with IOM prevented through an EU funded project the forced migration of 800 families that rely on this water system. The country’s information deficiency was also addressed thanks to the establishment of the first centralized groundwater system in the country, developed and provided by UNESCO. Furthermore, UNESCO is leading the UNCT and UNAMI’s efforts to draw up an integrated strategy for supporting the restoration of the Marshlands, in addition to launching several joint endeavours aiming to enhance cooperation between different Iraqi governmental bodies for advanced and inclusive planning.


22 March of every year marks a special occasion as humanity celebrates the World Water Day. With its warning scarcity, raising individual awareness among households remains one of the most effective tools to maximize water usage, and avoid vain exploitation of resources.

Leading this year’ festivities, UNESCO Iraq office, in partnership with Iraqi civil society organizations, held during a period of five days a series of conferences, seminars and lectures in several provinces all over the country under this year’s theme: “Water and Food Security”. Entitled "gender mainstreaming in water management", the lectures focused on several topics directly related to vulnerable communities.

UNICEF and in coordination with Directorate of Education in 18 Iraqi Governorates, NGOs, local Councils and also Governors sent Hygiene messages to more than 17,500 students in 40 schools throughout the country. Celebrations were concluded by activities on Water conservation for students.
Regarding its high sensitivity and importance, training on election coverage is considered a key topic on UNESCO's agenda. 2012 marks a special year in this prospect since it will witness in September the regional Parliamentarian Elections in Kurdistan, as well as starting preparations for the national elections in 2013.

Upon embarking on the project of "Training on Media Coverage during the electoral process", UNESCO will start a set of activities aiming to build the capacities of 700 Iraqi journalists, in addition to the Iraqi Communications and Media Commission (CMC) staff, UNESCO partner, project's main beneficiary as the key authority in terms of regulating and developing the Communications and Media sectors in Iraq.

This extensive five-month training will be a milestone on the road of building the media sector in the country through providing it with essential human resources. Additionally, these activities will contribute effectively to promoting democratic practices and civic consciousness among Iraqis.

Following the training held by UNESCO and its partners IMS and IMCK for Iraqi bloggers in Erbil in mid of 2011, UNESCO participated in a follow-up conference for Iraqi bloggers in Sulaymaniyah last February. The conference was dedicated to Iraqi and Arab bloggers as well as activists in the field of law and media. The recommendations of the conference were:

1. Building the capacity of bloggers through specialized trainings and workshops;  
2. Raising bloggers' legal awareness in order to protect their copyrights;  
3. Granting Freedom of Expression to bloggers; and  
4. Demanding UNESCO support in creating a Bloggers’ union and dedicated Civil Society Organizations.

UNESCO aims to support and assist Iraqi bloggers within its plans for the development of new media and citizen journalism as well as the best use of social media within the framework of international standards of freedom of expression.