Welcome to UNESCO Iraq’s Newsletter

“Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed”
- UNESCO Constitution

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It is my pleasure to introduce to you the first issue of the UNESCO Iraq Office’s newsletter. Since its establishment in Amman in 2004, UNESCO Iraq has made significant contributions to rehabilitating Iraq’s education system, restoring heritage sites and recovering looted cultural artifacts, increasing access to water and improving water management systems, and strengthening the media sector by strengthening electoral processes and pushing for improved access to information.

This year marks the most active period in our office’s history, with the total value of our projects reaching US $60 million. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our partners, the Iraqi and Kurdistan Regional Governments, for their cooperation with us, as well as our main donors: the European Union, the Office of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, First Lady of Qatar, the Governments of Germany, Japan, Italy, Turkey, and others for their continued support of our initiatives and activities.

2011 has also seen the inauguration of a new Iraqi Government. I began the year by meeting with the new Ministers of Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research, Science and Technology, and Culture of Iraq, to reiterate the Organization’s commitment to supporting our partner Ministries in both new and ongoing initiatives in all areas under our mandate.

I invite you to follow our newsletter and stay informed on our office’s latest activities and achievements as we work towards peace, reconciliation and a brighter future for Iraq.

Mohamed Djelid
Director – UNESCO Iraq Office

Director of UNESCO-Iraq meets with new Iraqi Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research (top left), Minister of Education (top right), Minister of Science and Technology (bottom left) and Minister of Culture (bottom right) in Baghdad.
**UNESCO and Ministry of Education Launch Iraqi Educational TV**

UNESCO, with the support of the European Union and in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, formally launched the Iraqi Educational Television (Iraqi Edu at Nile Sat) and the Iraqi Curricula Website at a ceremony in Baghdad on 23 February.

With funding of US $6.5 million from the EU, UNESCO has established two TV production/broadcasting studios with a satellite transmission unit, produced 624 TV lessons, provided a total of 725 hours of externally produced programs for Iraqi students and produced 24 episodes of “Abu Salam Family”, an animated series focusing attention on civic values, gender equality and human rights. UNESCO also established a TV library and trained all the TV station staff in various disciplines.

The Iraqi Curricula website (www.iraqicurricula.org) is an online resource with links to all relevant educational materials covering learning from primary to secondary schooling.

These two resources immediately address the needs of students who have been unable to attend class regularly due to war or insecurity. The satellite TV programs have a regional footprint and by the nature of the internet, all Iraqis no matter where they live can access educational material and programs from a computer.

As Mr. Jobst von Kirchmann, the EU Head of Cooperation put it, “the new educational TV will make the official curriculum available to everybody who has access to television. And here we are talking about almost 90 % of the population in Iraq and even more in the Diaspora.”

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**Revitalizing Science, Technology and Innovation**

UNESCO and the Iraqi Government launched an initiative in December 2010 to help rebuild the country’s intellectual infrastructure and begin the transition towards a knowledge-based economy.

A joint effort between the Central Government, the Kurdish Regional Government and UNESCO and with financial support of US $113,431 from Japan, the new program establishes and links a network of national and international government experts, scientists, academics and businesses to articulate policy priorities over a 12-month period. Broadly, the initiative will foster a national dialogue to realize the potential of science and technology to spur and economic growth and improve the quality of life in Iraq.

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**Najaf: Islamic Cultural Capital in 2012**

In January, the Director of UNESCO Iraq signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Minister of Culture Sadoun Al-Dulaimi, for a Cooperation Executive Programme for the Preparation of Najaf’s 2012 celebrations as Islamic Cultural Capital. The Ministry of Culture of Iraq has provided funding of US $2 million and in close cooperation with the Governorate of Najaf has taken responsibility for the overall preparations.

According to the agreement, UNESCO will establish an operational Communication Plan to include procedures, multi-lingual publications and promotional tools. UNESCO will also assist in planning a series of festivals and conferences, and will establish visit tracks and an interpretation center for visitors at the most prominent archaeological site of Najaf – Dar Al Emara – enriching the tourism experience and expanding awareness and knowledge of the history of Najaf.

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**Basrah Declaration for the Marshlands**

More than 100 Iraqi officials, academics, UN and private sector representatives have issued the Basrah Declaration of Principles for a National Vision for the Marshlands, released after a national conference co-organized by the University of Basrah, the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and UNESCO in Basrah on 6 and 7 June.

The Declaration sets out 12 basic principles for all actors including government, local communities and business, to follow. It recognizes the Marshlands as critical to the well-being of all Iraqis and as a vital component of the national identity. Participants also emphasized the right of actors in the region to pursue environmental, economic and cultural development and the importance of eradicating poverty.

The Declaration was released with a list of proposed actions to set it in motion, such as the establishment of a Higher Authority for the Marshlands, the creation of an international development fund and the drafting of a new national strategy for development in the Marshlands. It is being shared with a wide audience and will be presented to the Government of Iraq for formal adoption.

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**Press conference held in Erbil to launch the Science, Technology and Innovation project, December**

The Director of UNESCO Iraq and H.E. Minister of Culture sign the MOU for Najaf, January

The Director of UNESCO Iraq and H.E. Minister of Culture sign the MOU for Najaf, January
Public Sector Modernisation for Education Reform

In the framework of the Iraq Public Sector Modernization Programme, a joint UN programme funded by the EU that aims to support the Iraqi Government in adopting a public sector reform strategy, UNESCO and UNICEF have collaborated in conducting a Functional Review of the Iraqi education sector. UNESCO’s allocation for the first phase of this project is US $2 million.

From 7 to 10 April 2011, 15 Iraqi experts from the Ministries of Education and Higher Education and Scientific Research of both the central government and the KRG met in Erbil to develop the structure of the Functional Review Report for the Iraqi education sector with the assistance of UNESCO experts.

Based on the results of the data collection process launched by UNESCO in September 2010, the Report will provide an accurate picture of the structure of the four Ministries, including the strengths and weaknesses of the current institutional setting. The findings of the report, together with the assessment of the service delivery model and costing of education in Iraq will be key to ensuring that the future road map for education reform appropriately addresses any existing gaps hindering access to quality education.

The next workshop, where the Iraqi group of experts will present final results of the review, will be held in July in Erbil.

Assuring Quality for Higher Education in Iraq

Within the framework of the partnership launched last year between UNESCO and the Office of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser to support the rehabilitation of Iraqi higher education systems for US $8.5 million, a training workshop on Quality Assurance was organized in Doha from 6 to 10 June to lead a core team of 23 managers to implement quality in their respective institutions. This team, composed of key officers from Colleges of Engineering in 12 different Iraqi universities, was selected to launch a Quality Assurance pilot project in Iraq.

The training thoroughly addressed system and processes of Quality Assurance in Higher Education institutions and programs and paved the grounds for accreditation procedures. Once in Iraq, the participants will be assigned to perform a self-evaluation of their colleges and identify the areas for quality improvement. This first pilot experience will be duplicated in other colleges and specializations as a foundation for the establishment of a National Quality Assurance and Accreditation System in Iraq.

Globalization and increased academic and professional mobility have made quality assurance a necessity. By supporting Quality Assurance, UNESCO aims at bringing the Iraqi higher education system up to international standards.

Towards a National Education Strategy

UNESCO Iraq, in collaboration with the World Bank, UNICEF and Iraqi counterparts, is contributing to the formulation of a National Educational Strategy for Iraq as part of efforts to enhance the learning environment in Iraq to meet the Education for All (EFA) Goals, with funding of $1.7 million by the European Union. Most recently, the concerned parties organized a meeting in Iraq in March to mobilize more political support for the strategy.

Discussions focused on the requirements of higher education, demographic growth, the correlation between the curriculum and the needs of the labor market, and quality assurance in higher education. Participants recommended the preparation of a 40-50 page strategy document that includes objectives, policies and programs related to the issue, and highlighted the importance of having an international expert in Baghdad and Erbil to cooperate with the Drafting Committee.

UNESCO experts most recently reviewed a draft of Chapter 3 of the Strategy, covering its vision and mission in addition to policies and challenges. UNESCO has sent its comments to the Iraqi Drafting Committee for follow-up.
Empowering Iraqis through Literacy and Non-Formal Education

Within the framework of the US $6.4 million project Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) in Iraq in partnership with the Office of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, the UNESCO Iraq Office is supporting the Government in developing a National Literacy Strategy. This will guide the national literacy campaign to reduce illiteracy by 50% by 2015 and allow the government to work towards the achievement of Education for All (EFA) Goals and MDGs related to education.

To this end, a national consultation workshop was organized in Erbil from 1-2 June to review and ensure the finalization of the draft literacy strategy and to discuss the status of the draft literacy law. UNESCO held the consultation workshop with Dr Ala Makki, Deputy of Education Committee of the Iraqi Parliament, representatives of the Prime Minister's Office and Iraqi Ministries of Education and Ministry of Planning, as well as UNESCO’s experts in the field of literacy and non-formal education.

To enhance advocacy and communication to make non-formal education and literacy a priority, UNESCO also cooperated with the Ministry of Education in organizing a National Conference on Literacy Network for Iraq, held in Baghdad on 6 June. The purpose of this conference was to identify best literacy practices and ensure community mobilization for the national literacy campaign.

The final literacy strategy is expected to be officially launched during the celebration of International Literacy Day on 8 September 2011.

“"It’s a Right, Make it Right! Education for Girls and Women Now”

UNESCO celebrates Education for All (EFA) Global Action Week annually to raise awareness towards the achievement of the six EFA goals. Events were organized from 2-8 May 2011 this year, highlighting the most critical issues and obstacles girls and women face in gaining access to quality education. In Iraq, approximately 75% of girls drop out during or after primary school.

Several activities took place throughout Iraq in partnership with Ministries of Education and NGOs. In addition to local celebrations and distribution of posters and leaflets in schools and literacy centers throughout Iraq, two main Roundtable Discussions were held in Baghdad and Erbil to promote dialogue between governmental representatives and civil society. UNESCO also developed a documentary highlighting the main issues affecting education for women and girls.

UNESCO Iraq launches the “NGO Literacy and Life Skills Grant Program”

UNESCO Iraq announced in June the launch of the “NGO Literacy and Life Skills Grant Program” which will ensure the provision of literacy and life skills training to more than 6000 vulnerable youth and women. The grant will enable the establishment of community learning centers in Iraq in partnership with national NGOs and Ministry of Education.

The grant literacy program will be implemented in cooperation with Iraqi Ministry of Education during the coming school year (2011-2012). Proposed activities shall include provision of basic life skills along with literacy programs that will enhance work opportunities for unemployed illiterate youth and vulnerable communities throughout Iraq. To this end, 25 NGOs will receive a financial grant of USD 40,000 and UNESCO will provide needed equipment to established community learning centers.

NGOs interested in applying are invited to download the grant operational guidelines and application form from the Literacy Network for Iraq website at www.lifeforiraq.org. Proposals with attached supporting documents should be sent to: baghdad.proc@unesco.org with the subject “NGO Literacy Grant” no later than 30 July 2011, 12 am Baghdad time.

Integrating HIV/AIDS into Literacy and Non-Formal Education

In its ongoing project in responding to HIV/AIDS issues by increasing awareness through literacy (US $120,000) UNESCO Iraq held a training workshop for twenty participants consisting of Ministry of Education officials and representatives of relevant Iraqi civil society organizations, from 26-30 April in Erbil. Through the workshop, a toolkit was developed to assist Iraqi stakeholders in integrating knowledge and skills related to HIV/AIDS response and prevention into literacy and non-formal educational programming throughout the country.

Topics covered in the toolkit and training included: sexual behavior amongst Iraqi youth, gender equality, drug abuse, stigma and discrimination and vulnerability. The specific vulnerability of women was discussed given the high number of females amongst the illiterate population of Iraq and their particular position within the post-conflict society. Participants also discussed the situation of youth in Iraq and HIV, as social media and more open borders are changing their information and experiences.

Recommendations for further action included training a core group of master trainers and promoting further knowledge and skills related to preventative behavior amongst vulnerable groups.
The Sciences at UNESCO Iraq

UNESCO Iraq’s Sciences sector has been primarily active in Iraq in the area of Integrated Water Resources Management. Through several projects, UNESCO has built the capacity of water institutions in Iraq, rehabilitated twenty karez delivering water to the governorates of Dohuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah and is currently creating a national database for Iraq’s hydrogeological resources.

Identifying a gap in Iraq in the area of science and innovation, UNESCO Iraq has also recently launched a project that brings together key ministries in the central and Kurdistan Region governments to create a Master Plan for Science, Technology and Innovation.

UNESCO Iraq is currently a member of the UN Country Team’s Integrated Water Task Force, through which it has most recently been focusing on guiding the national dialogue to restore and develop the Iraqi Marshlands.

Twenty Karez Restored Across Northern Iraq

UNESCO Iraq has completed in March the project “Rehabilitation and Conservation of Karez Water Management Systems in Iraq”. With funding of US $1.6 million from the EU, this project improved the supply of drinking and irrigation water in rural areas of the governorates of Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Dohuk by restoring twenty karez in all three governorates. Karez are traditional water management systems; they are man-made underground aqueducts used to provide reliable supplies of water to human settlements for irrigation and household use.

Restoration of the karez over the four years of the project generated short-term employment, both skilled and unskilled, for local communities. UNESCO Iraq also ensured within the activities of the project to build capacity within the Kurdistan Regional Government Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources on maintaining, rehabilitating and managing karez in the future, through two training workshops and a study tour to Oman. With a long-term aim to enable future karez rehabilitation in the Kurdistan Region, UNESCO is currently in the process of publishing a Karez Restoration Manual, to aid experts in these restoration efforts.

Having received substantial coverage in international press and brought attention to the issues affecting this area, the project has had many positive impacts, both direct and indirect, on the areas it targeted. The restoration of the karez improved living conditions for thousands of Iraqis: there was more water available for drinking and household use, and the increased water supplies enabled the communities to expand their agricultural production. Those, locally employed, who worked on the restoration are also now more confident to do further restoration on their own, and many have said that they are willing to assist other communities’ karez restoration.

By providing employment opportunities and greater access to water, UNESCO Iraq is setting the foundations for sustainable growth and development in the villages in Northern Iraq.

GIS Database for Hydro-geological Resources

UNESCO Iraq has been active in developing a National Hydro-geological Database mapping out hydrological resources across all of Iraq. With funding of US $675,000 from the EU, this project provides water managers and experts with valuable tools for improved hydrogeological data management and planning.

As part of the project, UNESCO Iraq conducted a five-day workshop in Erbil in late February on the “Management of a GIS Database for Hydrogeological Resources” for twenty water managers and experts from both Federal and Kurdistan Regional Government Ministries of Water Resources, Agriculture, Industry and Minerals, Planning and Development Cooperation, and Higher Education and Scientific Research.

GIS is particularly useful for hydrogeological resource management in the context of Iraq. It can increase drilling precision when visually representing well and aquifer locations, and can reduce operational costs for the monitoring of wells and aquifer levels.

Upon the course’s conclusion, participants were officially established as the “inter-ministerial GIS team” for the development of UNESCO’s National Hydrogeological Database. This team’s role will be to integrate each Ministry and University’s data into this central database. A National Validation Seminar to be held in Baghdad in July will present the results of the project, and unveil the interactive database, GEO-FIA.
CULTURE: Tourism, Conservation

Culture at UNESCO Iraq

From restoring museums, citadels and shrines to fighting against the looting of artifacts, protecting intangible heritage, promoting tourism and nominating Iraqi sites to the World Heritage List, UNESCO as the only UN agency with a mandate for culture has been keen on preserving and showcasing the rich cultural heritage of this country of ancient civilizations.

UNESCO Iraq Launches Development of National Tourism Strategy

The UNESCO Iraq Office organized a launch meeting on 7 June 2011 for concerned Iraqi stakeholders to begin brainstorming about the concept of a tourism strategy and the issues related to its application in Iraq. This launch meeting was combined with a one-day study-tour on 6 June to introduce Iraqi participants to the Jordanian experience in the promotion of cultural, religious and eco-tourism sites. This event gathered thirty concerned Iraqi authorities and stakeholders, representatives from Jordanian institutions related to tourism as well as international experts including the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

Upon the request of the Government of Iraq, UNESCO is assisting Iraqi authorities in developing a National Tourism Strategy with funding of $1 million from the European Union. This UNESCO project is based on two main components: building local capacities for the tourism sector and supporting the promotion of cultural, religious and eco-tourism in Iraq.

The first part of the event was dedicated to a study tour of two famous Jordanian sites: the Ajloun Reserve and Bethany (Baptism Site) in the Jordan Valley. The meeting gathered the participants the following day at the Landmark Hotel in Amman. It introduced concepts closely linked with the development of a tourism strategy with international case studies from Jordan and Italy and the presentation of tools for tourism promotion of a destination. Specific tools presented were Virtual Tours and a Tourism Guide Licensing/Certification System. As the development of both these tools by Iraqi experts requires wide capacity-building/trainings programmes, the meeting addressed the issue of tourism education. The next step for the project will be the nomination of members for the Project Steering Committee by all involved stakeholders and decision makers, including Iraqi Universities providing tourism education programmes.

English/Arabic Technical Vocabulary for Cultural Property Conservation Published

The UNESCO Iraq Office has published 200 copies of an English-Arabic and Arabic-English Technical Vocabulary for Cultural Property Conservation, to be distributed to museums all over Iraq and the region. This initiative is the result of UNESCO’s most recent activities within the framework of its recently concluded Project for the Restoration of the Conservation Laboratory of the Iraqi National Museum, funded by the Japanese Trust Fund for the Preservation of the World Cultural Heritage for US $1 million.

The vocabulary in the guide is based on trainings given by the National Research Institute for Cultural Property in Tokyo to Iraqi conservation experts, focused on the study of advanced techniques and protocols for the conservation of museum artifacts of different materials such as bone, metal, wood, parchment, pottery and glass.

ICC Meeting Held in Iraq for the First Time

Iraqi officials took significant steps to address the threats against the nation’s cultural heritage at the 5th Plenary of the International Coordination Committee for the Safeguarding of the Cultural Heritage of Iraq, also known as the ICC. Held for the first time in Iraq, the two-day meeting held from April 3-4 resulted in a list of targeted recommendations intended to ensure that Iraq’s cultural heritage remains for future generations.

As testimony to the importance of the ICC, First Lady Hero Khan opened the session and Deputy Minister of Culture, Mr. Fawzy Al Atroushi chaired the meeting on behalf of the Government of Iraq. The Advisor of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Mr. Bahaa Mayah and the Director of UNESCO Iraq, were present as were nearly a dozen international experts. Recommendations covered specific policy and management areas and actions to be undertaken to prevent any further loss of Iraqi heritage.

The 5th Plenary marked the first time the ICC has met on Iraqi soil. The symbolism was not lost on the ICC members who saw this as an important transition to true and full Iraqi ownership of this deliberative body. Upcoming ICC meetings will be held in Baghdad at the technical level and in Najaf at the political level, in view of the celebration Najaf Islamic Culture Capital in 2012.
A Master Plan for the Erbil Citadel

UNESCO Iraq has been actively contributing to the revitalization of the Erbil Citadel since 2007, in cooperation with the High Commission for Erbil Citadel Revitalization and through funding from the Governorate of Erbil. March 2011 marked the completion of the first phase of the project worth US $1.5 million, resulting in the completion of a Master Plan for the restoration of the Citadel. UNESCO has also created a buffer zone for the Citadel, to preserve its context and setting and protect it from the negative impacts of future development in the area.

The preservation of the social, archaeological and cultural values has been very important in the conservation in the Citadel; UNESCO’s aim is that its work will help in its successful nomination to the World Heritage list, in order to protect the authenticity of its setting.

Currently in its second phase worth nearly US $13 million, the project is now performing urgent preventative works on several houses and buildings within the Citadel, with an expected completion date of March 2013.

National Reconciliation and Interreligious Dialogue: Let’s meet again in Samara

The project for the restoration of the Al-Askari Shrine in Samara implemented by UNESCO Iraq provides an excellent illustration of the potential of culture to promote national reconciliation and interreligious dialogue. Following the bombing of this major Shiite pilgrimage centre in 2006 and 2007, UNESCO launched an $8.4 million project funded by the European Union and the Government of Iraq to prepare the restoration of the Shrine and strengthening national capacities to protect other historic sites throughout the country.

The project focused on priority tasks such as cleaning, urgent preventive work, classification and storage of architectural elements, as well as assessments and surveys of the state of conservation of the Shrine and its structural stability. Approximately 600 citizens from Samara have been employed to undertake different aspects of the project, Iraqi architects and engineers received training in restoration techniques and the use of technical equipment, and historical and architectural documentation was compiled in conformity with international conservation standards.

UNESCO also worked closely with local authorities to organize a meeting in Samara between some 500 intellectuals and religious leaders from three other major Iraqi Shiite centres (Karbala, Najaf and Kazemiyah) and their Sunni counterparts. This historic encounter in February 2009 contributed to strengthening the reconciliation process by launching a dialogue among influential figures. “National reconciliation started here when the people asked for international help in rebuilding the Askari Shrine,” Mahmood Khalef Ahmad, Samara’s Sunni mayor, has said. “What we have achieved here should be a clear example to other provinces in Iraq.”

Iraqi Maqam, the Masterpiece

Iraqi Maqam was proclaimed as a Masterpiece in 2003 and was inscribed in 2008 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The UNESCO Iraq Office, in cooperation with the Iraqi Maqam Foundation based in Netherlands, is preparing the recording of four Iraqi Maqam. In this, UNESCO counts on the kind cooperation of the best Iraqi Maqam artists, including Farida, Hussein Al Athami, Saad Al Athami, and Hamed Al Sa’adi. By the end of the project, Iraq will have a recording of traditional Maqam accompanied by narrative explanations of its words; currently, the first CD is in production.

Modernizing Sulaymaniyah Museum

Sulaymaniyah Museum is the second largest museum in Iraq, and is home to many Kurdish and ancient Persian artefacts dating back to as far as 1792–1750 BC. A viable and sustainable Master Plan is necessary for the museum to have a clear understanding of the extent and type of objects it contains. Under “The Modernization of the Sulaymaniyah Museum Project Master Plan”, UNESCO has focused its work on three main areas: physical building and uses, the museum’s collections, and education. UNESCO has launched the project “Modernizing Sulaymaniyah Museum” under a co-financing agreement with contributions from the Governorate of Sulaymaniyah (US$300,000) and the UNDG Iraq Trust Fund (US$350,000).

Within the framework of this project, a UNESCO expert on museology has completed a mission in Sulaymaniyah to initiate the reinterpretation of the collection with the aim of creating a new permanent exhibition. Furthermore, a UNESCO education expert has completed an evaluation of the museum’s educational activities and started to develop a programme for primary and secondary school children, adults, and challenged children. The Senior UNESCO expert for the project is currently coordinating visits of international experts in storage, conservation and museum security to support the next phase of the project.
Communication and Information at UNESCO Iraq

Strengthening the media sector has been a key priority for UNESCO Iraq. The Office has trained and supported journalists in sensitive and neutral elections reporting, raised awareness about the right to information, reviewed journalism curricula in universities, worked on improving the coordination between the Communications and Media Commission and other bodies to improve broadcast regulation, and promoted safety trainings for journalists, academics and human rights defenders. UNESCO is the only United Nations agency with a mandate to defend freedom of expression and press freedom.

UNESCO Celebrates World Press Freedom Day

UNESCO Iraq held its World Press Freedom Day celebrations in Baghdad on 3 May as part of the worldwide events this year taking place for the occasion.

Iraqi bloggers seized on this year’s theme – 21st Century Media: New Frontiers, New Barriers – to announce the formation of the first Iraqi Bloggers Union to be called “Iraq first.” The announcement was made by blogger Ammar Bin Hatim who outlined the union’s charter before a crowd of hundreds. The objective of the union, said Hatim, “is to achieve the values of justice, freedom and political independence and cultural development of all segments of Iraqi society, including the rights of minorities to live in dignity and freedom in Iraq.”

The day was also punctuated by the somber realities for journalists working in Iraq. A moment of silence was observed to remember those reporters who were killed because of their work. The Journalistic Freedoms Observatory reported that 12 journalists were killed in the country since the last World Press Freedom Day.

The event included roundtable discussions on issues related to promotion of media as a platform for civic participation and democratic discourse, and the implications of new media on freedom of expression in Iraq. The event also featured a gallery of photojournalism and editorial cartoons.

Journalist Protection Draft Law

In light of the recent push for passage of the Journalist Protection Law (JPL) in the Council of Representatives, UNESCO has stepped up its campaign to inform journalists, members of Parliament and civil society about the draft law’s problems. This draft law has made several appearances over the past few years, and UNESCO is concerned that in its current form the law poses more of a threat to freedom of the press and freedom of expression than even adequately addressing the basic needs of reporters in the area of protection.

UNESCO has commissioned two analyses, one from Article 19 and the other from the Centre for Law and Democracy. Both analyses, which are available in Arabic and English, were highly critical of the draft law. UNESCO has officially expressed its concerns to the Government regarding the draft law; we understand that this is an Iraqi process, but also one that should be conducted with a full range of opinions and analyses available in order for Parliament to make an informed vote.

What we hope for is time for the Parliament to consider thoroughly the concerns raised by many parties, including a growing number of Iraqi journalists.

Having extensive experience in media regulation within the region, the UNESCO Iraq Office will be ready to assist the Government in complying with international standards in the regulation of the media sector and is planning to hold a national conference in Baghdad about Freedom of Expression and Information legislation towards the end of August.

Media Environmental Sustainability Trainings

Under UNESCO’s global mandate to support “Strengthening free, independent and pluralistic media and communication for sustainable development”, UNESCO-Iraq has organized a three-phase investigative journalism training focusing on environmental and water issues in Iraq. The first of the three trainings was held in Erbil in December 2010, and fifteen participants who had excelled in the first phase were selected to attend the second phase in Erbil from 25 to 30 June.

Participants were trained by international media experts from Canal France International and respected sustainable development experts from the Environment Research Centre (University of Technology, Baghdad). Both theoretical and practical approaches to reporting on environmental issues and sustainable development as an international concept were taught and framed within the Iraqi context.
Over the last year, UNESCO and its Iraqi partners have focused on strengthening and supporting media professionals, human rights defenders and members of the academic community who have been especially targeted by extremists, thus suffering the consequences of violence and threats inside Iraq. This project is jointly implemented with UNOPS, with funding from the European Union.

One of the main objectives in the project has been to raise awareness on human rights abuses in Iraq, as well as providing practical tools to report on and monitor human rights violations to national and international institutions. Another objective is to increase the capacity of the targeted groups on security issues to ensure their personal safety.

Most recently, UNESCO Iraq conducted a series of workshops for human rights defenders in Baghdad and Basra, providing them with personal safety and security training.

Other activities planned within this project include: offering an interactive website in which human rights issues and violations are reported and accessible to Human Rights Organizations, journalists, academics, legislators and civil society; legal awareness training to governmental officials and lawyers; and the establishment of two resource centers/hubs (Baghdad and Erbil) that will act as regional focal points for security, and the reproduction and distribution of a Field Work Safety Manual.

Review of Iraqi Journalism Curricula

Within the framework of the project “Support of Media in its Role of Fostering Peace and Democracy,” conducted in partnership with UNDP and UNOPS with funding of US $763,261 from Spain, UNESCO Iraq has held several activities to review Iraq’s journalism curricula.

UNESCO held a workshop for “Iraqi Journalism Curriculum Development” for Iraq and KRG in Amman from 26 June to 1 July 2011 for 19 representatives from the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research for Baghdad, Baghdad, Salahaddin and Sulaymaniyah Universities, the Technical Institutions of Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, as well as four international experts. This workshop was held to complete the study for the possibility of adapting UNESCO’s proposed curriculum known as “UNESCO Model Curriculum for Journalism” to Iraq’s requirements for the ongoing curricular reforms of journalism programs. This final workshop represents the last stage for an initiative that began in June 2010 with a workshop held in Amman, followed in January 2011 by a study tour to the USA. During this tour, seven Iraqi delegations and UNESCO representatives had the opportunity to visit University and the University of Oregon, newspapers and news agencies in order to see firsthand the most recent developments in journalism at both the education and professional levels.

In the workshop, participants discussed the results of their study of the proposed curriculum and the suggestions that were expressed and compiled previously. They agreed on adopting the proposed curriculum and developing strategic projects in response to institutional and marketing demands. The participants agreed that the UNESCO Model Curriculum provides a high degree of flexibility allowing adaptation to the needs and vision of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and of journalism students.

UNESCO Iraq Holds Retreat for Media and Electoral Commissions

UNESCO brought together the Communications and Media Commission (CMC) and the Iraqi Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) in a retreat in Erbil facilitated by Albany Associates from 14 to 17 June. The retreat took place within the framework of the ongoing project “Support for Enhanced Media Coverage and Monitoring of Electoral Processes” funded by the European Union for US $3 million. This meeting provided an opportunity to discuss areas of potential cooperation and interaction between the two during and after elections.

The first two days were dedicated to the CMC and were spent reviewing the strengths and weaknesses of its internal structures and developing a vision for the organization. IHEC participants attended the subsequent two days during which they discussed two main themes: the regulation of media during elections and areas of potential cooperation and interaction between the CMC and IHEC. The retreat, attended by 15 representatives of the CMC and four from the IHEC, was positive in its outcomes relating to coordination mechanisms between the two organizations.
**Education Sector**

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Ministers of Education in Baghdad and Erbil, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Baghdad and Director of UNESCO Iraq attended the 6th Steering Committee Coordination Meeting held in Doha, April 2011.

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Representatives from Iraqi universities attended a Quality Assurance in Higher Education workshop to discuss implementing a pilot Quality Assurance project in 12 engineering colleges in Iraq. Doha, 6-10 June 2011.

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Iraqi experts participated in a Functional Review workshop held by UNESCO Iraq as part of the Iraq Public Sector Modernization Programme. Erbil, 7-9 April 2011.

**Sciences Sector**

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Iraqi ministry officials, academics, representatives from the private sector and experts gather to discuss a national vision for the Marshlands in the Basrah Conference. Basrah, June 2011.

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UNESCO’s Natural Sciences Officer embarked on a joint UN mission to survey the Marshlands. February 2011.
**Culture Sector**

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Iraq’s First Lady, Hero Khan attended the fifth meeting of the International Coordination Committee for the Safeguarding of Iraqi Cultural Heritage. From left to right: Director of UNESCO Iraq Office Mr. Mohamed Djelid, First Lady of Iraq, Ms. Lemia Dizayee from UNESCO Iraq and Mr. Francesco Bandarin UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Culture. Erbil, April 2011.

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Wadi Al-Salam Cemetery was nominated to the Tentative List of properties to be nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List on 25 January 2011. Currently the world’s largest cemetery containing a few million bodies, Wadi Al-Salam holds the graves of many prophets, thinkers and historical figures.

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Participants in a study tour to some of Jordan’s religious and eco-tourism sites for Iraqi participants as part of UNESCO Iraq’s launch meeting, held from 6-7 June, for the development of an Iraqi National Tourism Strategy. Amman, June 2011.

**Communication and Information Sector**

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Representatives from Iraqi universities met in Amman for a workshop from 26 June to 1 July to discuss reviewing Iraqi journalism curricula. Participants agreed to adopt the UNESCO curriculum model, adapting it to Iraq’s particular needs. Amman, June 2011.

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UNESCO Iraq held the second phase from 25 to 30 June 2011 of a three-phase training for journalists to report on water and environmental issues in Iraq. Erbil, June 2011.
Upcoming Events

Meeting for the selection and evaluation of received proposals under the NGO literacy Grant Program (Education)
10-11 August 2011, Erbil

Celebrations of International Literacy Day (Education)
8 September 2011, Iraq (specific locations to be confirmed)

Launch of the National Literacy Strategy for Iraq (Education)
10-16 September 2011 (tentative), Baghdad

Training on Data collection and Data Analysis (Education)
11 – 16 September 2011 (tentative), Erbil

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Did You Know? Iraqi Poetry and Maqam

... that the birth of Arabic prose as a literary form is attributed to Ibn al-Muqaffa, an Iraqi who lived during the times of the Abbasid Khalifate (750-1 256)? Born in Basrah, he translated classical Persian works into Arabic and became famous as the author of Kalila and Dimna, a series of didactic fables in which two jackals offer moral and practical advice.

Modern Iraq, too, is an important cultural powerhouse of the Arab world. The most famous novelist in Iraq during the first half of the 20th century was Dhu al-Nun Ayyub, whose stories revolved mostly around social issues. Also, Ma'ruf al-Rusafi, Jamil Sidqi al-Zahawi, and Muhammad Mahdi al-Jawahiir became prominent among the poets of the Arab world. All three wrote in the neoclassical style, with beautiful rhymes and strict rules of meter and verse.

Most prominent among the new generation of Iraqi poets, who engaged in blank or free verse poetry as opposed to the neoclassical style, were Badr Shakir al-Sayyab and 'Abd al-Wahhab al-Bayati. Both dedicated much of their poetry to Iraq, its society, and its politics, and both engaged in symbolic-mystical writing, borrowing mythological themes from their country's ancient pre-Islamic history. A prominent female poet of the same generation is Nazik al-Mala'ika.

Many Iraqi poets also compose poetry in colloquial Arabic. Their poetry is easily understood, even by people who cannot read, as it is only recited, never written. It fills radio and television broadcasts and has enthusiastic listeners.