



Republic of Iraq



Ministry of Environment

IRAQI FOURTH NATIONAL REPORT TO THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY



السنة الدولية للتنوع البيولوجي 2010

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Foreword

Although Iraq's accession to the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) was a mere seven months ago, the Iraqi Ministry of Environment (MOE) has initiated a number of significant first steps to fulfill the country's new obligations. Among the most prominent examples are the establishment of a national committee to implement the Convention and the preparation of the national report. Additionally, the MOE has initiated several other aspects of protection, such as the creation of protected areas and national programs for biodiversity.

Iraq has become a member party of the Convention at a pivotal time as the international community struggles to reach the 2010 biodiversity goals as well as set forth future milestones as yet to be determined. The obligations fulfilled by Iraq are a noteworthy example of international cooperation, which should be fostered to address the growing threats to the health of the planet.

The MOE shares the international community's concerns regarding the social, economic, cultural and environmental implications of the loss of biodiversity due to the negative impacts of climate change, and the need to educate the masses in order to conserve biodiversity, encourage sustainable use, and explain the benefits derived from biodiversity. As the Executive Director of the Convention has pointed out, no progress has been made in stopping the loss of biodiversity on a global scale during the previous period. The present goal, therefore, is to bring forth a new vision of the preservation and sustainability of biodiversity to acknowledge the inextricable link between natural capital and sustainable goals.

The MOE is in a unique position to identify the root causes for biodiversity degradation in Iraq, and take the necessary mitigating actions. This Ministry calls for a change in policies to reflect the true value of species and their habitats, and to recognize that biodiversity is life -- our life -- so let us strive to protect it before all is lost.

A fundamental impediment to the protection of Iraq's biodiversity is the lack of institutional structure and necessary legislative framework to protect important species, establish protected habitats, or create a sufficiently strong but feasible work plan. In addition to this institutional failure, there is a general lack of environmental awareness among the public and government, a lack of research institutions to aid in the creation of work plans, a dangerous expansion of unplanned urbanization and illegal hunting, and a threat from invading species.

The MOE aims, with the aid of other governmental and non-governmental institutions, to address this degradation by establishing new laws and regulations and launching various protection programmes. The accession to the CBD can be regarded as an important first step in this direction, through which we aim to raise the capabilities of Iraqis in the field of biodiversity preservation and conduct joint programmes on both international and regional levels.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all who have contributed to the preparation of this report. I would particularly like to thank the members of the joint committee from both the MOE and NI, who undertook the task of preparing this report, and, the Secretariat of the CBD for the continuous support in this critical period.

Narmin Othman Hassan
Minister of Environment
Republic of Iraq - 22nd July 2010

Introduction

It is fitting that as Iraq issues its first comprehensive report on the biological diversity of the country, the United Nations designates 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity. Environmental issues such as biodiversity have not played a large part in the recent public discourse in Iraq, which to a large extent has been preoccupied with security and reconstruction. That being said, environmental concerns represent a significant challenge within Iraq that are complicating the development of the country, such as: water resource management; decline in biodiversity; waste management; oil development and industrial pollution and environmental impacts caused by decades of war and conflict.

In 2009, Iraq signed the Convention for Biological Diversity (SCBD, 2009a) and initiated the first attempt to address the issue of biodiversity degradation that has plagued the country. This document is the first national report to be submitted to the CBD Secretariat as part of Iraq's obligations as a Party to the Convention. It will examine and report on the status of biodiversity within Iraq and lay the groundwork for development of a national biodiversity strategy and action plan (NBSAP) to protect the diverse and vital species and ecosystems of Iraq.

Article 1 of the Convention (SCBD, 2009b) provides three overall objectives:

- 1. the conservation of biological diversity;**
- 2. the sustainable use of its components, and**
- 3. the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.**

Article 6 of the Convention requires the Parties to develop "national strategies, plans or programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity", and article 26 requires regular reporting. Although Iraq is a new party to the convention and this is the country's first report to the Secretariat, the authors of this report used the guidelines for the Fourth National Report in the preparation of this document (SCBD, 2009c).

As a new party to the convention, Iraq is in the process of establishing the institutional and legal framework for CBD implementation. Therefore, this first national report by Iraq may not cover all the content as suggested in the guidelines for the IV National Report, although it is likely that a significant baseline can be established. As much information as possible has been pooled together in this report and an initial set of indicators for biodiversity has been elaborated for assessing gaps in information. Iraq has not yet developed a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) but this first

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