



# REPORT OF THE UNEP ROUNDTABLE ON IRAQI MARSHLAND MANAGEMENT

*21 - 22 September 2004  
Amman, Jordan*

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

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# **Report of the UNEP Roundtable on Iraqi Marshland Management**

*21 –22 September 2004  
Le Meridien Hotel, Amman, Jordan*



**UNEP**

Division of Technology, Industry and Economics  
**International Environmental  
Technology Centre**



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## **Roundtable Background**

The Amman Roundtable on Iraqi Marshland Management was organized by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on 21 and 22 September 2004 in Amman, Jordan. The Roundtable was one of the initial activities for UNEP's "Support for Environmental Management of the Iraqi Marshlands" project, which is being implemented within the framework of the United Nations Trust Fund for Iraqi Reconstruction. Dialogue during the project preparation process, with the Iraqi counterparts, UN agencies within the UN Trust Fund mechanism, and donor agencies, identified a clear need to discuss various on-going initiatives and to facilitate coordinated response for marshland management. UNEP was requested to organize a meeting to address this need.

The objectives of the Roundtable included the following:

- To present the UNEP project titled "Support for Environmental Management of the Iraqi Marshlands" and discuss its implementation plans with various stakeholders
- To provide a platform for exchange information on marshland management among local, national, and international partners
- To examine the current status of marshland management and various United Nations initiatives that support marshland management, and to identify areas for cooperation

The Roundtable was organized over two days. Sessions on Day 1 provided a platform to discuss the UNEP project, and to analyze the current status of various initiatives taking place in and for the Marshlands, both environmental and otherwise. At the beginning of the session, commitments and dedications of the Government of Iraq, Japan, and Jordan, as well as of other concerned United Nation members to the Iraqi Reconstruction were renewed and articulated. The meeting served as a channel between each involved stakeholder to highlight crosscutting issues that are inherent to the management of the marshlands and present them together with different initiatives that are ongoing and were undertaken by a number of international organizations and local counterparts. Developing a baseline for scientific knowledge to guide operational action planning, building Iraq's institutional and technical capacity, as well as inspiring regional dialogue and cooperation were some of the identified key issues for the project.

Some outputs that the project are expected to produce were also presented. These included, among other envisaged results, quick relief to the area's water and sanitation problems through pilot project implementations, establishment of Project Implementation Unit (PIU) within the Iraqi Ministry of Environment to support the overall marshland management, satellite-based monitoring and reporting system, setting up of the Marshland Information Network (MIN), Arabic and English training materials, cadre of trained decision makers, experts, and community leaders with up-to-date knowledge and field experiences, and employment opportunities for both professional and community tasks.

Moreover, the session conveyed the need for the Government of Iraq to establish in-house coordination and donor-government coordination mechanisms amongst the various ministries involved. Possible links and areas of coordination with several bilateral institutions active in the marshlands were also identified in addition to each organization's accomplishments and gathered information that could be valuable to the project. The day concluded with the verification of the needs for a common vision, socio-cultural links, data and information management, comprehensive capacity building, people's ownership, and policy support.

Day 2 focused on the project implementation plan from the thematic and institutional perspectives. The session on thematic structures presented the project's main activity components, which included the implementation of environmentally sound technologies (ESTs) on a pilot scale, capacity building of Iraqi professionals and policy makers, data collection and baseline analysis, and awareness raising on marshland management and issues. Within the institutional structure of the project implementation, UNOPS capacity and roles in the project were presented in back to back with UNEP's side and the PIU's essential tasks. The first half of the second day ended realizing the importance of coordination, data management and information network system, capacity building, and the existence of focal points to achieve the goals of the project.

Following the close of the Roundtable, two working group sessions were held in the afternoon of Day 2 to discuss and refine the plans for training and pilot implementation and for information management. The working group on EST Pilot Implementation and Capacity Building mainly discussed the main criteria for pilot site identification and the specifics of each component involved. The session brushed up the project strategies, and identified possible partners and collaborations inside and outside of Iraq. The parallel working group on data collection and baseline analysis focused on the most practical means to set up the information management system for the marshland project. Participants were particularly enlightened of the details and features of the MIN, in addition to the various supports, capacity building, infrastructure that are lined up in the project component.

The participants for the Roundtable included Ministers of Environment from Iraq, Japan, and Jordan as well as the Executive Director of UNEP. In addition, representatives from Iraqi authorities at the national, governorate, and local levels, UN agencies from relevant clusters within the UN Iraq Trust Fund mechanism, bilateral agencies, and other stakeholders also participated.

## **UNEP Project on Support for Environmental Management of the Iraqi Marshlands**

The development goal of the UNEP project is to support the sustainable management and restoration of the Iraqi Marshlands, with the following immediate objectives:

To monitor and assess baseline characteristics of the marshland conditions, to provide objective and up-to-date information, and to disseminate tools needed for assessment and management

To build capacity of Iraqi decision makers and community representatives on aspects of marshland management, including: policy and institutional aspects, technical subjects, and analytical tools

To identify environmentally sound technology (EST) options that are suitable for immediate provision of drinking water and sanitation, as well as wetland management, and to implement them on a pilot basis

To identify needs for additional strategy formulation and coordination for the development of longer term marshland management plan, based on pilot results and cross-sectoral dialogue

The project is expected to raise the basic capacity in technical and policy aspects of water quality and wetland management. Utilizing such expertise, suitable EST options will be identified and implemented on a pilot basis to meet the urgent need for water and sanitation in a number of marshland communities. Based on these activities, a strategy for wider application of technical options for marshland management is to be developed. The strategy, as well as expertise and knowledge, provide valuable input for the eventual development of a master plan for the Iraqi Marshland, and its subsequent implementation by domestic institutions.

This project is implemented by the International Environmental Technology Centre (IETC) of UNEP, within the Division of Technology, Industry, and Economics (DTIE). Funding for this project has been provided by the Government of Japan, through the UN Iraq Trust Fund.

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