

Madam Chair of the Global Environment Facility
Ladies and Gentlemen, Ministers and Heads of Delegations
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honor today to be the head of the Iraqi delegation participating in the fourth GEF assembly and would like to express the thanks the Iraqi Government to the Government of Uruguay and to all those working on preparation to success and achieve the goals of this great attendance.

The Ministry of the environment in Iraq was established as a result of environmental careless during the past three decades, where the environment in Iraq has been facing many problems, their cause were among the irresponsible decisions and indifference to the consequences of accumulations of the future, and applying development policies with negative serious environmental consequences, as well as the population growth without the provision of basic requirements, and the increasing number of poor people who formed the strength of pressure on natural resources, and lack of attention to address the pollutants that resulted from wars and other problems.

The problems were reflected to be challenges facing the environment Iraq, and begun to threaten future generations, some of the challenges facing Iraq are:

- 1 - Lack of quantity of water resources and bad quality.
 - 2 - Air pollution and noise.
 - 3 - Lack of integrated management of municipal waste and medical waste.
 - 4 - Desertification and degradation of agriculture land use.
 - 5 - The presence of large quantities of hazardous wastes that require high expertise to deal with it.
 - 6 - Pollution of different areas of Iraq with depleted uranium.
 - 7 - The existence of approximately 25 million land and sea mines, and a large number of unexploded shells.
 - 8 - Loss of biodiversity.
 - 9 - The complete destruction of the marshes in the south of Iraq.
 - 10 - Lack of environmental awareness.
 - 11 - Lack of environmental laws and regulations.
- And other challenges.

After 2003, the outlook on the environment was redirected from providing few services in certain areas to look more comprehensively, through a series of measures and steps taken and the new constitutional text.

Despite the precarious security situation in Iraq, Ministry of Environment planned since 2003 (the year of establishing the Ministry), to develop an annual work plan, implemented by the staff of the Ministry using it's own available resources, through the implementation of the plan a huge data were collected related to various sectors of environmental and polluting activities, and exploit these data in the preparation of the annual environmental report which reflect the environmental realities in Iraq. The report is issued by the Ministry of the Environment and could be used in preparing of the environmental study and research by specialists in this area.

In addition, the ministry has with the assistance of competent organizations of the United Nations and others, funding and implementation of several pilot projects and environmental programs of the common aim to monitor and improve the environmental situation and conduct research and studies, and we have to refer to the efforts of all parties who assist in the ministry institutional capacity-building, and provide many services and equipments that had helped greatly in the analysis of samples and getting the data, which reflects the reality of pollution levels in the environmental sectors, so that the ministry at the present time, is capable of some kind of preparation and implementation of projects which are funded by the Iraqi Government, as well as preparing proposals for other projects which will be presented to the International Organizations.

The former Political Regimes, had made Iraq away from the international forums, which reflected negatively on the ability of specialists in various fields to keep pace with scientific development, including the development in the environmental field, and acquaintance on the experiences of the world, based on that and after 2003 decisions were taken by the Iraqi Government to participate in most of the environmental conferences that have helped directly to the subsequent decision-making that led to the signing several memorandums of understanding and joining many International environmental conventions and protocols, Iraq has become a member of the following conventions:

- 1 - Ramsar Convention.
- 2 – Ozone Convention.
- 3 - Biological Diversity Convention.
- 4 - Climate Change Convention.
- 5 – Desertification Convention.

And other international conventions and protocols.

Iraq is still working hard to join the other environmental conventions.

Iraq's joining the international conventions should implement many of programs and projects that require the cooperation of all International Agencies to support Ministry of Environment in various fields of support to implement its obligations.

Finally, on behalf of the Iraqi Government I would like to appreciate and thank all who contributed in supporting Iraq and standing by his side to face the environmental challenges in Iraq, which will reflect its positively improve the environment in the region, and the world.
Thank you very much

Hikmat J. Gorgees Shokah
On behalf of H.E. Narmin Othman Hassan
Minister of Environment