Dear colleague,

Please find attached the first draft of the Charter of Cooperation between Public Authorities and Non-Governmental Organizations for the Development of Iraqi Society.

What is the Charter?

The Charter is a policy on cooperation between non-governmental organizations and the public authorities (the Council of Representatives and the government) that we hope will be adopted by the Council of Representatives by the end of the year. The policy includes provisions:

• proposing mutual respect and equal partnership as values and principles to govern relations between civil society and public authority;
• increasing mechanisms for citizen action and participation by citizens and non-governmental organizations in public life and policy-making;
• protecting the political independence of civic initiatives;
• improving transparency and accountability of public authorities and non-governmental organizations; and
• establishing channels for sustainable funding for civic initiatives.

The Charter is a gateway for sustainable collaboration between public authorities and Iraqi civil society in the interests of the development of Iraq’s society.

Who is in charge of drafting the Charter?

The idea of creating a national policy for cooperation between public authorities and civil society came from Iraqi non-governmental organizations, and is modeled on similar policies that have been adopted around the world. The first draft of the Charter was prepared by a group of members of parliament, representatives from Iraqi civil society, and representatives from the NGOs Directorate in the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers. The United Nations Office of Project Services provided technical support and implementation assistance with the help of the European Center for Not-for-Profit Law.

Because the Charter is designed to establish a sustainable relationship between civil society and public authorities, it is very important that the Charter be prepared through an inclusive process in which all levels of civil society and public authorities can participate.

Beginning on 19 June, workshops will be held across Iraq to gather feedback from civil society activists, media representatives, academics, government officials, and others. This feedback will be used to prepare a revised version of the Charter. The Council of Representatives will retain the final authority for adoption of the Charter, and is expected to do so by the end of the year.
How can I get involved?

During the last two weeks of June, Charter consultation workshops will be held in all eighteen governorates of Iraq. These workshops will be overseen by the NGO Coordination Committee for Iraq (NCCI) and implemented by fifteen independent Iraqi civil society leaders.

To be notified about workshops in your governorate, or to send any comments or questions about the Charter, please contact Abdulghani Zuhair by email at info@iraqicharter.org or by telephone at 0871 341 7811.

In addition, a press conference to mark the formal national launch of the Charter adoption project will be held in Baghdad on 19 June.

Finally, in the coming weeks, a website, Facebook page, and Twitter hash tag for the Charter will all be launched. Visit http://www.iraqicharter.org/ for more information as well as a calendar and locations of upcoming events.