



## Iraq adopts standards to improve children's learning environments

**Baghdad, 8 July 2013** – The Government of Iraq today, with the support of UNICEF and the European Union, has adopted a set of standards to ensure that primary schools across the country become ideal learning environments for children. These standards are developed as part of a larger programme, worth 17 million Euros, supported by the European Union to improve the quality of and access to primary education across Iraq.

"These standards are critical to ensure that all primary school age children will have the best educational and learning experience possible in the months and years ahead," said Dr. Mohammed Ali Tamim, the Minister of Education.

The standards cover five broad areas of school improvement: school environment; school management; capacity building of teachers; community involvement in supporting education; and inclusiveness and participation. A strategic school development component and a self-monitoring mechanism are also integrated into the standards.

"Adopting and universalizing these standards are a major victory for the around 9 million Iraqi children who, every year, are of the age to go to primary school," said Dr. Marzio Babilie, UNICEF's Representative to Iraq. "As each school, one by one, applies these standards across the country, the quality of education for every child will be greatly enriched."

While the primary school enrolment rate in Iraq is high with 9 out of 10 children enrolling in primary school at the correct age, less than half of them complete primary school at the correct age. Every year around 450,000 children in Iraq will either drop out of school or not complete on time.

"The adoption of these standards will make schools more engaging and attractive for children, which will help to ensure they enrol and stay in school," said Ms. Jana Hybaskova, the Ambassador of the European Union to Iraq. "The European Union is proud to have supported the development of these standards, which will help secure Iraq's future development and prosperity."

The standards are part of 'Child Friendly School' global approach and model that aims to improve children's learning achievements as well as their general health, social and emotional well-being.

To date, over 750 schools across Iraq are applying the 'Child Friendly School' model, with another 450 joining by the end of 2014. Nearly 8,000 teachers and education staff have been trained on the principles of Child Friendly Schools with 50 Teacher Resource Centres established in Iraq's 18 governorates.

The 'Child Friendly School' model was initiated by UNICEF and the Ministry of Education in 2011 with funding from the European Union.

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### **For further information please contact:**

Mr. Jaya Murthy, UNICEF Iraq, +962796926190, [jmurthy@unicef.org](mailto:jmurthy@unicef.org)

Mr. Salam Abdulmunem, UNICEF Iraq, +9647809126782, [sabdulmunem@unicef.org](mailto:sabdulmunem@unicef.org)

Ms. Hala Al-Sharifi, EU Iraq, [Hala.AL-SHARIFI@eeas.europa.eu](mailto:Hala.AL-SHARIFI@eeas.europa.eu)

### **About UNICEF Iraq**

UNICEF has been in Iraq since 1983 working to ensure Iraqi children survive and realize their full potential. UNICEF maintains its comparative advantage in health, nutrition, education, water and sanitation, child protection and social policy in its support to the Government of Iraq. UNICEF supports the development of child friendly policies, building the capacity of institutions that deliver essential services to children and convening all duty bearers to realize the full rights of Iraqi children. Via a network of staff and partners, UNICEF's programmes improve basic health services, safeguard a quality education, develop water and sanitation systems, protect children from abuse, violence, and exploitation, and meet the needs of the most deprived and vulnerable.

### **About UNICEF**

UNICEF works in 190 countries and territories to help children survive and thrive, from early childhood through adolescence. The world's largest provider of vaccines for developing countries, UNICEF supports child health and nutrition, good water and sanitation, quality basic education for all boys and girls, and the protection of children from violence, exploitation, and AIDS. UNICEF is funded entirely by the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, foundations and governments. For more information about UNICEF and its work visit: [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

### **About EU Support to Education in Iraq**

Education sector has been a focus priority in the EU support to Iraq. Total allocation has reached around €179 million to date, focusing on enhancing access and in improving participation and completion at all levels of education in Iraq through: rehabilitation of schools; reduction of overcrowding in educational establishments; development of an improved learning environment through the provision of teaching and learning materials; procurement and distribution of textbooks; policy formulation and curriculum development; teacher training; and improve health and nutrition of students.

### **About EU in Iraq**

Helping Iraqi national efforts in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which have a strong two-way link to the peace consolidation process is fundamental for the EU. The EU's objective for cooperation with Iraq has been to help Iraq mobilise its own resources for recovery and development, with the support of the international community. EU support to Iraq from 2003 to the end of 2012 amounts to over 1.183 billion Euro targeting mainly the following sectors: basic services such as education, health, water and sanitation, infrastructure; political and electoral process; support to refugees and IDPs; rule of law; human rights; and capacity building of Iraqi institutions. For more information about EU in Iraq visit: <http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/iraq>