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**PRESS RELEASE**  
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**Iraq drafts first policy on civil society**

**Baghdad/Erbil 16 September 2012** Parliamentarians and NGOs this weekend kicked off the drafting process of the first Iraqi policy on civil society and authority cooperation.

“By agreeing on institutionalized forms of cooperation, the Iraqi public will have better opportunities to take part in the public debate, communicate their needs and also to get a better response from authorities” says Adam Styp-Rekowski, Programme Manager for Civil Society at the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS).

The drafting process is supported by a project funded by the European Union and implemented by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) in Iraq.

As many NGOs and stakeholders as possible are invited to take part in the yearlong consultation process on the policy to make sure that it covers all aspects of authority - civil society cooperation. It will also help to ensure maximum ownership and commitment to the realization of the policy.

Right now, MPs and NGOs are taking part in a series of workshops to learn about international best practices on policy documents on cooperation.

At the beginning of 2013, a working draft of the policy will be published for inputs from civil society across Iraq. Consultations will be conducted with MPs and NGOs in all 18 governorates before the final negotiations on the national level take place.

Once an agreement has been reached between all parties, a final draft policy will be presented for endorsement by the Parliament.

“It is very very important to rely on civil society in order to achieve good results for the future” says Ali Mohsin Assi Tameemi, Head of the Civil Society Committee of the Iraqi Parliament.

“This initiative will give high support for the future of Iraqi NGOs to be real partners on the ground with government and parliament. The policy will provide a concrete base to address the needs of the Iraqi people. It is great for NGOs and great for the Iraqi public”, Jinan Mubarak, Head of the NGO Iraqi Center for Woman Rehabilitation and Employment.

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**The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS)** has supported the multi-year process of developing the Iraqi NGO law as well as the NGO law of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and currently supports the processes of implementation of the two laws. Part of the activities focus on awareness of the laws and of constructive relations between public authorities and civil society among various groups in society.

Under a project funded by the European Union, UNOPS as part of these activities supports the development of a policy document for cooperation between civil society and Federal authorities.