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Fact Sheet

Office of the Spokesman

Washington, DC

October 16, 2008

Iraq Cultural Heritage Project (IChP)

- The Department of State, through the American Embassy in Baghdad, has awarded a \$13 million grant to International Relief and Development (IRD) a charitable, non-profit, non-governmental organization that directs assistance “in regions of the world that present social, political and technical challenges.”
- The Iraq Cultural Heritage Project (IChP) will be implemented in partnership with the Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) and Iraqi government entities responsible for cultural patrimony. Discussions concerning various aspects of the IChP took place between State Department representatives and representatives of the Iraq State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, as well as the Iraq Ministry of Culture and the State Ministry of Tourism and Heritage prior to and following the grant award to IRD. There was agreement on a common purpose and a common approach through partnership.
- IRD will collaborate with various institutions having the technical and academic expertise to address the principal goals of the Project. They include:

1) Establishment of a Conservation and Historic Preservation Institute in Erbil.

The Institute will focus on technical and professional training. The objects conservation program will be implemented with expertise provided by the Walters Art Museum, the Winterthur Conservation Program, and the University of Delaware. The U.S. National Park Service will provide expertise in establishing the historic preservation and archaeology program of the new Institute.

2) The Iraq National Museum: Improvements to the professional environment within the Iraq National Museum in Baghdad.

This includes rehabilitation of the museum infrastructure, design and development of new collections storage facilities, improvements to museum gallery space and to the museum’s conservation laboratory. Technical guidance will be provided by the Walters Art Museum and the Winterthur Conservation Program.

3) Professional Development and Capacity Building for Iraq’s Museums.

With the collaboration of the Field Museum of Natural History and the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago a two year professional development program will be developed for employees of the Iraq State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH), the Iraq National Museum and other museums. The aim is to build a cadre of professionals who may be employed as conservators, collection managers, registrars and other fields of expertise necessary for an effectively functioning museum. Complementing this professional capacity building will be: a) **The American Academic Research Institute in Iraq Archaeological Publication Project (TAARI)**. In consultation with the Iraq State Board of Antiquities and Heritage and Iraqi archaeologists, TAARI will publish heretofore unpublished archaeological excavation reports prepared by Iraqi archaeologists; b) **SUNY Stony Brook Iraq Museums Library Project** that will endeavor to build the library collections of the Iraq and Mosul museums.

- The goals of the Iraq Cultural Heritage Project aim to overcome the effects of decades during which Iraqis, who once were pre-eminent in the field of archaeology and preservation, were unable to actively engage with the international professional community or cultivate a new generation of professionals.
- Through its ECA Bureau and U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, the Department has supported numerous activities relating to the protection and preservation of Iraq’s cultural heritage. These include emergency response to the looting of the Iraq National Museum, training of Iraqi museum professionals, support for archaeological site protection, and instituting legal measures to mitigate illicit trafficking in Iraq’s looted cultural property. Since 2003, several million dollars have been applied to these needs resulting in professional and infrastructure improvements to the National Museum as well as other museums and institutions, and improved archaeological site security in Iraq.

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- Other United States government agencies have also supported programs intended to promote the preservation of Iraq's cultural heritage.
 - For example, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) provided \$1.4 million under its 2003-2005 special initiative – *Recovering Iraq's Past* -- and, since the conclusion of the initiative, has awarded an additional \$1.8 million for preservation, access, and research projects related to Iraq's cultural heritage, bringing the total to \$3.2 million. NEH has a long history of support for projects on Iraq that began shortly after its establishment.
 - U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) provided \$1.4 million in funding to SUNY-Stony Brook in support of faculties at Iraqi universities as they re-build capacity to conduct undergraduate and graduate training in archaeology and in support of a graduate degree program at SUNY-Stony Brook for Iraqi students of archaeology.

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