

Brussels, 18 May 2004

Public Statement from the European Development and Humanitarian Aid NGO community on the current situation in Iraq

The current situation in Iraq, characterised by continued violent incidents between the Coalition Provisional Authority and insurgents in a number of regions as well as attacks on the civilians and civil officials, has caused a dramatic increase in numbers of civilian casualties (among them many children) and prompted the withdrawal of most humanitarian organisations from the country.

European NGOs call on the European Union and its member states to uphold their responsibilities in the international community, as defined in the United Nations' Charter, through a commitment to improving the situation of the civilian population and peace in the region. In practical terms, the cessation of hostilities, access for humanitarian agencies to vulnerable populations, and the transfer of power towards multilateral and Iraqi leadership would be first steps.

Therefore CONCORD and VOICE¹ call upon the European Union to commit to the following:

- 1) The immediate cessation of hostilities throughout the country and the provision of conditions whereby humanitarian NGOs can reach the civilian population, especially in the most affected areas, in accordance with International Humanitarian Law and in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention.
- 2) A handover of provisional authority in Iraq to a UN mission able to oversee the transition to stability and democratic governance in a sovereign Iraq.
- 3) Support from the European institutions for the democratic transition process and for the basic needs of the civilian population.

¹ This statement does not necessarily reflect the position of all VOICE members.