

## **Head of UN Women's Fund Urges International Community Not To Forget the Needs of Iraqi Women as they Face War**

*Statement by Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)*

"Today at UNIFEM our thoughts are with the women of Iraq who need the adequate protection and assistance that is the right of all civilian populations under international law. Security Council in Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security recognized that, "women account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict, including as refugees and as internally displaced persons." The International Community must remember this as it organizes to deliver assistance and protection to the women of Iraq.

"Our staff in the region are focusing on how to support the women fleeing their countries or communities, who will need emotional and psychological support along with a range of social services.

"UNIFEM calls on all parties to the conflict to uphold legal standards, especially those outlined in the Geneva Conventions that outlaw the deliberate targeting of civilians and the use of indiscriminate weapons, and also the provisions in the International Criminal Court Statute with respect to sexual and gender violence.

"UNIFEM also calls on the international community to recognize the rights of Iraqi women to participate in all decision-making about the future of their society. For almost ten years, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, in co-operation with other United Nations and non-governmental partners, has provided assistance to women in conflict situations and has supported their participation in peace processes. We have seen over and over again that the peace and reconstruction process suffers when women are not included.

"The United Nations was founded by a generation that had experienced and understood war, a generation that was convinced that war could be prevented. Subsequent generations have affirmed the validity of that conviction, and quite recently massive demonstrations have indicated overwhelming support for a peaceful solution and the efforts of the United Nations in this regard.

"Despite sustained UN effort to resolve this conflict without war, war is now a reality. We must work together to do everything we can to ensure the protection of the civilians, most of them women and children, who have become the targets of today's wars."