

PRESS RELEASE

GOVERNING COUNCIL OF UNITED NATIONS COMPENSATION COMMISSION
HAS CONCLUDED ITS FIFTY-SEVENTH SESSION

The Governing Council of the United Nations Compensation Commission, under the Presidency of Ambassador Tassos Kriekoukis (Greece), has today concluded its fifty-seventh session. Representatives of Kuwait, Iraq, Saudi Arabia (on behalf of Iran, Jordan, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia) and the Philippines addressed the fifteen-member Governing Council at its opening plenary meeting.

At its previous session in June, the Compensation Commission had completed 12 years of claims processing, resolving over 2.68 million claims, seeking approximately \$352.5 billion in compensation. Awards of approximately \$52.5 billion were approved in respect of approximately 1.5 million of those claims, representing roughly 14.9 per cent of the amount claimed.

The Commission is continuing on its remaining major task: the payment of awards to successful claimants. In July of 2005, \$200 million was made available to Governments and international organizations for distribution to successful claimants making a total of \$19.4 billion, which has been made available.

Following the passage of United Nations Security Council resolution 1483 (2003), which reduced the percentage of Iraq's payment into the Compensation Fund from its oil sales from 25 per cent to 5 per cent, the Governing Council adopted decision 197 (S/AC.26/Dec.197 (2003)) which called for quarterly payments of up to \$200 million, the most recent of which was made on 28 July 2005. As a result of the completion of the review of all claims and of the higher than anticipated income into the Compensation Fund, the Council decided to lift the ceiling of \$200 million for each quarterly payment. It is anticipated that the next scheduled payment to be made on 27 October 2005

will be about \$600 million. The amount of subsequent quarterly payments will also be based on the amount available in the Fund, and not be subject to any ceiling amount. As a result, full payment of all claims of individuals is likely to be achieved at a date considerably earlier than envisaged.

The Governing Council also received and reviewed the Executive Summary of the Joint Regional Meeting held in Kuwait from 13-14 September 2005. Participants included the claimant countries (Jordan, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia), Iraq and the Compensation Commission secretariat, which served as facilitator. The meeting discussed possible mechanisms for the monitoring of the use of Compensation Commission environmental awards and the creation of a follow-up program. The participants agreed that efforts should be made toward regional cooperation for the rehabilitation of all countries in the region. There was also discussion of a potential databank for environmental information from the region. A follow-up meeting of this group is scheduled to be held in Geneva in November of this year.

During the session, the Council discussed the progress report of the Executive Secretary on the activities of the Commission. The report addressed the processing of claims and the payment of approved awards.

The Council also discussed the report of the Executive Secretary on the distribution by Governments and international organizations of payments to successful claimants, the transparency of the distribution process, and the return of undistributed funds.

The Council decided to hold its next regular session from 6-8 December 2005.

Further information about the Commission, including the text of Governing Council decisions and reports and recommendations of the panels of Commissioners, can be found on the United Nations Compensation Commission website located at www.uncc.ch.