

PRESS RELEASE

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

The Governing Council of the United Nations Compensation Commission, under the Presidency of Ambassador Tassos Kriekoukis (Greece), has today concluded its fifty-eighth session. Representatives of Kuwait, Iraq, India, as well as Palestine addressed the fifteen-member Governing Council at its opening plenary meeting.

At its fifty-sixth session in June, 2005, the review of all claims was completed, with awards of approximately USD52.5 billion approved in respect of some 1.5 million claimants. As a result of decision 253 of the Governing Council at its fifty-seventh session in September, 2005, to make available for each quarterly payment the entire available balance of the Compensation Fund, approximately USD655 million was paid out on 27 October, 2005. Following this payment, there are only 85 approved claims (in categories "D", "E" and "F"), with an outstanding award balance of USD32.4 billion, that have not been paid in full. As of 1 December, 2005, the overall amount of compensation made available by the Compensation Commission was USD20.055 billion.

At its fifty-eighth session, the Council adopted decision 256 concerning the payment mechanism and the priority of payment of outstanding claims. The next payment is scheduled to be made on 19 January, 2006.

The Council discussed the results of a meeting of countries in the region (Iran, Jordan, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia) which have been awarded funds for conduct of environmental remediation and restoration projects and Iraq under the auspices of the UNCC that took place in Geneva on 23 November, 2005. The participants agreed upon the proposed guidelines for the follow-up programme for environmental awards. At today's meeting the Governing Council adopted the guidelines, the text of which is annexed to decision 258. The next meeting of the claimant countries, Iraq and the UNCC will be held in Kuwait on 17 December and will address the establishment of the Regional

Rehabilitation Advisory Project, regional cooperation and coordination, the regional databank and a timetable for future activities.

The Governing Council continued to discuss the issue of the phasing out of the UNCC. The fact that payments to individual claimants will be completed as much as a year earlier than anticipated will lead to revisions in plans for staffing and budgeting during the two-year period 2006-2007. The Governing Council was in general agreement with the Executive Secretary's recommendation that the longer-term goal should be transferring responsibility for continuing payments to the Government of Iraq under the supervision of the Security Council. In the meantime, the Governing Council decided to maintain the Compensation Fund under the continuing oversight of the Governing Council, supported by a residual secretariat in Geneva. In addition to the responsibility for continuing payments, and other "wind-down" tasks, including registry and archiving functions, a residual UNCC secretariat in Geneva would be in a position to help oversee the monitoring mechanism for environmental awards, the costs of which are to be funded by the claimant Governments through deductions from the awards concerned.

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 organisations of payments to successful claimants, the transparency of the distribution process, and the return of undistributed funds.

Appreciation was expressed to the Governments of Algeria, Benin, Brazil, the Philippines and Romania (Vice-President), who will be leaving the Council at the end of 2005. They will be replaced in the Council by Congo, Ghana, Peru, Qatar and Slovakia.

The Council decided to hold its next regular session from 7-9 March 2006.

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.