

PRESS RELEASE

The Governing Council of the United Nations Compensation Commission held a special session on 15 February 2001 for the purpose of electing a new president and one of the two vice-presidents of the Council. The Council elected the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations and other International Organisations in Geneva, Ambassador Sverre Bergh Johansen, as President and the Permanent Representative of Mauritius, Ambassador Meetoo Jaynarain, as the new Vice-President of the Governing Council. Norway and Mauritius replace The Netherlands and Argentina which held the presidency and vice-presidency of the Governing Council for the period 1999-2000. It has been the practice of the Council to elect its president and vice-presidents from the incoming members for a two-year period.

Background

The United Nations Compensation Commission ("the UNCC") is a subsidiary organ of the United Nations Security Council. It was established in accordance with Security Council resolutions 687 (1991) and 692 (1991) to process claims and pay compensation for direct losses and damage suffered by individuals, corporations, Governments and international organizations as a direct result of Iraq's unlawful invasion and occupation of Kuwait (2 August 1990 to 2 March 1991).

The Commission is composed of the Governing Council, panels of Commissioners, and the secretariat.

The Governing Council is the policy-making organ of the UNCC. Its composition is the same as that of the fifteen-member Security Council at any given time. The Governing Council makes decisions on recommendations made by the panels of Commissioners regarding compensation for claimants.

The panels of Commissioners review and evaluate the claims submitted by Governments on behalf of their nationals, their companies or on their own behalf. On the basis of their review, undertaken in instalments of claims, the panels recommend compensation awards to the Governing Council.

The secretariat, headed by the Executive Secretary, services and provides assistance to the Governing Council and the panels of Commissioners.

More than 2.6 million claims have been received by the Commission within the filing deadlines. The total asserted value of these claims (i.e., the amount sought by the claimants) amounts to over US\$300 billion. Ninety-six Governments have filed claims, as well as thirteen offices of three international organizations, which have filed claims on behalf of individuals not in a position to submit their claims through a Government.

To date, the Commission has resolved over 99% of the claims submitted, consisting of the claims of individuals for departure from Kuwait or Iraq (category "A" claims), the claims of individuals for serious personal injury or death (category "B" claims), the claims of individuals for losses up to US\$100,000 (category "C" claims), the claims of individuals for losses over \$100,000 (category "D" claims), the claims of corporations, other private legal entities and public sector enterprises (category "E" claims), and the claims of Governments and international organizations (category "F" claims). The Commission has resolved all category "A", "B" and "C" claims. There are approximately 11,700 claims in categories "D", "E" and "F" still to be resolved. The Commission is expected to complete its review of the claims in 2003.

Claims resolved to date have been awarded compensation amounting to over US\$32 billion out of a total amount claimed of approximately US\$83 billion.

To date, the Commission has made available to Governments and international organizations over US\$11 billion for distribution to successful claimants in all categories.

Funds to pay the awards of compensation are drawn from the United Nations Compensation Fund which receives up to 30 per cent of the revenue generated by the export of Iraqi petroleum and petroleum

products. At present, the Compensation Fund receives 25 per cent of the proceeds under the "oil-for-food" mechanism in accordance with Security Council resolution 1330 adopted on 5 December 2000.

Further information about the Compensation Commission can be found on its website located at www.uncc.ch.