



U.S. EMBASSY - BAGHDAD

2008 Provincial Reconstruction Team News

-Iraqi Mayors Attend Historic Cities Forum in Chicago-

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Baghdad - Three Iraqi mayors became a part of history recently as they flew to The Iraqi mayors who attended the April 28-30 conference were: Majid Hammood, Warka, Muthanna Province; Zuhair Al Aaraji, Mosul, Ninewa Province and Saad Al Khalifawi, Fallujah, Anbar Province. Chicago to attend the first-ever U.S.-Arab Cities Forum where they discussed important development issues with fellow civic leaders from the United States, Canada and Arab world.



Mayors from more than a dozen Arab nations, including three representing Iraq cities, gathered in Chicago, April 28-30, for the first ever U.S.-Arab Cities Forum hosted by Chicago Mayor, Richard M. Daley

The Iraqi mayors who attended the April 28-30 conference were: Majid Hammood, Warka, Muthanna Province; Zuhair Al Aaraji, Mosul, Ninewa Province and Saad Al Khalifawi, Fallujah, Anbar Province.

Despite ongoing attacks from terrorists, the mayor of Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, told ABC News, "There's still a lot of potential, a lot of growth and building going on. The city is moving forward as much as it can." The Mayor said he wants to learn more about the dairy industry, recycling, education and infrastructure.

Several Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) helped prepare the mayors for their trip to the United States while the Cultural Affairs Office of the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad proved instrumental in facilitating their visas so they could attend the three-day meeting.

The Forum, whose working sessions were held at the University of Illinois-Chicago's Conference Center, was co-hosted by Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley and Chicago's Sister City partners, Mayor Omar Maani of Amman, Jordan, and Mayor Mohamed Sajid of Casablanca, Morocco.

Mayor Daley kicked off the multi-national gathering by welcoming the mayors to "the Windy City" to share information and discuss strategies for making their communities more competitive in the global economy.

The conference agenda focused on three major topics: Economic Development and Improved Quality of Life; Education and Youth; and the Environment and Sustainability. "The Forum will give the mayors a chance to hear from the experts and share innovations on these three critical issues," Daley said.

More than 50 municipal leaders from the United States, Canada and the Arab world attended the meeting including mayors from cities in: Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Qatar Yemen. Mayors representing the United States and Canada came from a number of municipalities including: Dearborn, Michigan; Kansas City, Missouri; Mobile, Alabama; Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; and Windsor, Ontario.

“As mayors and leaders of municipal government, we share the same challenges. And as technology continues to advance, we all are faced with the challenge and opportunity of living and working in a global economy,” said Mayor Daley.

Agreeing with Daley that “the municipal challenges are relatively the same among all cities,” Amman’s Mayor Maani noted it was important “to share experiences and best practices with our colleagues from the U.S. and Arab cities...to better serve our citizens.”

Daley added that “We are also on the front lines when it comes to dealing with issues like transportation, education, crime and the environment on behalf of our residents. That’s why a meeting such as this one is important. The information we exchange here and the relationships we build will pay great benefits to all our cities and our residents in the time to come.”

Casablanca’s Mayor Sajid also touched on the historic significance of the Forum noting, “By organizing this significant event, the City of Chicago is contributing to the strengthening of the relationship between local governments in the United States and Arab countries.”

Like Maani, Mayor Sajid emphasized, “The objectives of our meetings are a dialogue and the exchange of good practices, a requirement for the promotion of durable and prosperous cities.”

Economic stabilization formed a large part of the Arab mayors’ discussions at the Forum centered on diversification of industries, public-private partnerships, improvements to basic infrastructure and capitalization of natural assets.

Recognizing the need for modern development to be environmentally sustainable, the mayors touched on tactics such as: developing green building standards, promoting renewable energy projects, reducing traffic congestion and improving water infrastructure and water conservation practices.

In the area of education and youth, talk centered on how to increase the scope of quality education to help youth acquire a greater range of job skills to increase their earning power thus becoming strong, productive members of society. Expanding out-of-school activities was also a topic of discussion.

Many of the mayors attending the U.S.-Arab Cities Forum also participated in the annual Richard J. Daley Urban Forum being held at the University of Illinois-Chicago on April 29.

The Richard J. Daley Urban Forum of the University of Illinois at Chicago is an annual symposium that provides opportunities for mayors from around the world, business leaders, key policy-makers, leading scholars, students and commentators to discuss important issues in American urban history and urban studies.