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U.S. and Iraq Sign Memorandum on Radiation Worker Safety

At a ceremony at the U.S. Embassy today, Minister of Environment Dr. Nirman Othman and Ambassador Christopher Hill signed a joint Memorandum of Cooperation concerning the Ministry's Radiation Workers Protection Program.

Countering the threat of environmental contamination, the Radiation Workers Protection program is required by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as a follow-up to the dismantling of Iraq's former nuclear facilities and the safe disposal of radioactive materials associated with those facilities. Today's Memorandum of Cooperation falls within the purview of the U.S.-Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement and supports bilateral initiatives in the field of environmental and health cooperation.

In his remarks, Ambassador Hill highlighted the long and productive partnership between the U.S. Embassy and the Ministry of Environment, noting that this Radiation Worker Safety initiative is the latest in a series of collaborative projects between our two governments. Ambassador Hill praised Minister Othman and her staff—including Deputy Minister Dr. Kamal Latif and the Director General of the Radiation Protection Center, Ms. Bushra Ali Ahmed—for helping to lead the way to make Iraq, and Iraqi workers, safe from the dangers of radiation contamination.

More specifically, the memorandum will promote best practices in radiation safety and security to protect Iraqi radiation workers, while assisting the Ministry in designing its own radiation protection training programs. Under the terms of the memorandum, the U.S. Department of State's Iraq Scientist Engagement Program (ISEP), in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment Radiation Protection Center will design training for Iraqi lab technicians, database personnel, and on-site inspectors on specific topics related to radiation safety, protection, and security. ISEP will also work with the Ministry on equipment procurement.

These efforts build on two previous radiation safety workshops sponsored by the U.S. Department of State for Iraqi chemists, physicists, and engineers in July 2008 and October 2009.



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