



## **Statement concerning the crisis in Iraq**

### **Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies (VOICE)**

While preparations for a possible war in Iraq, and disputes as to how best to deal with Baghdad's weapons programmes, have received huge attention, the possible humanitarian consequences of any such war have been practically ignored.

VOICE calls for all possible political and diplomatic means to be pursued within the framework of the United Nations in order to achieve a peaceful resolution of this crisis.

The consequences of a failure to reach a diplomatic resolution must be considered in the context of the current humanitarian situation in Iraq. It is generally recognised by the humanitarian community that:

- the current humanitarian situation for the civilian population is extremely fragile
- even without armed conflict, this situation will continue, and
- any escalation of the crisis will exacerbate this situation.

Given these considerations, and in the event of any armed conflict, VOICE calls on the belligerent parties to:

1. Ensure full respect for International Humanitarian Law, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War which, *inter alia*, absolutely prohibits attacks on civilian populations and acts that jeopardise the means necessary to the survival of those populations.
2. Ensure a clear separation between civilian humanitarian actions and the activities undertaken by the military, and that humanitarian organisations are allowed adequate space to implement programmes in an independent and impartial manner.

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Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies (VOICE)  
represents 90 European NGOs active in humanitarian aid worldwide.

VOICE is the main NGO interlocutor with the EU for humanitarian affairs,  
including emergency aid, relief, rehabilitation and disaster preparedness.