



## **VOICE Statement on the Situation in Iraq**

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

VOICE and its member organisations, highly concerned about the humanitarian situation in Iraq, call on the European Union to remind the occupying powers of their obligations to the people of Iraq under International Humanitarian Law and in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Access and security are urgently required if humanitarian assistance is to reach the civilian population and, especially, if the most vulnerable groups are to receive the necessary supplies.

Now that the Coalition forces have taken military control of Iraq's cities, they have even greater obligations under international humanitarian law to:

- secure public order,
- protect the civilian populations and ensure their basic needs, and
- facilitate relief work undertaken by impartial humanitarian organisations.

Emphasising the importance of independence and impartiality in humanitarian relief efforts, VOICE calls on the European Union to:

- *Demand* that the occupying powers in Iraq fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian law to re-establish the rule of law and to ensure non-discriminatory access for humanitarian relief organisations in the territory it controls.
- *Urge* the occupying powers to hand over to the UN the civilian co-ordination and administration of humanitarian relief efforts.
- *Reconfirm* the professional experience and effectiveness of humanitarian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in reaching the most vulnerable populations in accordance with the above-mentioned principles.

Brussels, 16 April 2003

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.