

## Strengthening the Trade Policy and WTO Negotiations Capabilities of Iraq

In a joint effort to support the Government of the Republic of Iraq in enhancing its trade prospects, UNCTAD is collaborating with UNIDO in implementing the trade component of a wider project, financially supported by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), entitled “strengthening national quality and trade infrastructure in Iraq”. The UNIDO-UNCTAD collaboration was conceived under the UN Trade and Productive Capacity Cluster framework. The trade component of the project last from January 2013 to December 2015. The main beneficiary and partner in the project will be the Ministry of Trade. A series of training events, study tours, and capacity building assistance is foreseen under the project to assist Iraq in its negotiation for accession to the WTO and in reviewing and modernizing its trade policy framework. UNCTAD will carry out technical assistance activities and capacity building, including intensive training courses and workshops in the area of WTO accession, trade policy and trade negotiations for Iraqi senior officials and members of the WTO accession inter-ministerial task force set by the Government of Iraq. The project will involve as an important part, activities aiming at supporting the Iraqi private sector to enhance its institutional and human capacity for active involvement in the WTO accession and trade policy formulation process.

Iraq application to join the WTO under Article XII of the Marrakesh Agreement establishing the WTO, was introduced on September 2004, and was followed by the establishment of the Working Party on the accession of Iraq in December of the same year. After the submission by Iraq of its Memorandum on the Foreign Trade Regime (MFTR) in September 2005, the Working Party held two successive meetings in 2007 and 2008.

It is expected that at the end of the implementing phase of this of the project, the key outcomes will include the following:

- Improved overall understanding of the complex rules and disciplines associated with WTO membership by Government trade officials and negotiators, in particular, the representatives of business and private sector and other relevant stakeholders from the civil society including, parliamentarians, media, consumer organizations, etc.
- Government officials involved in the accession process trained and technically prepared to deal with WTO accession and trade-related policy issues and challenges
- Trade policy studies, reviews, and impact assessments completed; upgraded capacity to formulate and implement trade and trade-related policies;
- Replies to the questions from WTO Members timely prepared and submitted;
- Market access offers on goods and services completed; improved capacity of government officials to negotiate using up to date negotiating techniques.
- Trade policies and support institutions are reformed and strengthened to deal with a more competitive trading environment

A meeting today (through video conference) between UNCTAD, UNIDO and the Ministry of Trade of Iraq discussed the launching of the project and the next steps to be taken.