

PRESS RELEASE

COALITION PROVISIONAL AUTHORITY SOUTHERN REGION

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INITIAL MEETING OF THE BASRA PROVINCE INTERIM COUNCIL

A significant step toward Iraqi self-governance in Basra Province took place today with the inaugural meeting of the Basra Province Interim Council. Twenty nominees attended, representing a broad cross section of local society, professionals, academics, businessmen, politicians, Shia, Sunni, Christians, women and tribal representatives. Two more were unable to attend due to prior commitments.

This meeting follows intensive consultations, where strenuous efforts were made to obtain broad backing for this process. Selection of members was made on the basis of honesty, effectiveness and qualifications. None of the council members should have been senior members of the Baath Party.

The Provisional Chairman, Ambassador O Woehlers Olsen (CPA Regional Coordinator for the Southern Region) commented:

“ I very much welcome the fact that all present today have confirmed their willingness to serve the people of Basra Province. This is the first time in many decades that the people of Southern Iraq will have a say in the decisions made in Baghdad. This is a highly significant event.”

After the introductions, the Ambassador and his staff left the meeting whilst the Interim Council elected its own Acting Chairman, pending the election of a Permanent Chairman (who will also be the Governor of Basra Province) and a Deputy Chairman. The Interim Council announced that they would meet again at 5.00pm on Saturday 5 July at the former Information Ministry building to elect a Chairman and a Deputy Chairman by secret ballot.

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The Interim Council will provide policy guidance to the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) Southern Region, help decide the priorities in each ministry and the allocation of funds between ministry departments. The Chairman will also be responsible for co-chairing the Basra Province Interim Technical Committee with the CPA Regional Coordinator.

For its part CPA Southern Region undertook to facilitate Interim Council meetings by providing security, recruit and pay an Iraqi Secretariat, compensate Council members for attendance, identify and refurbish a suitable building for the Council to meet in and continue to provide technical advice.

NOTES FOR EDITORS: There will be an opportunity for the press to take pictures and ask questions at the conclusion of the next meeting.