

12 November 1998

Oil-for-Food
Background
Information

Statement by Benon Sevan
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The United Nations is continuing to implement the oil-for-food programme to provide essential humanitarian supplies to the people of Iraq. After the regular meeting this morning of United Nations agencies convened by the Humanitarian Coordinator in Iraq, Hans von Sponeck, it was decided to retain around 50 international staff in Baghdad in order to maintain a capacity to continue observation of the programme.

The remaining international staff along with 524 national staff are maintaining a reduced level of observation of all sectors of the humanitarian programme in and around Baghdad. In the south and centre of Iraq, the United Nations role is to maintain an observation operation to ensure the equitable and efficient distribution of supplies by the Government of Iraq.

There has been no reduction in the 231 United Nations international staff and 809 national staff in the three northern governorates of Dahuk, Erbil and Sulaymaniyah where the United Nations implements the programme on behalf of the Government.

In Baghdad this morning the World Food Programme sent out 18 national observers to observe food distribution by food agents and make random checks of households receiving the official ration. They reported that food distribution was continuing normally.

The independent inspection agents at the border crossings are working normally and report no change in the pace of arrivals. They report that two ships are unloading wheat and rice at the Um Qasr port and that trucks with oil-for-food supplies are entering Iraq at the Trebil border crossing with Jordan, the Al-Waleed border crossing with Syria and the Zakho border crossing with Turkey.

The independent oil inspectors stationed at Zakho in the north

east of Iraq, at the port of Ceyhan in Turkey and at the Mina Al-Bakr platform in the south of Iraq report that oil exports are proceeding normally. More than a million barrels of Kirkuk crude oil passed through the pipeline to Ceyhan in the last 24 hours and there are two ships waiting to berth at Mina Al Bakr. Each will take on around 2 million barrels of Basrah Light crude oil.

At Headquarters in New York, applications for approval of contracts for the supply of further food, medicine and other essential supplies continue to be processed and circulated to the Security Council's 661 Committee. The report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the implementation of the current phase which ends on 25 November 1998 is being finalized.