

13 November 1998

Oil-for-Food
Background
Information

Statement by Benon Sevan Executive Director of the Office of the Iraq Programme

At 0715 today (New York time), I was informed by telephone that the independent inspection agents who certify the arrival of humanitarian supplies into Iraq were being withdrawn immediately from their posts.

This decision was taken, without prior consultation, by Lloyds Register, a United Kingdom company, which is contracted by the United Nations to provide inspection and authentication services at the Umm Qasr port and the Trebil border crossing with Jordan, the Al-Waleed border crossing with Syria and the Zakho border crossing with Turkey. Fifty four staff of Lloyds Register were based at these points.

Under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding between the United Nations Secretariat and the Government of Iraq detailing arrangements for the implementation of Security Council resolution 986 (1995), and the procedures of the Security Council's 661 Committee, the independent inspection agents are stationed at the border crossing points to provide authenticated confirmation of the arrival in Iraq of humanitarian supplies. Payment to suppliers from the United Nations Iraq account is subject to the inspection agents confirmation of arrival.

Without this certification the bank holding the United Nations' Iraq account will be unable to make payments to suppliers with contracts governed by the procedures of the 661 Committee.

I have informed the Permanent Mission of Iraq and will be consulting with the Security Council's 661 Committee at 12.30 today. The Office of the Iraq Programme is examining various options with a view to restoring inspection services with the least possible delay in order to maintain the flow of food, medicine and other essential humanitarian supplies into Iraq.

