

15 November 1998

Oil-for-Food  
Background  
Information

## **Statement by Benon V. Sevan**

United Nations Security Coordinator  
Executive Director -- Office of the Iraq Programme

I am pleased to announce that the Secretary-General has today authorized me to make arrangements for the immediate return to Baghdad of all United Nations personnel who were temporarily relocated to Amman, Jordan on 11 and 12 November. I am confident that the return of all 151 international staff will be completed by the end of tomorrow, 16 November 1998.

They will rejoin the 57 international staff who remained in Baghdad along with the 524 national staff who together have maintained a reduced level of observation of the oil-for-food programme over the past four days. In the three northern governorates the 231 international and 809 national staff continued the implementation of the programme. I would stress that there has been no interruption in the provision of humanitarian supplies to the people of Iraq.

Since the unilateral decision on Friday morning (New York time) by Lloyd's Register to withdraw their 54 inspection agents, the Office of the Iraq Programme has been working to restore certification and authentication services at the three land border crossings of Al Waleed, Trebil and Zakho and the port of Umm Qasr.

The Government has advised the United Nations that 75 trucks carrying wheat have not crossed into Iraq at Al Waleed; 59 trucks are held up at Zakho and at Umm Qasr a shipment of rice is being unloaded in the absence of the usual authentication procedures. We are also aware that there are perishable items enroute to Iraq.

There is an urgent need to resolve this potential disruption to the oil-for-food programme. We are keeping the Security Council's 661 Committee informed of our efforts and also consulting with the Government of Iraq. I am hopeful that authentication services

will be restored within the next 24 hours.

During the past days I have been in constant contact with the Humanitarian Coordinator in Baghdad, Mr Hans von Sponeck. On behalf of the Secretary-General I would like to express the appreciation and pride we feel for the manner in which the international and national staff of the United Nations and its agencies and programmes have handled the tense and difficult situation of the last week.