

Preface

Assisting in the postwar reconstruction of Iraq is an important task for the international community. Japan has pledged \$5 billion in reconstruction assistance over the coming 4 years, and is pressing ahead with plans for its implementation. Postwar Iraq is also burdened with a wide range of environmental problems, including water supply and sanitation issues that require urgent attention owing to the risks they pose to human health and living environments, and issues calling for more mid- to long-term solutions such as desertification and ecosystem restoration.

The Special Committee on Environmental Cooperation for Iraq was established in FY2003 to examine how Japan could contribute to reconstruction in Iraq in the environmental field. Composed of 6 members and a secretariat appointed by request of the Ministry of the Environment, and a secretariat, the Special Committee was charged with the tasks of ascertaining the current status of Iraq's physical environment and related assistance needs, and formulating recommendations for the content and form of environmental assistance to be offered by Japan. In its first year of operation, the Special Committee devoted itself largely to the research of available documentation to pinpoint current environmental issues in Iraq and relevant activities being implemented by donor organizations of other countries. Based on the results of these investigations, in FY2004 the Special Committee gathered further information through diverse channels, including the deliberations of the Donor Committee of the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq in Jordan, and began to consider the form of environmental assistance that Japan should provide. In FY2005, the Special Committee continued to examine the potential for applying technologies possessed by Japan in helping with the reconstruction of Iraq and the form of Japan's environmental assistance, while also interviewing officials of the Iraqi Ministry of Environment and other Iraqi government agencies and personnel involved in such initiatives as Italy's New Eden Project to gather and analyze information on assistance needs.

From these discussions, the Committee has decided that even for projects such as the rehabilitation of Iraq's marshlands, priority should be put on restoring the living environment of the local inhabitants, and that Japan should accordingly focus on establishing a sustained dialog with local communities and formulate environmental assistance plans based on that dialog. It is also important for Japan to consider any potential contribution in the light of environmental assistance initiatives already being implemented by the UN or other donor countries. An example of the kind of initiative that should be considered is the application of Japanese technology to small-scale on-site water purification systems which would make a major contribution to the improvement of the living environments of local inhabitants. Under

the current troubled conditions that make the provision of on-site technical assistance in Iraq difficult, the Committee feels that along with assistance in the form of funds and equipment for environmental restoration and improvement works, it is also important to focus resources on bringing Iraqi government personnel and engineers to Japan for training, etc.

This report was drafted on the basis of discussions held over a total of 10 meetings, some of which were also attended by Yuriko Koike, Minister of the Environment. Many other personnel, including representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Japan International Cooperation Agency, Japan Bank for International Cooperation, United Nations Environment Programme, and private sector consultants also attended the meetings as observers. It is The Committee's fervent hope that those responsible for assistance to Iraq will put this report to good use as a basic reference for considering future environmental assistance to Iraq.

Kazuhiko Takeuchi

Chair, Special Committee on Environmental Cooperation for Iraq

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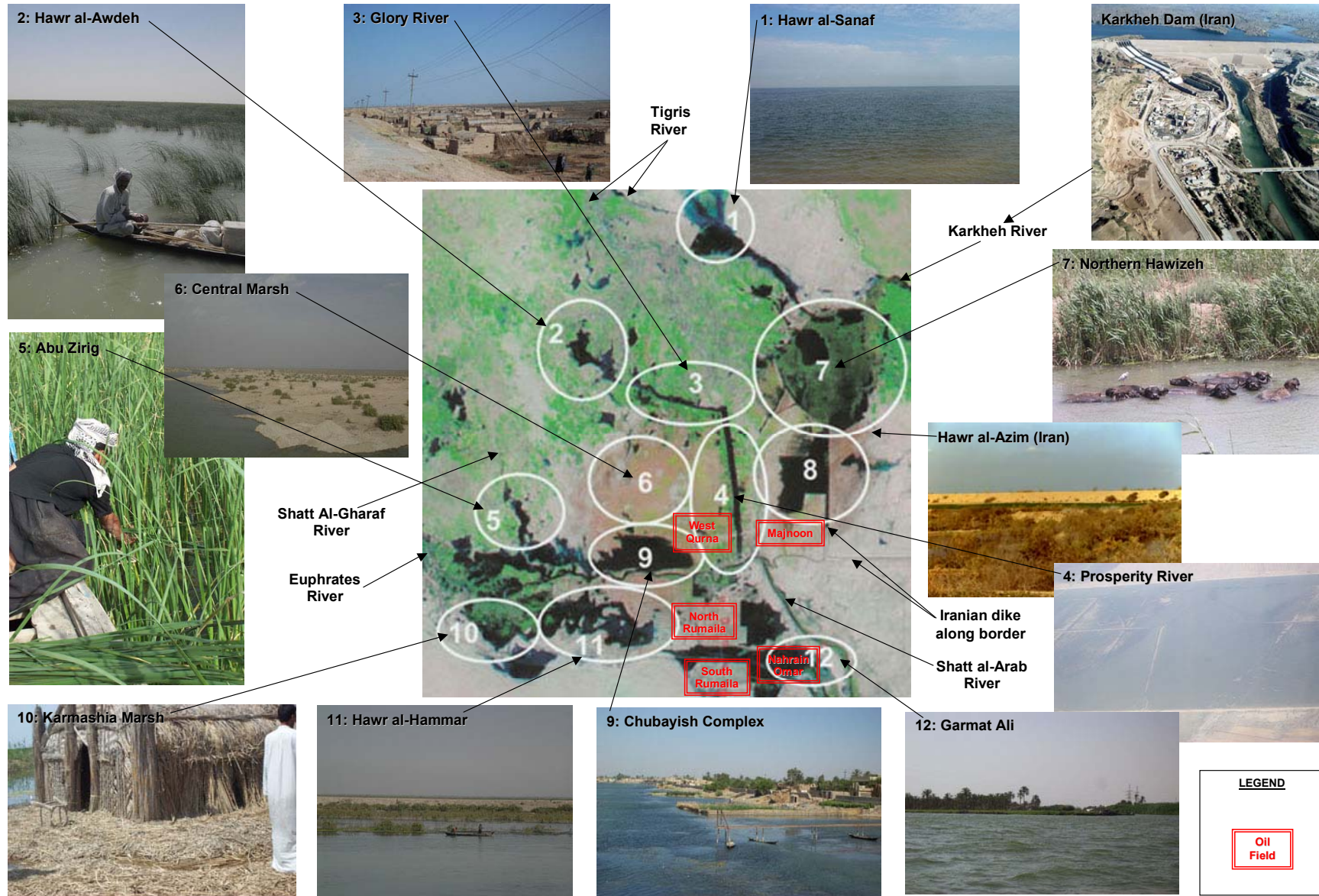
Frontispiece 1 Map of Iraq

Courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin



Frontispiece 2 Map of the marshland region of southern Iraq

Courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin



Frontispiece 3 The current appearance of marshland in southern Iraq¹