

Chapter 1 Background and Objectives

1.1 Background to the Consideration of Environmental Assistance for Iraq

The region of the Middle East occupied by present-day Iraq prospered in ancient times as the hub of the Mesopotamian civilization, and Iraq's southern region, blessed with abundant water resources from 2 major rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates, is also thought to be the location of the biblical Garden of Eden.

After WWII, Iraq used its abundant oil reserves to pursue modernization. The country has been governed by regimes that have been unusually secular for the Middle East, and the focus of those regimes on education created a populace with a high level of education. However, the disregard shown by past regimes for the importance of investment in public infrastructure has left the country in a state of dilapidation.²

This state of ruin has been further exacerbated by the economic sanctions imposed after the Gulf War, and by the Iraq War and subsequent conflict, creating an urgent need for reconstruction assistance through international organizations, direct country-to-country cooperation, and so forth. Japan has already declared its wish to assist in the reconstruction of Iraq, and is now engaged in the consideration of concrete assistance plans.

There are particularly high expectations for environmental assistance due to its symbolic significance for Iraq's reconstruction, and the Ministry of the Environment is considering concrete methods of contributing to Iraq's reconstruction in the environmental field. While only limited information can be obtained until security begins to improve, Japan needs to examine areas in which it could contribute in the future, and formulate policies for meeting its responsibilities in accordance with its status in the international community.

1.2 The Purpose and Objectives of the Special Committee

Iraq suffers from a wide range of environmental problems, including environmental degradation stemming from ill-advised development under the former regime, delayed development or functional decline of environmental infrastructure due to lack of funds, and reckless exploitation of natural resources. Resolution of these problems requires that members of the international community cooperate to provide assistance in line with their

respective capabilities. Japan should accordingly identify the fields in which its technology, resources and frameworks can be used most effectively and efficiently.

Insofar as Japan needs to examine measures and concrete possibilities for providing assistance in the environmental field as an aspect of the reconstruction of Iraq, the purpose of the Special Committee is to investigate the current status of Iraq's environment and gather information on assistance initiatives in the environmental field being implemented by international organizations and other parties, and based on these investigations, consider the forms of environmental assistance that Japan could provide.

1.3 Details Considered

1.3.1 Scope

(1) Iraq's political and social circumstances, and analysis of international situation

Any examination of the possibilities for providing environmental reconstruction assistance to Iraq needs to look at the environmental issues faced by Iraq from a broad perspective that encompasses the nature and cultures of surrounding countries and indeed the whole Middle East region. In addition to Iraq's relationships with surrounding countries such as Iran, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Israel and Palestine, sufficient understanding and analysis of its relationships with the USA, the EU nations, and international organizations are also vital. Organized below are the key points of the above relationships that should be taken into account in any consideration of the provision of environmental assistance to Iraq.

Iraq is currently building a democratic government, but its internal situation is still unstable. The restoration of public order is vital to the provision of essential reconstruction assistance, and the current level of safety is not sufficient to permit the immediate launch within Iraq of Japanese assistance initiatives. Examined here are the outlook for the establishment of new governmental institutions, the restoration of public order, and other general factors that are prerequisites for the provision of reconstruction assistance within Iraq.

(2) Iraq's environmental issues and assistance needs, and ongoing initiatives of other countries

Japan and other countries have, since almost immediately after the end of the Iraq War in May 2003, been implementing various initiatives for the reconstruction of Iraq. Provided here is a broad analysis of Iraq's environmental problems and assistance needs, and present an overview of the priority issues related to the provision of reconstruction assistance. Also

provided is a review the achievements of environmental initiatives undertaken so far and those currently being planned.

(3) Japanese knowledge assets that could contribute to Iraq's reconstruction

Japanese knowledge assets that the Committee considers could be useful to reconstruction assistance for Iraq in the environmental field are identified.

(4) Recommendations for Japanese environmental cooperation in Iraq

As well as making recommendations regarding policy for reconstruction assistance in the environmental field, specific projects that hold out possibilities are also proposed.

1.3.2 Methodology

The following methods were used to analyze the potential for providing environmental assistance to Iraq and to determine ways in which Japan could provide distinctive assistance that incorporates its strengths in the environmental field.

(1) Review of available reports and other data

Because of the difficulties involved in dispatching Japanese nationals to carry out research and implement technical assistance projects within Iraq under the worsening security situation, the Committee obtained and reviewed all relevant data available in Japan or from agencies engaged in the implementation of projects in Iraq as basic information for the planning of assistance projects. Information on postwar Iraq's environmental problems was gathered from existing reports, information published on the Internet, international conference presentations, and other materials issued by international organizations such as UNEP and the World Bank, assistance agencies of donor countries, and agencies in Iraq.

(2) Determination of the current situation through hearings of relevant personnel

the current situation and ongoing initiatives in Iraq were identified and analyzed through conducting interviews and making enquiries with relevant personnel in international agencies, donor country assistance agencies, and Iraq's Ministry of Environment.

(3) Examination of potential fields for contribution in the light of Japan's technological and knowledge assets

Based on an accurate assessment of Iraq's environmental problems, the mechanisms behind those problems and the measures required to resolve them are considered, and an attempt is made to identify technologies for implementing those measures in which Japan has

particular competence. The fields in which Japan can best provide assistance are then examined.