PROJECT IDENTIFICATION FORM (PIF)

PROJECT TYPE: MEDIUM-SIZED PROJECT
TYPE OF TRUST FUND: GEF TRUST FUND

PART I: PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title:	Initial steps for the Establishment of the National Protected Areas Network		
Country:	Iraq	**GEF Project ID:**	5392
GEF Agency:	UNEP	**GEF Agency Project ID:**	1069
Other Executing Partners:	Ministry of Environment of Iraq (MOE), Nature Iraq (NI)	**Submission Date:** **Resubmission date**	05 April 2013 13 June 2013
GEF Focal Area:	Biodiversity	**Project Duration(Months)**	48
Name of parent programme (if applicable):	n/a	**Agency Fee (US$):**	125,387

A. INDICATIVE FOCAL AREA STRATEGY FRAMEWORK:

Focal Area Objectives	Trust Fund	Indicative Grant Financing ($)	Indicative Co-financing ($)
BD 1 – Outcome 1.1 Improved management effectiveness of existing and new protected areas - Outcome 1.1 Improved management effectiveness of existing and new protected areas - Output 1. New protected areas (2) and coverage (224,000 ha) of unprotected ecosystems	GEF TF	1,319,863	3,450,000
Total project costs		**1,319,863**	**3,450,000**

B. INDICATIVE PROJECT FRAMEWORK

Project Objective: Develop and start implementing the plan for the establishment of a national Network of Protected Areas

Project Component	Grant Type	Expected Outcomes	Expected Outputs	Trust Fund	Indicative Grant Amount ($)	Indicative Co-financing ($)
1. Design of Protected Areas System and institutional strengthening	TA	1.1 The first Protected Areas Network for Iraq is designed. Existing information and prior studies in the country, Inventory of the Key Biodiversity Areas of Iraq, NBSAP results, international best practice, and relevant regional examples in PA management are reviewed as the basis for the plan.	1.1.1site-specific baseline ecological and land-use surveys and data collection through ground surveys and remote sensing are conducted at priority sites, to support the development of the first national network of Protected Areas.

1.1.2 A detailed plan for the establishment of a national network of protected areas, including institutional set-up and supporting legal framework. Recent KBA studies, as well as experience and best practice on Protected Areas management at regional level is gathered and used as the basis to develop the plan.

1.1.3 A costed Strategy and Action Plan for the institutional, legal and operational set-up of a national network of Protected Areas is developed in consultation with all stakeholders and under the leadership of the MOE

1.1.4 Essential new legislation required for the establishment of a PAN in Iraq is drafted and included in the national | GEF TF | 150,000 | 600,000 |

			legislative system			
		1.2 The required national professional capacity is in place to support all steps in the process of development of the first comprehensive PA Network in Iraq	1.2.1 A Training Needs Assessment (TNA) for staff of MOE at central (institutional) as well as local level (at the two priority sites covered in component 2), and involving other strategic partners, is carried out at project inception, providing the basis for an integrated training and institutional strengthening programme

1.2.2 The Capacity Building programme is implemented (on the basis of 1.2.1), covering top priority areas (ref section A.1.3), some of which are already pre-identified by the MOE.
The Training Programme will entail a combination of on-the-job and formal training carried out in collaboration with national conservation NGOs and regional conservation training institutions. | | | |
| 2. Protected Areas Network implementation | TA/INV (GEF) & INV (co-fin) | 2.1 Protected Areas Network implementation is started, with the establishment of two priority Protected Areas | 2.1.1 The essential infrastructure, staff, equipment and outline management plans for the 2 priority PAs of (1) Dalmaj marshes in Qadissiya (100,000 ha) and Wasit governorates and (2) Teeb area in Maysan governorate (124,000) are established, serving as an initial model for other PAs in the country. | GEF TF | 951,971 | 2,400,000 |
| 3. Public Awareness | TA | 3.1 The level of understanding, consensus and awareness within relevant government sectors, other stakeholders including the wider public on the social, economic, ecosystem services, and environmental conservation values provided by a viable PA network is enhanced | 3.1.1 Public awareness and outreach strategy developed and implemented, to publicize and support the main objectives and values of the PAN within (a) other relevant line Ministries and government bodies, with a focus on decision-makers, and (b) the wider public including local community groups

3.1.2 MOE website developed to include/enhance the section on Protected Areas, managed and sustained by the MOE.

3.1.3 Targeted thematic outreach materials and technical toolkits (electronic and/or printed) are developed and published to support the public awareness and communication strategy (3.1.1) | GEF TF | 97,904 | 150,000 |
			Sub-Total		1,199,875	3,150,000
Project management cost				GEF TF	119,988	300,000
Total project costs					**1,319,863**	**3,450,000**

C. INDICATIVE CO-FINANCING FOR THE PROJECT BY SOURCE AND BY NAME IF AVAILABLE, ($)

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Amount ($)
National Government	Ministry of Environment	Cash	1,300,000
Local Government	District Governments of Missan, Khadisiya and Wasit	In-kind	200,000
CSO	Nature Iraq, Ford Foundation, RSPB, OSME, British Birds, BirdLife International	In-kind	80,000

Bilateral Aid Agencies	Italy, US	Cash and in kind	1,500,000
GEF Agency	UNEP	In kind	100,000
Private Sector	To be defined (e.g. oil companies working near Teeb site)	Unknown at this stage	270,000
Total Co-financing			**3,450,000**

D. INDICATIVE TRUST FUND RESOURCES ($) REQUESTED BY AGENCY, FOCAL AREA AND COUNTRY

GEF Agency	Type of Trust Fund	Focal area	Country Name/Global	Grant amount ($) (a)	Agency Fee ($) (b)	Total ($) (a+b)
UNEP	GEF TF	Biodiversity	Iraq	1,319,863	125,387	1,445,250
Total Grant Resources				**1,319,863**	**125,387**	**1,445,250**

E. PROJECT PREPARATION GRANT (PPG)

PPG Category	Amount Requested ($)	Agency Fee for PPG ($)
(up to) $100k for projects up to and including $3 million	**50,000**	**4,750**

PPG AMOUNT REQUESTED BY AGENCY(IES), FOCAL AREA(S) AND COUNTRY(IES) FOR MFA AND/OR MTF

GEF Agency	Type of Trust Fund	Focal area	Country Name/Global	(in $)		
				PPG (a)	Agency Fee(b)	Total c = a + b
UNEP	GEF TF	Biodiversity	Iraq	50,000	4,750	54,750
Total PPG Amount				**50,000**	**4,750**	**54,750**

PART II: PROJECT JUSTIFICATION
A. PROJECT OVERVIEW
A.1.Project Description

A.1.1 The Global environment problems, root causes and barriers: Iraq is a vast, biodiversity-rich and biogeographically diverse country (ref. 4th CBD NR, 2010; KBA Study *in press.* 2013; POWPA Action Plan, 2012). The country has recently suffered from decades of conflicts, wars, sanctions and international isolation, which resulted in deteriorating standards of human well-being and severe environmental degradation. The country's development agenda is therefore focused on re-establishing security and reconstruction. In this context, Biodiversity conservation and Protected Areas establishment was not given priority in recent years. It is only in late 2009 that Iraq acceded to the CBD and the country is now in the process of establishing the legal and institutional framework for CBD implementation. The first National Report (considered the fourth) was submitted to CBD Secretariat in July 2010. The Action Plan for the IUCN Programme of Work on Protected Areas (POWPA) was completed in 2012. A comprehensive study on the county's key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) has been ongoing by Nature Iraq and partners, with the support of BirdLife International since 2005 in order to identify the most important areas for biodiversity. Over 220 sites have now been surveyed, some over 12 seasons, and these sites are now being assessed against international criteria, as in IBAs and IPAs (Important Bird and Plant Areas respectively). This wealth of vetted data and the developed national and local capacities to undertake proved essential to produce an initial "suitability analysis for an Iraqi Protected Areas System". The formulation of the first NBSAP is currently ongoing, with support from the GEF and UNEP (started in 2012), and the initial NBSAP stocktaking assessment already confirmed Protected Areas establishment as a high priority to enhance biodiversity conservation. *Existing Protected Areas Coverage:* According to current information, the total extent of existing or planned natural Protected Areas of Iraq is approx. 284,022 ha (2,840 km2) corresponding to 0.65% of total land area of Iraq (43,737,000 ha). No protected areas are established or planned in the sea territorial waters of Iraq. The following table summarizes key data on existing and proposed protected areas (adapted from the Iraq POWPA Action Plan), and additional information on each site is provided in the POWPA Action Plan for Iraq:

PROTECTED AREA TYPE	NUMBER	AREA	ECOREGIONS
National Protected Areas			
National Park	1 proposed	141,615 ha(1,416 km²)	Tigris-Euphrates alluvial salt marsh (PA0906)
Other types of PA	1 established (Barzan Tribal Protected Area)	4,707 ha(47.07km²)	Zagros Mountains Forest Steppe (PA0446)
International Protected Areas			
Ramsar Sites	1 established (Hawizeh Marsh)	137,700 ha(1,377 km²)	Tigris-Euphrates alluvial salt marsh (PA0906)

PROTECTED AREA TYPE	NUMBER	AREA	ECOREGIONS
TOTAL	3	284,022 ha(2840 km^2)	2

PA Governance: there is currently no specific legislation on Protected Areas in Iraq. In recent years a new institutional framework has been delineated for the management of PAs, according to the Ministry of Environment Law n.37 of 2008 and the Environment Protection Law n.27 of 2009: the competence on Agricultural Protected Areas was confirmed to the Ministry of Agriculture, while the competence on Natural Protected Areas was assigned to the Ministry of Environment. In 2010, the Ministry of Environment submitted a draft Regulation on Protected Areas for to the State Advisory Council for starting the approval procedure. As of February 2013, the legal review process is still ongoing. It is foreseen that the new Regulation on Protected Areas may be approved by the Iraqi Ministers Council in year 2013. Although some protected areas have been designated (see table above), few protection measures are applied, thus sites often are protected only on paper. The proposed Mesopotamian Marshlands National Park is the only site that was more comprehensively studied in recent years. A preliminary overview of environmental problems, biodiversity status as well as evaluation of challenges and priorities for action emerge from the above key reference documents.

Key threats to Biodiversity: some of the most common and widespread in Iraq include unsustainable fishing and hunting, land mines, oil extraction and mining activities, desertification, agricultural pollution and runoff, infrastructures construction. The national report and initial results of the NBSAP also highlight that there are considerable obstacles for biodiversity conservation in general. These are mainly related to stakeholders outreach and involvement, jurisdictional disputes, lack of legislation, difficulties in the legislative process, difficulty in raising awareness, funding availability, capacity building, and security constraints. The NR emphasized the "urgent need for global involvement and commitment in order to overcome these obstacles". *In the above context, the major barriers to the effective establishment and management of Protected Areas in Iraq include (ref: POWPA PA 2012):* weak or absent legal framework; lack of financial mechanisms to establish and sustain a network of PAs; lack of national technical expertise on PA design and management; lack of coordination between ministries (horizontal) and between national local government (vertical); lack of adequate baseline information; sub-optimal law enforcement capacity; lack of trans-boundary coordination; very limited public awareness on the importance of PAs and Biodiversity conservation. The following table summarizes specific threats affecting the three main existing and planned PAs:

	KEY THREATS TO PROTECTED AREAS AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION	Central Marshes	Hawizeh Marshes	Barzan
1.	Agricultural Expansion & Intensification Threats	Low	Low	High
2.	Residential and commercial development	Medium	Medium	Medium
3.	Energy Production and mining (gravel mining, oil development, electrical towers, etc.)	Medium	High	Low
4.	Transportation & service corridors (development of roads and shipping corridors)	Low	Low	Medium
5.	Over-exploitation, persecution and control (logging, hunting, over-fishing, etc.)	Medium	Medium	Low
6.	Human intrusions and disturbance - Effects related to non-consumption of biological resources – recreational activities, war, military exercises, work and other activities	High	High	Medium
7.	Natural systems modification (dams and changes water mgmt, filling in wetlands, drainage, dredging, canalizations	High	High	Medium
8.	Invasive or other problematic species	Not evaluated	Not evaluated	Not evaluated
9.	Pollution (municipal and industrial waste and garbage, noise, air, light, & thermal pollution).	Medium	Medium	Medium

A.1.2 The baseline scenario and associated projects: The MOE of Iraq currently has a large and complex structure employing approximately 150 staff in the central Technical Directorate in Wazirea/Baghdad, with additional district offices and staff located throughout the country. In total, approximately 60 MOE staff are assigned to Directorates and Units that perform activities related to the conservation of Biodiversity. However among these, the existing capacity to manage Protected Areas is yet very limited, and the MOE has yet very limited capacity to effectively implement its challenging mandate, especially with regards to the establishment and management of an effective National system of Protected Areas. The initial results of Nature Iraq's Key Biodiversity Area Project provide an effective basis to design a national PA system, and identify sites that hold: one or more globally threatened species; one or more endemic species which are globally restricted to the site or surrounding region; significant concentrations of a species (e.g. important migratory stops, nesting sites, nurseries or breeding areas); and/or globally significant examples of unique habitat types and species assemblages. Once complete, the Iraq KBA Inventory (by Nature Iraq, due for release in the first half of 2013) can serve as the foundation for a fu-

ture protected areas network in the country. The findings of the KBA project are already being used to prioritize sites for protection and conservation planning. Nature Iraq with support from international partners has conducted an initial review of the KBA data and developed a summary document entitled "Suitability Analysis for an Iraqi Protected Areas Network". The MOE and the GEF project will adopt the KBA document as the basis to start developing a national system of parks and protected areas. The new Protected Area Law is also awaiting cabinet approval, and would provide the legal basis for the official creation of Iraq's first proposed Mesopotamian Marshlands National Park in the Central Marshes. Once this legislation is passed by the Iraqi cabinet, the MOE will be in a position to start work on an extensive protected area network for Iraq. However the KBA work conducted so far still has many gaps (i.e. many areas in the country have not been surveyed yet), and surveys have so far been very strongly focused on birds, which are one of the best indicator taxa for biological diversity, while other taxa deserve more focus as well and they will require different survey methodologies. In addition, each site that meets KBA Criteria deserves more in-depth surveys to fully characterize them. The survey work itself has helped to gain a better understanding of the both Iraq's wealth of resources (environmental and human) and the threats that face the country (unsustainable development, pollution, habitat destruction, declines in health and loss of species). However there is no substitute for getting out into the field and seeing things first hand. Both Nature Iraq and the Iraqi Ministry of Environment have benefitted greatly from these activities and in the baseline scenario (without the GEF project), it is envisaged that these efforts will continue, with support by national government and international donors e.g. Italy, US, Canada and Japan. The Government plans for the gradual establishment of a national the PA system. The first two pilot PAs that the GEF project will support (Dalmaj marshes and Teeb area) have been selected as the first two pilot protected areas by the National Committee for Protected Areas, and the National Committee for Biodiversity (Ref. Outcome 2.1). The government plans to invest own human and financial resources and other donor funding into the initial/essential staffing, equipment and infrastructure at these priority PAs (ref table C), and this will provide the necessary baseline co-financing for the GEF intervention.

A.1.3 The proposed alternative scenario: The GEF project will address the above problems, root causes and barriers in a systematic way complementing ongoing efforts by the MOE and partners. The GEF project will help develop critical professional capacity at national level, to support MOE's mandate in biodiversity conservation and protected areas management, setting priorities and initiating pilot on-the-ground conservation action for the establishment of the first National Protected Areas, based on existing (e.g. the KBA inventory to be published in 2013, and the priorities emerging from the ongoing NBSAP) and new site-specific studies. The proposed alternative scenario -with the GEF project- will support the design and initial steps for the establishment of a viable national network of Protected Areas, upgrading MOE's PA management capacity, creating two new PAs and thus increasing the national Protected Areas coverage and the number of species of global importance that will be under effective conservation management in the country. The Objective of the Project is to: *"Develop and start implementing the plan for the establishment of a national Network of Protected Areas"*. Three components are envisaged, including:

Component 1. Design of Protected Areas System and institutional strengthening
Outcome 1.1*: The first Protected Areas Network for Iraq is designed. Existing information and prior studies in the country, Inventory of the Key Biodiversity Areas of Iraq, NBSAP results, international best practice, and relevant regional examples in PA management are reviewed as the basis for the plan.*
Outcome 1.2*: The required national professional capacity is in place to support all steps in the process of development of the first comprehensive PA Network in Iraq*
This outputs builds upon the already identified "Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs) of Iraq" (to be published in 2013 by Nature Iraq and MoE - the result of 7 years of extensive field work) and the initial results of the ongoing NBSAP. The PAN (Protected Areas Network) plan will be fully costed and will include detailed proposal for the legal and institutional set-up, financing mechanisms, operational and management guidelines for the first two sites to be established as part of a future national Network of Protected Areas. Baseline PA monitoring systems will be established and piloted at two pilot sites: Dalmaj marshland in Wasit and Qadissiya Governorates and Teeb area in Maysan governorate (ref. also to the criteria for site selection outlined in component 2). National professional capacity will be enhanced as part of the training programme (outcome 1.2), focusing on biodiversity assessments, protected areas management, species identification and BD conservation, Strategic communication and advocacy, PA Policy and management, Monitoring and evaluation, Fundraising for PA sustainability, Environmental Legislation and Law Enforcement, Scope and objectives of the CBD and other MEAs relevant to BD conservation and related national obligations (e.g. Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, CMS, AEWA, UNCCD, etc.); BD and Environmental Monitoring programmes and database management; Invasive Alien Species (IAS) management; Agro-biodiversity Conservation, etc. Through this component, the basis for legislative and institutional set-up of pilot PAs and the national PA system will be established. This will also be enhanced through establishing inter-sectorial collaboration mechanisms for the development of the PA network. Attention will be given to integrated biodiversity planning at the ecosystem level as well as to enhanced inter-regional and inter-ministerial coordination.

Component 2. Protected Areas Network implementation

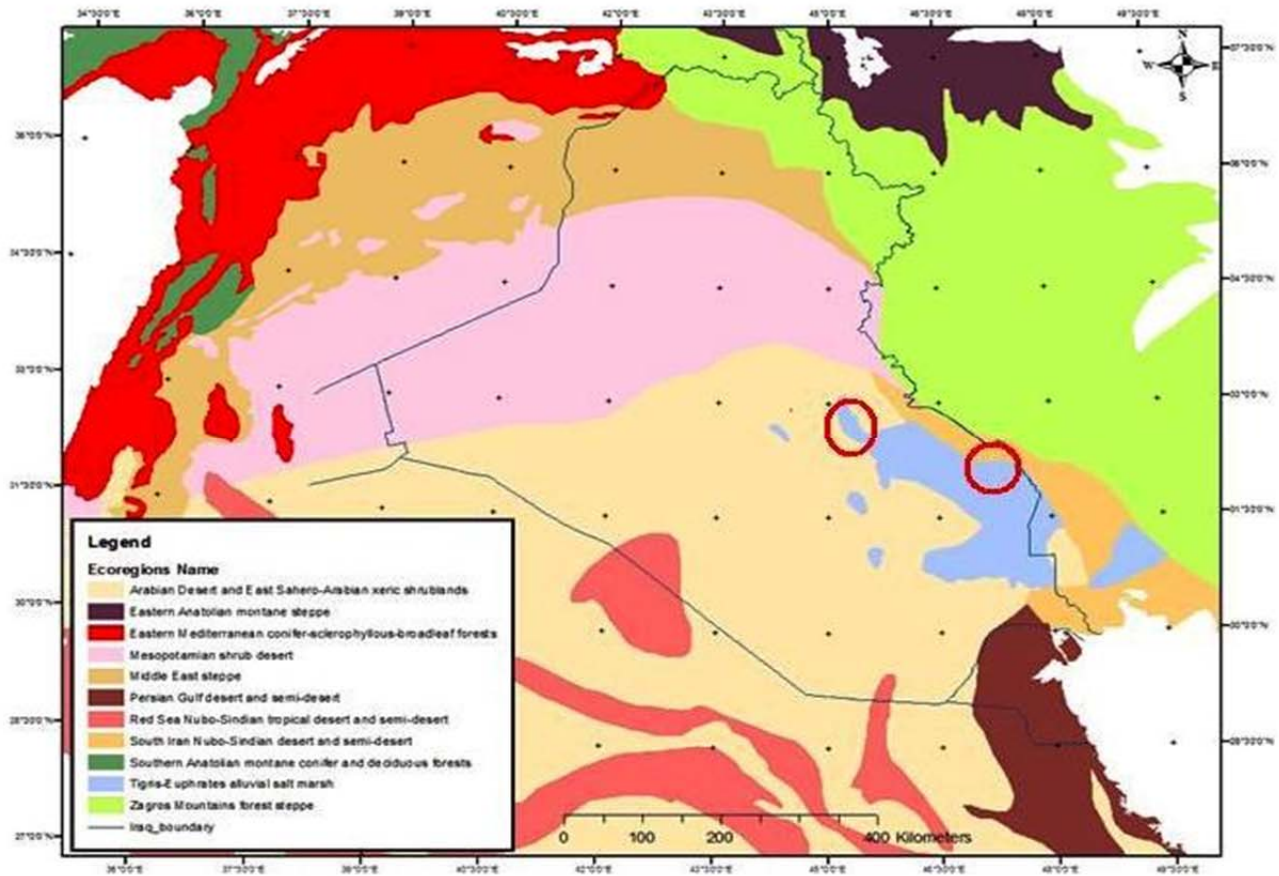*Outcome 2.1: PAN implementation is started with the establishment of two priority Protected Areas*

This component builds upon the results of component 1, and runs in parallel to component 3. The first two pilot PAs that the GEF project will support include Dalmaj marshes and Teeb area. These two sites have been selected as the first two pilot protected areas by both committees: the National Committee for Protected Areas, and the National Committee for Biodiversity for the important natural features they host, but also for other strategic reasons:

1. both sites are known with their considerable richness in biodiversity, and any conservation/protection action on these proposed areas means protection of considerable number of threatened and endemic species for the country;
2. they are placed in a position that will favour the future expansion of the 'network' structure of protected areas, providing stepping stones for linking desert/semi-desert habitats with marshlands habitat;
3. Teeb area holds a good population (may be the highest on national level) of Goitered Gazelle (*Gazella subgutturosa*) along with other vagrant fauna species that move over the borders between Iraq and Iran. This might provide potential action for trans-boundary conservation planning between the countries.

These two sites are encompassed in three Palearctic ecoregions of Iraq: PA0906 *Tigris-Euphrates alluvial salt marsh*, and PA1303*Arabian desert East Sahero-Arabian xeric Shrublands* and PA1328*South Iran Nubo-Sindian desert and semi-desert* (source: http://www.birdlife.org). A detailed description of each site, including a description of activities planned at each site, is provided in Annex 1, and key information is summarized below:

Site 1 - Dalmaj Wetlands - **Location:** Southern Iraq, Middle Euphrates (Diwaniya and Kut) - **Current protection status:** not protected, but identified as a KBA, IBA, and IPA (Important Plant Area) - **Area in ha:** 100,000ha

Site 2 - Teeb - **Location:** Southern Iraq, Missan - **Current protection status:** Not protected, but identified as a KBA, IBA, and IPA - **Area in ha:** 124,000ha

Map 1. Ecoregions of Iraq showing the location of Dalmaj and Teeb pilot Protected Areas

Component 3. Public Awareness

Outcome 3.1: *The level of understanding, consensus and awareness within relevant government sectors, other stakeholders including the wider public on the social, economic, ecosystem services, and environmental conservation values provided by a viable PA network is enhanced*

The level of understanding and awareness on biodiversity conservation and environmental issues in general is currently extremely low within all government and non-government sectors in the country. This is identified as a critical barrier that is negatively affecting the ability of the MOE to fulfill its mandate and limiting its ability to engage in an effective dialogue with other sectoral ministries and stakeholders. This component of the project will therefore focus on removing such barriers by enhancing the MOE's capacity to effectively communicate the value of PAs and actively involve key stakeholders in the debate on PA establishment and environmental issues in Iraq. This component will take stock of existing awareness and education efforts (e.g. two education publications in Arabic: "Birds of Iraq" and the "Children's Birds of Iraq" both published by Nature Iraq and widely disseminated) and it will complement the efforts started during the NBSAP and all other components of the project. The project will also support the mandate of the MOE by further enhancing its capacity and facilitating communication, awareness raising (with a specific focus on decision-makers) and stakeholder involvement at all levels (i.e. central/local), during PAN development process.

A.1.4 The incremental cost reasoning and expected baseline contributions: The GEF funding will complement the national baseline investment by the MOE as well as parallel donor co-financing. GEF-funded activities will focus on removing critical barriers in terms of national professional capacity, availability of baseline data and analysis thereof, and levels of awareness and understanding of the importance of Protected Areas and BD conservation issues in the country. The project provides incremental support towards the establishment of the initial steps for the establishment of a viable Protected Areas Network. Without the GEF funding, the current baseline activities on biodiversity conservation by the Government of Iraq would not be sufficient to create such a nationally-owned PAN and PA management capacity. Without the GEF's timely and focused support, Biodiversity conservation would remain at the periphery of the Government's agenda due to critical lack of capacity and understanding of BD conservation issues. PA establishment and management would inevitably continue to be marginalized in the development processes, leading to further loss and deterioration of the most significant and globally important biodiversity assets of the country. The project will also generate global environmental benefits in the biodiversity focal area by enhancing and speeding up the process of putting in place the required legislative and management measures and associated professional capacity to protect globally significant species and ecosystems. The PAN strategy for Iraq will directly contribute to the CBD objectives and in particular to the conservation of the biological diversity of the Iraqi marshlands as a freshwater ecosystem of global importance. Through adopting the principle of ecosystem approach to conservation, the project will also generate co-benefit in the climate change, land degradation and international waters focal areas.

A.1.5 Global environmental benefits: The project will generate significant GEBs through actions both at the national and site level. At the national level, by advancing the preparations for a comprehensive and viable PA Network for the country, the project will set the stage for the long-term preservation of a vast set of globally important species and habitats in one the most BD rich countries in the region. At the local level in the two pilot PAs, the project will ensure the protection of 8 species of global importance and marshlands and desert Shrublands as habitats of global and regional importance.

A.1.6 Innovativeness, sustainability and potential for scaling up: The project is very innovative for Iraq as it envisages a close collaboration between the MOE, national conservation NGOs and local community groups for the establishment of the first PAs in country. The project is embedded within existing national institutions and builds upon the results of prior work. In addition, a significant element of capacity development and institutional strengthening is envisaged, hence laying the foundations for longer term sustainability of all project outcomes. The plans for a National PA network and the experience generated form the two pilot sites will also provide the basis for the subsequent up-scaling of project achievements at the national level, by the same group of stakeholders involved in this initial GEF project (which is the first ever proper GEF project in Iraq).

A.2. Stakeholders

In Iraq there are several national Committees that were established to support the Government in developing policies, planning and reporting on different environmental fields. For Protected areas, two national committees are relevant: The "National Committee for Protected Areas" and the "Iraq National Marshes and Wetlands Committee". *National Committee for Protected Areas:* A National Committee for Protected Areas was established in 2008 for planning and management of a network of Protected Areas in Iraq. This national inter-ministerial Committee is led by the Ministry of Environment and is formed by the representatives of the Ministries of: Environment (Leader), Higher Education & Scientific Research, Water Resources, Science & Technology, Municipalities & Public Works, State for Tourism & Antiquities, Agriculture and Education. The NGO representative on the committee is the national conservation NGO "Nature Iraq". *Iraq National Marshes*

and Wetlands Committee (RAMSAR Convention): The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands was ratified by Iraq in October 2007 and entered into force on February 18th, 2008. An Iraq National Marshes and Wetlands Committee (INMWC) was established in 2008 to assist the Government of Iraq in its implementation of national Ramsar Convention responsibilities. This national inter-ministerial Committee is led by the Ministry of Water Resources and its members include representatives of: Ministry of Water Resources; Technical Advisors; Members from Governorate Councils of Missan, Basrah and ThiQar; Ministry of Environment; Ministry of Science & Technology; The Iraqi Media Body; Nature Iraq (NGO representative). A detailed analysis of project stakeholders at the two pilot sites will be conducted during project preparation. However initial list of key stakeholders that will be involved is provided in the Table below:

Category	Examples / List	Role(s) in the GEF project
Government Ministries and institutional bodies	Parliament, Ministry of Environment (MoE), Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR), CRIM (Center for the Restoration of Iraqi Marshlands), Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Oil, Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Health, Governorate Authorities, Municipalities,	Policy and decision making on policies; strategies and plans for biodiversity protection; policy implementation; enforcement of laws and regulations - these are also all involved in existing national committees on BD and are involved in the ongoing NBSAP and preparatory work at the pilot PAs
NGOs	Environmental NGOs (e.g. Nature Iraq, Iraqi Nature Conservation Society), Hunters associations (Mesopotamian Society for Sustainable Hunting, The Iraqi Hunting Society, Society for Hunting and Protection of Environment, Professional Hunters' Society)	Local expertise and knowledge of local biodiversity conservation and socio-economic issues; support to the implementation of field surveys, capacity building, educational and awareness raising programmes, etc.
Indigenous and Local communities	Local community groups (e.g. Friends of Dalmaj), Local School Teachers.	Benefitting from the protection of biodiversity; engagement in the implementation of field surveys, educational and awareness raising programmes; providing expertise and knowledge of local issues; participation in PA design, establishment and management.
Scientific Community	Research institutions and universities (e.g. Universities, Marine Science Center, Marshes research Center – University of Thi-Qar); Zoos and botanical gardens (e.g. Museum of natural history of Baghdad)	Support with scientific research the identification of values and concerns Provide tools and staff for environmental research
International organizations	BirdLife International, Royal Botanic Gardens of Edinburgh - Centre for Middle Eastern Plants (RBGE-CMEP)	Provide guidance, expertise and literature on BD assessments and PA management - these institutions are already working closely and for several years with MOE and Nature Iraq, e.g. on the national KBA and IPA projects. This collaboration will continue in the GEF project
Private sector	Private Companies and multinationals (especially oil companies operating near protected areas); Local commercial activities and trading companies; Industries Media and communication agencies (e.g. the Iraqi Media Center); Celebrities and Religious leaders	Support for pilot projects implementation and for PAs; involvement in awareness raising activities
Regional partners	BirdLife Middle East Office	Provide guidance, expertise, training support and literature on BD assessments and PA management
National focal points of relevant MEAs	Ramsar, UNESCO World Heritage, CITES, CMS, AEWA, etc.	Provide guidance, expertise, training support and literature on wise-use of wetlands, PA management
Donors	Italy, US, UK, Canada, others tbd.	Co-financing support for implementation of conservation activities.

A.3. Risks

There are several constraints and risks that can potentially impair or prevent the achievement of project objectives or that can compromise an effective implementation. These risks and associated mitigation measures will be taken into account in project design, and are summarized in the table below.

Risk	Mitigation Measures
- There is very limited professional capacity in Iraq to support the implementation of technical project activities. There is a need to develop such capacity as a basis for a proper nationally-owned PAN design process and pilot establishment of the first PAs in the country. - The UN Security Phase status of Iraq results in limitation for travel to Iraq by international consultants. This results in much higher-than-normal operational costs for all project meetings, workshops and trainings, that have to be held abroad (normally in Jordan) whenever there is participation of international staff involved (a requirement due to the nature of activities involved and the limited availability of Iraqi trainers) - There are significant delays and difficulties for Iraqi citizens in obtaining visas to attend trainings in several countries abroad (but not in neighboring countries such as Jordan) - High costs and limitations for the implementation of site-level surveys within Iraq (that have to comply with the very high security-related costs) *Level: medium/high*	The combination of all these clearly identified constraints and risks is well known and was taken into account in the design of first NBSAP project (successfully ongoing). The project takes into account and is designed to address all these risks through the following main mitigation actions: - Development of adequate national professional and technical capacity through formal and informal (on-the-job) training for Iraqi nationals to support the PAN development process - On-the-job capacity building is to be carried out largely through the sustained presence in Iraq of a team of full-time advisors to the MOE. Formal training may be mostly done in neighboring countries where (a) the BD conservation and PA management capacity is more advanced, trainers and in many cases available locally and trainees can e.g. gain direct experience from existing protected areas, and (b) access for Iraqi nationals as well as international trainers/advisors is less problematic and cost-effective. - project activities are nested in well-established national government and non-government institutions that are equipped to execute the project at the national level as demonstrated through the successful execution of the first NBSAP (ongoing). In general, given the above considerations and considering the project implementation set-up mainly through experienced local partners, the risks of carrying out the field activities related to the PA implementation in the two target areas are considered low and acceptable, and the chances that these activities cannot be carried out is relatively small. Actually the risk associated with field activities in rural areas is probably significantly lower than in large urban centres at this particular time.
Relevant stakeholders for the PAN development processes have very limited understanding and awareness of the environmental and BD conservations issues at stake. This is (and will continue to) limit severely the efforts of MOE to uphold BD conservation issues in the Government's agenda. The MOE is also constrained in terms of its ability to foster mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation issues and environmental concerns into other sectors and Ministries. *Level: medium/high*	This is a constraint and risk that will be addressed through a significant budget allocation for stakeholder consultation, awareness raising, consensus building and communication-related activities. These tasks are outlined as component 3 of the project, and will be designed to provide cross-cutting support to components 2 and 1 of the project.
Political instability and frequent changes in government might negatively affect the level of political commitment towards biodiversity conservation *Level: medium*	The design of the project will take this risk into account by (a) focusing on the development of broad-based technical, professional and institutional capacity within the MOE. This may partly compensate for the possible temporary lack of high-level political support, and technical staff can sustain the process of PAN development. In addition (b) Through an active consultation, awareness and outreach program (component 3), the project will develop a broader base of understanding, consensus and support within other ministries and stakeholders (with a special focus on decision makers), thus increasing the level of political support for the BD conservation agenda and PA establishment in the country.
The concept of Protected Areas "*Mahmiat*" is often initially met with resistance and prejudice by stakeholders and local communities. This is expected to constrain the initial efforts of the MOE towards discussing and establishing a PAN *Level: medium*	Same as above: the combination of increased national capacity and broad consultative and awareness efforts is expected to mitigate this anticipated problem by removing critical barriers and building consensus and understanding of BD conservation issues among all key stakeholders involved in the PAN development process. The project will also take stock of the participatory and community based "*Hima*" approach to PA management as approved at the latest IUCN congress in Jeju, ref.: http://www.spnl.org/jeju-declaration-adopted-to-promote-green-growth/
Lengthy processes of approval and activation of legislation *Level: medium*	The project will have limited influence over this higher-level institutional and governance issue. However some steps will be taken to save time on other elements of the process and thus mitigating this problem, including: starting with a review of existing PA legislation in neighboring countries so as to save time and take advantage of suita-

	ble example already in place and in the Arabic Language; deploying a full-time technical assistance team to support the project and MOE with a mandate to follow-up consistently on all steps of discussion of legislation and institutional set-up; supporting the preparation and discussion of legal and institutional set-up with a targeted consultation and awareness outreach campaigns focusing on decision-makers and other government departments represented in the Cabinet and members of parliament.
Difficulties in implementing project recommendations and enforcing legislative provisions *Level: medium*	This is a longer-term risk that may affect the long-term impact and sustainability of project activities. This issue is bound to remain largely outside of the project's influence due to the limited budget and time-frame of the project. However GEF support will focus on removing main initial barriers to lay-out solid foundations for a PA network in the country, by: building essential national capacity; raising the level of understanding and buy-in with other government sectors and society at large; putting in place the necessary technical, legal and institutional instruments to support PA management. These initial building blocks can be subsequently developed and expanded upon through Government efforts and other Donor-assisted projects.

A.4. Coordination with other relevant GEF financed and other initiatives

The Ministry of Environment (MOE) in Iraq oversees or operates in close coordination with a number of biodiversity-related initiatives in the country. Representatives from all these partners and stakeholders will be involved in project activities through (a) participation in the "National Committee for Protected Areas" and the "Iraq National Marshes and Wetlands Committee", (b) becoming members of the GEF Project Steering committee and (c) taking part in the wide range of consultative processes and discussion workshops planned in the framework of the project and MOE work.

The principal related initiatives that the MOE will coordinate with include the "Key Biodiversity Areas" (KBA) Project with the New Eden Group/Nature Iraq, supported by Italian Ministry for Environment, Land and Sea. A number of site-level conservation projects of the New Eden Group/Nature Iraq partnership continue to provide support to the MOE particularly in the Iraqi Marshland Areas but also in other areas of the country (Kurdistan and Central Iraq). In addition, the MOE and other relevant ministries are coordinating with and building upon the results of: the UNEP-supported Iraqi Marshlands Observation System (IMOS) and the follow-up to the completed Marshlands Project; the Green Belt Project (under implementation); UNEP/DTIE/IETC Marshlands project; UNAMI-UN Assistance Mission in Iraq; Iraq UNDAF process; the Canada-Iraq Marshlands Initiative (CIMI); the World Bank on the Iraq Emergency Environmental Management Project (EEMP); the UNDP projects in the Iraqi Marshland areas; the UNDP-UNEP-WHO Environmental Strategy for Iraq; the UNEP-UNESCO ongoing work to designate the Mesopotamian Marshlands as a UNESCO World Heritage Site; partners in Neighboring countries concerned with the conservation of the Iraqi Marshlands and the Gulf (Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states). Other relevant ongoing initiatives relevant for biodiversity protection in Iraq, that the project will coordinate with, include: UNEP/ROWA, MOE – GEF-funded project "First NBSAP for Iraq and Development of Fifth National Report to the CBD"; UNEP/ROWA, UNDP, MOE - First National Communication Report of the UNFCCC; The New Eden Programme (funded by Italian Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea); Designation of the Southern Mesopotamian Marshlands as a World Heritage Site; Nature Iraq / BirdLife International / Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh - Centre for Middle eastern Plants / Darwin Initiative, 3 year Environmental Education programme; UNEP/ROWA, UNDP and MoE: State of Environment Report.

B. DESCRIPTION OF THE CONSISTENCY OF THE PROJECT WITH:

B.1.National strategies and plans or reports and assessments under relevant conventions

The project specifically supports the achievement of the CBD Aichi Targets 11 and 12, and addresses the national priorities emerging from the first NBSAP Stocktaking and Assessment Report , with particular reference to national Priority 2, under Recommendation 4: *"Establish pilot protected areas in line with PoWPA priorities, as a basis for the development of national PA management capacity through on-the-ground conservation action and associate training for building capacity for national staff"*; and the priorities set forth in the CBD PoWPA Action Plan for Iraq (2012), with particular reference to Priority 2 "Establish 10 new PAs by 2020". The project also fits within the UNDAF 2011-2014 for Iraq, supporting its Key Development Outcome 3 and specifically Outcome 3.1: "The Iraqi state has institutionalized policy and operational framework for the sustainable management and conservation of natural resources", which in turn support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal n. 7 on ensuring environmental sustainability.

B.2. GEF Focal area and/or fund(s) strategies, eligibility criteria and priorities:

Iraq is the 192rd party of Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), making it one of the latest countries that acceded the Convention (in 2009). Although information about the status of biodiversity is the country still limited, the unique eco-geological location of Iraq makes it one of the most important ecosystem and biodiversity-rich centers in the region. As this is the first GEF biodiversity project for Iraq, emerging from the NBSAP priorities, its primary objective is to support CBD

targets and align the country's BD conservation agenda within the framework of ongoing development recovery and re-building process that is currently underway. The project is fully consistent with GEF5 Focal Area Strategies, in particular **Objective One:** *"Improve Sustainability of Protected Area Systems"* The project will support initial steps for the full establishment of an effective and sustainable Protected Areas Network (PAN) through profiling, listing and categorization of potential protected areas important for conservation and sustainable use of critical biodiversity assets in Iraq. The project will develop a costed PAN strategy and enhance capacities for effective management of protected areas.

B.3. The GEF Agency's comparative advantage for implementing this project:

UNEP's comparative advantages in the GEF are aligned with its mandate, functions and Medium Term Strategy and its biennial Programme of Work (2012-2103) – see: www.unep.org. Besides the comparative advantages and associated areas of expertise that UNEP will bring as IA and MOE partner in the project, in the case of Iraq UNEP also has an established and recent track record of country-based projects in support of the Iraqi Marshlands. The UNEP ROWA office located in Bahrain will also serve as a coordination hub and support centre for project activities, ensuring greater synergy and coordination with all relevant UNEP activities in the region and UNEP-hosted environmental conventions. The total value of these UNEP corporate, regional office input as in-kind contributions is estimated at approximately 100,000US$ over the project period. In addition, during the project preparation phase, the project team will work closely with the MOE to facilitate and support the dialogue with the Ministry of Finance of Iraq as well as other donors and partners, so as to enhance support for BD conservation in Iraq and secure additional Government and third-party co-financing for the project. UNEP is responding to country's demand for accessing GEF projects and providing requested services that match its GEF comparative advantages, and building on its mandate. Thematically the project is fully aligned with UNEP's Medium Term Strategy, and mainly with 2 of its 6 Sub-programmes (Ecosystem Management and Environmental Governance). The deployment if international UN staff in Iraq to support this project remains unlikely until the security situation improves in the country, hence it will have to be kept to a minimum if at all possible. However UNEP will support the deployment and capacity building of a full-time technical national team in-country to support and oversee project implementation with the MOE and Nature Iraq. The UNEP Regional Office for Western Asia based in Bahrain will ensure consistent backstopping and support for all aspects of project implementation and M&E, both in country and in terms of regionally-based activities in Jordan and Bahrain. A more detailed outline of implementation and execution arrangements, including the definition of roles and responsibilities of all partners in Iraq and in the Region will be defined at the PPG stage.

PART III: APPROVAL/ENDORSEMENT BY GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT(S) AND GEF AGENCY(IES)

A. RECORD OF ENDORSEMENT OF GEF OPERATIONAL FOCAL POINT (S) ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT(S):

(Please attach the Operational Focal Point endorsement letter(s) with this template. For SGP, use this OFP endorsement letter).

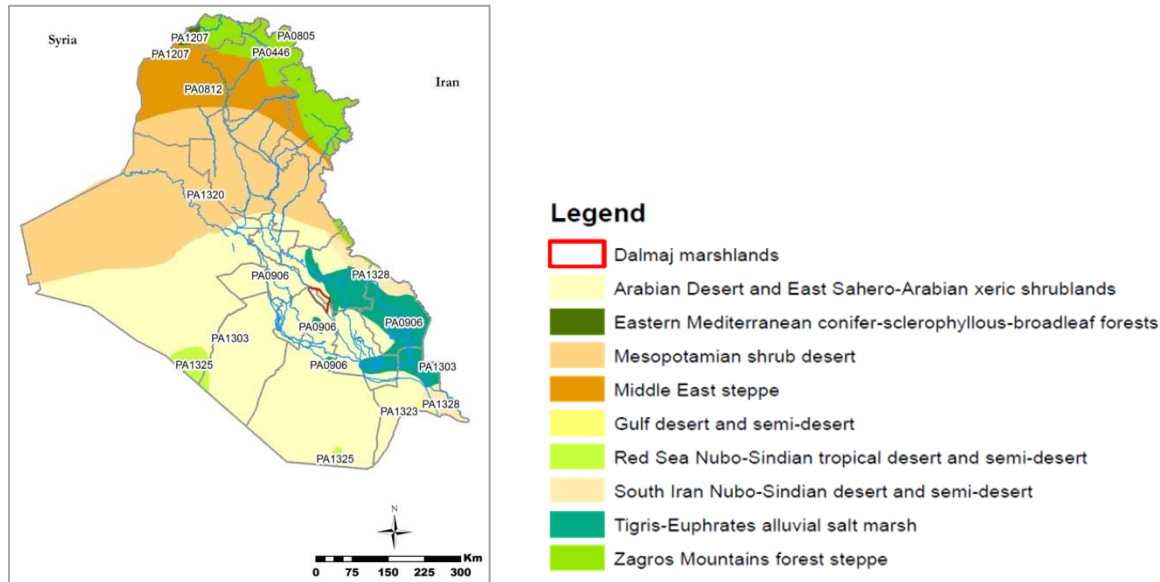| NAME	POSITION	MINISTRY	DATE*(MM/dd/yyyy)*
Dr Ali Al-Lami	MOE Advisor, GEF Operational Focal Point	MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT OF IRAQ	03/05/2013

B. GEF AGENCY(IES) CERTIFICATION

This request has been prepared in accordance with GEF/LDCF/SCCF/NPIF policies and procedures and meets the GEF/LDCF/SCCF/NPIF criteria for project identification and preparation.					
Agency Coordinator, Agency name	**Signature**	**DATE***(MM/ dd/yyyy)*	**Project Contact Person**	**Telephone**	**Email Address**
Maryam Niamir-Fuller, Director, GEF Coordination Office, UNEP, Nairobi	*M. Niam Fuller*	06/14/2013	Edoardo Zandri, Task Manager, Biodiversity, DEPI DB/LD Unit, UNEP Nairobi	+254 20 761 4380	edoardo.zandri@ unep.org

ANNEX 1 - Essential information on the two proposed Protected Areas

Site 1 - Dalmaj Wetlands - Location: Southern Iraq, Middle Euphrates (Diwaniya and Kut) - **Current protection status:** not protected, but identified as a KBA, IBA, and IPA (Important Plant Area) - **Area in ha:** 100,000ha

Map 2. Location of Dalmaj wetlands in Iraq

Criteria for selection: Dalmaj wetlands have been evaluated as areas of important natural values within the framework of the KBA assessment and the priorities emerging thereof. This KBA site has been proposed as future protected area under Priority Activity 2 of the PoWPA of Iraq[1] as the most representative of the eco-region Arabian Desert and East Sahero-Arabian Xeric Shrublands (PA1303). The priority given at this site is also justified in the combined presence of wetland, farmlands and desert ecosystems, providing an important site for waterfowl and waders along their migration routes, the other the presence of the Houbara Bustard (with potential possibility for breeding) and important desert ecosystems that are yet largely unknown and poorly investigated. Additional criteria for the selection as priority PA for the project include: (a) *KBA criteria (Key Biodiversity Areas)*: Ie. Irreplaceability Sub-Criteria: Bioregionally-restriced assemblages; (b) *IBA criteria (Important Bird Areas)*: A1. Globally threatened species, A2. Restricted-range species, A3. Biome-restricted species, A4. Congregations: (i) A4i. 1% or more of biogeographical population of a congregatory waterbird species (1 spp),), (ii) A4ii.1% or more of global population of a congregatory seabird or terrestrial species (1 spp), (iii) A4iii. Holding congregations of 20,000 waterbirds or 10,000 pairs of seabirds of one or more species (c) *IPA criteria (Important Plan Areas)*: A4. Site contains national endemic, near endemic, regional endemic and/or regional range-restricted species or infra-specific taxa, A5. Site contains species of special interest, B1. The site is a particularly species-rich example of a defined habitat type, C. The site is identified as an outstanding example of a globally or regionally threatened habitat type.

Key habitats to be protected: Arabian Desert and East Sahero-Arabian Xeric Shrublands. Main habitats of the site are the large lake and marshlands with associated mudflats surrounded by terrestrial semi-desert habitats. A large portion of the surrounding terrestrial habitats is occupied by farmland.
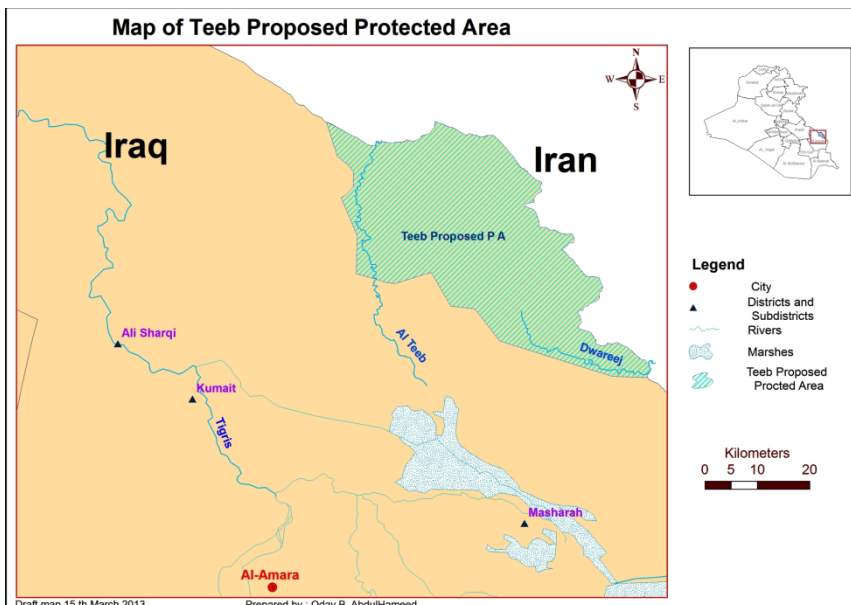
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[1] available at: http://www.cbd.int/protected/implementation/actionplans/country/?country=iq

Key species of global significance: Important species recorded at the site include the endangered and endemic Basra Reed Warbler (*Acrocephalus griseldis*), the Vulnerable Marbled Duck (*Marmaronetta angustirostris*) and the near-threatened Black-tailed Godwit *(Limosa limosa)*, while the desert habitat is characterized by the presence of the Vulnerable Houbara Bustard *(Chlamydotis undulata)*. Other species include the Lesser White-fronted Goose *(Anser erythropus),* White-headed Duck (*Oxyura leucocephala),* and the Iraq Babbler (*Turdoides altirostris).*

Main threats at the site: Main threats that have been recorded for this area are related to the water shortage and high salinity as water presence and quality are concerned; human introduced threats are related to the heavy hunting of the Houbara Bustard with Falconry methods (often completely unregulated and illegal) and to the possible expansion of agriculture in the surrounding area, with the potential introduction of pollutants and increase in water salinity. For the rest, the area has retained the majority of its natural habitats and has not been affected by many human activities for at least the last decade; this gives an additional value for the establishment of a protected area.

Proposed priority conservation actions at the site: establishment of the legal and management framework for the site to be gazetted as a formal Protected Area. Rapid baseline surveys to identify and map biodiversity values covering key indicator taxa within the PA, and define major land uses and socio-economic activities in the buffer zone. Development of an outline Zoning Plan. Preliminary boundary demarcation of the new PA. Participatory development of a first outline Management Plan, and its approval by regional and national authorities. Recruitment and training of local PA staff, and provision of essential infrastructure and equipment. Development of a sustainable financing plan for the PA. Capacity development and strengthening of the existing local conservation group "Friends of Dalmaj", as a key partner in PA management and community liaison. Awareness and educational programmes with local communities and hunters, focusing on the alternative multiple values ecosystem services of the site and on the biodiversity conservation and potential economic importance of the new protected area. Set-up of a simple and effective ecological monitoring programme, with a focus on key biodiversity indicator species, main threats to the PA and on water quality and water levels. Law enforcement to reduce poaching and illegal hunting practices, and a feasibility study for the possible establishment of a surrounding controlled hunting reserve which could generate sustainable revenue for local communities.

Site 2 - Teeb - Location: Southern Iraq, Missan - **Current protection status:** Not protected, but identified as a KBA, IBA, and IPA - **Area in ha:** 124,000ha

Map 3. Location of Teeb area in Iraq

Criteria for Selection: Teeb has been evaluated as area of important natural values within the framework of the KBA assessment and the priorities emerging thereof. This area was initially not included in the 10 proposed sites for protected areas of the PoWPA document. The criteria for selecting the sites in the PoWPA document took into account the natural values and the priorities emerging from their evaluation, trying to select one or more potential protected area for each eco-region represented in Iraq (depending also on the extension of the eco-region at country level). The area includes two eco-regions: South Iran Nubo-sindian desert and semi-desert, and Tigris-Euphrates Alluvial Salt Marsh. For the eco-region "South Iran Nubo-sindian desert and semi-desert" another protected area was selected "Khor Az-Zubayr". However it later appeared that, based on additional information, the Teeb area better represents this ecoregion than Khor Az-Zubayr. Therefore, considering that the PoWPA provided a provisional list of potential sites that had been firstly selected as a result of KBA assessments, that many other sites were surveyed and showed to contain equally important natural values and that the focus of this project is to establish a future "network structure" of PAs, at this time the "Teeb" area has been considered more representative of the eco-region in which it is located and more suitable to the purpose of providing a first "networking" of the existing and planned PAs. Moreover, basing on a recent meeting (February 2013) of the National Biodiversity Committee and of the National Committee for Protected areas, and based on recent reports from the Ministry of Environment, this area has been endorsed as proposed PA for this GEF project. Additional criteria for selection Reasons for selection as priority site for the project include *(a) KBA criteria:* Ie. Irreplaceability Sub-Criteria: Bioregionally-restriced assemblages; *(b) IBA criteria:* A1. Globally threatened species, A2. Restricted range species, A3. Biome-restricted species; and *(c) IPA criteria:* B1. The site is a particularly species-rich example of a defined habitat type, C. The site is identified as an outstanding example of a globally or regionally threatened habitat type.

Key habitats to be protected: Teeb area hosts an important desert habitat pertaining to the critical/endangered "South Iran Nubo-sindian desert and semi-desert" eco-region (source: http://worldwildlife.org/ecoregions/pa1328). An oasis is present inside the area as well as seasonal streams ("*wadyan*") adding value to this area both from a naturalistic point of view and for the ecosystem services the area can provide to humans. Due to the presence of water and its position along an important migration route, Teeb area also represents a stepping stone for the migration of many passerine and other bird species.

Key species of global significance: Some important bird species are recorded in this area, of which several are vulnerable, like the Lesser White-fronted Goose *(Anser erythropus)*, and Houbara Bustard *(Chlamydotis undulata)*. Other species include the Black-tailed Godwit *(Limosa limosa)*, Iraq Babbler *(Turdoides altirostris)*, Hypocolius *(Hypocolius ampelinus)*. The area is also known as an important stop over site for migratory birds. The area also harbors a significant population of Goitered Gazelles (*Gazella subgutturosa* - sub-species not known), and it is also important but not yet well studied for the wide range of plant species present.

Key threats at the site: Main threats that have been identified in the area refer to the existing and future oil development and infrastructure building, to the presence of was residuals, overgrazing, poaching, drought and waste management issues.

Proposed priority actions at the site: as for the Dalmaj wetlands site, essential initial steps include the establishment of the legal and management framework for the site to be gazetted as a formal Protected Area. Rapid baseline surveys to identify and map biodiversity values covering key indicator taxa within the PA, and define major land uses and socio-economic activities in the buffer zone. Development of an outline Zoning Plan. Preliminary boundary demarcation of the new PA. Participatory development of a first outline Management Plan, and its approval by regional and national authorities. Recruitment and training of local PA staff, and provision of essential infrastructure and equipment. Development of a sustainable financing plan for the PA. Establishment of coordination mechanisms with the Iranian authorities to release the same natural share of water to the area through the main seasonal rivers (Al-Teeb and Chlaat). Coordination with locally active oil companies and working with them on the set-up of a monitoring program that targets the oil-spills and to adopt eco-friendly methods in the oil extracting industries. Awareness and educational programmes with local communities and hunters, focusing on the alternative multiple values ecosystem services of the site and on the biodiversity conservation and potential economic importance of the new

protected area. Set-up of a simple and effective ecological monitoring programme, with a focus on key biodiversity indicator species, main threats to the PA and on water quality and water levels. Law enforcement to reduce poaching and illegal hunting practices, and a feasibility study for the possible establishment of a surrounding controlled hunting reserve which could generate sustainable revenue for local communities, while maintaining a conservation focus on globally important species such as the Gazelle, Houbara, and Lesser White-fronted Goose.