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## ***PRESS RELEASE***

For Immediate Release

### **To Avert Iraq Civil War, Fund for Peace Calls for a Government of National Unity**

**Washington, DC, August 16, 2005:** In a report released today, The Fund for Peace (FfP) urges the formation of a government of national unity in Iraq to reverse current trends toward internal conflict. Dr. Pauline H. Baker, author of the report, states, “The delay in the constitution announced yesterday is a sign of deeper unresolved problems, particularly alienation of the Sunni population. A bold step forward is needed in addition to agreement on a constitution if the insurgency is to be subdued, political legitimacy fully established and sectarian rivalries moderated. A government of national unity would not mean that any single group would lose power; rather, it would mean that no major group would be left without power. Such an agreement would help Iraq move forward.”

In a well-researched document, the FfP found that from April 2004 to April 2005, all twelve indicators of conflict that it has been tracking have remained in alert. In fact, paradoxically, the risk of civil war has increased at pivotal turning points in the democratization process since the invasion in 2003. A trendline that links indicators with key events shows that the intensity of conflict went up sharply when the Interim Governing Council was established in June 2003, Saddam Hussein was captured in March 2004, and sovereignty was transferred to the interim government in June 2004.

The January elections followed suit. Initially declared a success, elections had a long-term boomerang effect: the new government was not seen as legitimate or representative among the Sunnis, the depth of the sectarian fault lines between them and other groups were exposed and the insurgency intensified. Those setbacks are at the heart of the constitutional problems the country is facing today.

Sunni marginalization is the single most important factor driving the insurgency, providing it with a rationale, receptivity and recruits. In the eyes of Iraq’s traditional ruling group, the political process is heading toward their permanent political exclusion. “That is why they are opposing certain provisions in the constitution,” said Dr. Baker. Decision-makers need to focus on correcting this strategic imbalance by negotiating a political dispensation that would guarantee the Sunnis an integral place in Iraq’s political system in the next government. There is no guarantee that a unity government would succeed or last for long, but it would help Iraq get through this transition period and, difficult as it may be, is preferable to current trends, concluded the report.

The report warns of three circumstances that could enflame the conflict further:

1. If US forces are forced to reoccupy areas that are prematurely handed over to ill-prepared Iraqi security forces,
2. If the prosecution of Saddam Hussein is seen as a vengeance trial by Sunnis, and
3. If the interim government stands by its decision to allow private militias to operate with impunity.

This report is the fourth in a series that conducts month-by-month, indicator-by-indicator analysis of Iraq developments. The Fund for Peace is an independent research and educational organization based in Washington DC.

For a full text or executive summary of the report, visit The Fund for Peace website:

<http://www.fundforpeace.org/publications/reports/iraq-rep04.php>.

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