



Conclusions of the Interactive Seminar entitled "The Ministry of Construction and Housing: The future vision and obstacles to implementation"

On 25/03/2019, Al-Rafidain Center for Dialogue RCD organized an interactive seminar entitled " The Ministry of Construction and Housing: The future vision and obstacles to implementation ", on RCD's Sérgio Vieira de Mello Hall. At the seminar, His Excellency the Minister of Construction, Housing, Municipalities and Public Works, Mr. "Bankin Rikani" gave a lecture on the nature of the projects implemented by the Ministry and ways to solve the technical problems facing the Ministry. Rikani spoke of the urgent need in Iraq for the housing units, which are estimated at (3) million units, pointing to two necessary conditions in the implementation of projects that are intended to be successful, which are economic feasibility and technical specifications.

The Minister stressed that the reasons for the lack of quality in the projects that are being implemented are due to the adoption of old specifications and methods, dating back to the beginnings of the last century. In addition to the fact that the bids submitted come in the name of discreet foreign companies. The truth is otherwise, as they belong to fictitious or unsound companies.

In addition, Minister Rikani dealt with many important files. The session was attended by a number of specialists, religious leaders, academics and State officials. Below are the main conclusions and recommendations of the seminar.



Conclusions:

1. One of the measures of development in the modern state is the services provided by the latter, such as water and sewage, and then energy and roads. The percentage of providing water service in Iraq is about (90%), and the percentage of providing sanitation services is (18%).
2. Iraq needs to build (3) million housing units in order to accommodate the annual population increase, which amounts to about (3%) annually, that is, an addition of about one million citizens annually, which is one of the highest rates in the world.
3. The collective mind that mobilizes Iraqis against the political class, in terms of generalizing accusations of corruption, theft, failure of the administration and other statements, which are sometimes issued by state officials led to a loss of confidence. This in turn led to citizens - and sometimes officials - disrespect for money and public order, which negatively affected the service reality in the country.
4. The establishment of successful projects requires two issues: the first is the economic feasibility of the project, and the second is the development of technical specifications and final costs. Some projects in Iraq did not take into account the economic feasibility, including the establishment of rest houses in all governorates at a cost of (5) billion dinars, and this is an aspect of wasting public money.
5. Most of the technical specifications of the projects presented in Iraq are based on old technology dating back to the forties or fifties of





- the last century, because they come from unreliable sides. In addition to that, the submission of projects is in the name of false Dutch or British companies, and this has been reflected in the failure to complete the projects, or their completion in contravention of the required technical specifications.
6. The increase in the number of slums in Iraq is due to several reasons, including the lack of distribution by the state of residential lands for a long time, as well as the exploitation by some of the weakness of the law in order to obtain plots of land in slums. Because of slums and the nature of the built neighborhoods, Images of Iraqi cities have been distorted from what they were thirty years ago.
 7. The state is moving to establish new cities with an area of one third of the existing cities, as lands are distributed in them to all citizens without giving discrimination to state employees from others. Services will also be provided in them before their construction, so that the citizen does not move to live in the desert. The fees for services provided to the poor will be collected from what the rich pay, while the middle class will bear the cost of providing the services provided to them.
 8. The process of distributing land faces legal and bureaucratic obstacles, because lands in Iraq belong to the Ministry of Finance, and the process of transferring ownership to another party faces routine obstacles, including assessment committees, as well as financial obstacles, which are the provision of sufficient funds for this.





9. The Council of Ministers approved the construction of thirty-three thousand housing units for the poor groups who meet the conditions of the Social Welfare Law.
10. Not adopting the vertical building because there is no culture for the Iraqis to live in it, in addition to that, it needs high maintenance costs amounting to (200) dollars per month.
11. Transforming the road network in Iraq into a two-way network, throughout Iraq, that costs (5) trillion dinars, and needs three years to be implemented.
12. The Iraqi government is facing a challenge, at the level of building the areas liberated from ISIS, as the reconstruction process requires more efforts than the process of new construction.

Recommendations:

1. Keeping the service sector away from politics, as politicians interfere in the design or implementation of projects will keep them away from the professionalism required for implementation.
2. It is necessary to avoid collective vilification of politicians and government officials, or general accusation of theft and corruption to everyone, because this leads to citizens' discontent with the state, and thus leads to the encroachment on public money.
3. In investment projects, the focus should be on projects that bring capital to the country, such as industrial and tourism projects, or providing health services, such as building hospitals, and not giving investment to unproductive projects such as gas stations.





4. The banking system in Iraq must develop. The remaining banking system as it is, of old and backward systems, will not help investment operations in various service sectors.
5. The basic design powers of cities must remain within the responsibility of the ministry, to ensure the preservation of green areas, and other vital facilities of the city.
6. Increasing restrictions on accessing administrative positions and limiting them to specialized categories is a form of eliminating corruption and nepotism. In this sense, the Minister of Construction and Housing stipulated that only those who hold a bachelor's degree in civil or architectural engineering should occupy the position of municipality director.