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**NEWSDESK**

25 Jul 2003 20:57:15 GMT

## UN seeks to promote entrepreneurs in poor nations

UNITED NATIONS, July 25 (Reuters) - U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan launched a new initiative on Friday aimed at promoting local entrepreneurship in developing nations as a new tactic in enlisting the private sector in the war against poverty.

He asked a new commission headed by former Canadian Finance Minister Paul Martin and ex-Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo to report back to him by November on how to build strong local private sectors in poor countries.

"Visit the smallest town in the poorest country on market day and you will see the private sector at work," Martin told a news conference.

"If those entrepreneurs are given the chance to grow beyond the village square, who would doubt that they could lead the growth of their countries more sustainably and more thoroughly than any outside form of intervention," Martin said.

Annan set up the new panel as it became increasingly clear that U.N. demands would fall short for more foreign aid, increased trade and greater private sector investment in poor countries, preventing many poor from achieving ambitious goals set for them by the United Nations at a 2000 summit.

The so-called Millennium goals, to be achieved by 2015, range from halving the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day to primary schooling for all children to reversing the spread of AIDS.

"We cannot reach these goals without support from the private sector. Most of all, we cannot reach them without a strong private sector in the developing countries themselves, to create jobs and build prosperity," Annan said.

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