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New York, 25 July 2003 - Secretary-General's opening remarks at the launch of the Commission on the Private Sector and Development

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

I am delighted to take part in this launch of the Commission on the Private Sector and Development, and to do so together with my colleagues and friends, Ernesto Zedillo, Paul Martin, and Mark Malloch Brown.

The fact that President Zedillo and Mr. Martin are here and are prepared to serve as the Commission's distinguished Co-Chairs speaks for the importance of its work.

President Zedillo brings to the Commission invaluable leadership and expertise. As you know, he served as the chair of the High Level Panel on Financing for Development in preparation for the Monterrey Conference last year. He is currently leading the UN Millennium Project's research effort on trade and financial issues.

We are equally fortunate to benefit from the experience of Paul Martin, the former finance minister of Canada. His global vision and commitment to development, as well as his successful track record as a businessman, will greatly enrich the work of the Commission. He also comes, if I may say so, from a "UN family." His father signed the UN Charter for Canada.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The birth of this Commission is yet another illustration of the rapidly growing partnership between the United Nations and the private sector.

It also underscores the importance of that partnership in our work to reach the Millennium Development Goals – a blueprint for building a better world in the 21st century.

Ranging from halving extreme poverty to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education – all by the target date of 2015 – the Millennium Development Goals represent a set of simple but powerful objectives that every man or woman in the street, from New York to Nairobi to New Delhi, can easily understand and support.

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.

I very much hope that this Commission will provide both a fresh analysis of these issues and practical proposals that can have an impact on the ground.

There are many promising examples of this happening already, including through the Global Compact – the UN's corporate citizenship initiative bringing together companies, Governments, UN agencies, labour and civil society, with the common purpose of fostering action in support of universal values.

The United Nations Development Programme has taken the Global Compact to the local level in many countries around the world, inspiring dialogue, learning and projects. Several concrete initiatives are already taking shape.

It has also launched strategic project partnerships and ambitious initiatives such as "Growing Sustainable Business in the Least Developed Countries".

I hope that the Commission will build on these and other successful approaches, identifying how successful ones can be scaled up, and how business in partnership with other actors can bring about positive change.

There is much to be done, and it is of crucial importance that we move forward. A large part of the work for development, after all, is about preparing the ground for sufficient private sector activity to provide jobs and income needed to build a more equitable and prosperous society. I very much hope that this Commission will

make a difference in that mission.

Thank you very much.