

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan

Annan Receives Report on Private Sector and Development

1 March -- The Commission on the Private Sector and Development today presented to the Secretary-General its report, titled *Unleashing Entrepreneurship: Making Business Work for the Poor*. The report calls for targeted policy reforms and other initiatives that would spur growth in the local businesses that are critical to the eradication of poverty in the developing world.

<http://www.un.org/News/oss/sg/>

**NEW REPORT AIMS AT UNLEASHING ENTREPRENEURIAL, CREATIVE
POTENTIAL IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, SAYS SECRETARY-GENERAL
AT HEADQUARTERS LAUNCH**

March 1st, 2004

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Following are Secretary General Kofi Annan's remarks at a press briefing for the launch of the report of the Commission on the Private Sector and Development in New York, on 1 March:

I am delighted to be here with you for this launch of this report of the Commission on the Private Sector and Development. Let me first thank Commission co-chairs -- Prime Minister Paul Martin and President Ernesto Zedillo -- without whose vision and commitment we would not be here today.

Let me also thank Mark Malloch Brown and members of the Commission for their diligent efforts in preparing this report in such a short time period.

As you know, time is a critical factor in our battle against poverty and in our work to reach the Millennium Development Goals.

I am therefore heartened that the launch of the report will be followed by a plan of action and a set of initiatives, to be developed further as catalysts for action on the Commission's main recommendations. Some of these actions could be driven by the UN system; others are being initiated by our development partners and the private sector itself.

This focus on concrete steps is just what I hoped for from the Commission when it was launched less than a year ago.

In the work for development, the UN has only sporadically tapped the power that can be drawn from engaging the private sector. I therefore challenged the Commission to identify ways to engage the private sector in developing countries, with a view to unleashing its entrepreneurial and creative potential of their own people. And I am delighted that the Commission has risen to the task.

In particular, it has focused on two key areas:

First, the hopes and expectations of developing country entrepreneurs themselves, as expressed through their actions and their responses to wide-ranging surveys exploring what most affects their companies' ability to produce and grow.

Second, a broad range of good practice examples that illustrate how the capability of the private sector can be best harnessed to develop the country and to reduce poverty.

Of particular interest are examples of new and effective approaches being developed and implemented by the private sector itself -- by companies, civil society organizations, and of course, labour unions.

In this way, the Commission's work should help shed light on the capacity of the private sector to play its role, and a more central role in development, and especially in the work to reach the Millennium Development Goals.

Thus, the report in many ways complements the efforts of the Global Compact -- the UN's corporate citizenship initiative bringing together companies, non-governmental organizations and trade unions, with the common purpose of fostering action in support of universal values.

I am confident that we will be able to work closely with companies represented in the Global Compact to put the conclusions of the Commission into practice.

Decisive action will also be needed by developing country governments to remove barriers to private sector development -- including rules and regulations which impede access to finance, or block the development of human resources.

Overall, we need to build a true development coalition in which all the actors play mutually supportive roles -- governments, public development agencies, the private sector, civil society organizations and labour unions.

The UN looks forward to playing its full part in that coalition. And I look forward now to hearing more about the work of the Commission, from our co-chairs.

Prime Minister, Mr. President, I give you the floor.