

GLOBALIZATION

HOW TO SHAKE DJIBOUTI

Entrepreneurs believe they can change the world. The United Nations, it seems, is starting to agree. The newly formed Commission on the Private Sector and Development seeks to reduce the obstacles facing small businesses in developing nations—a pet project of Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Mark Malloch Brown, head of the U.N. Development Program. The group plans to release a report next month detailing how problems such as AIDS and famine fester in the absence of economic growth, which begins with entrepreneurs. “Every single country that has succeeded has done so

because of the success of its own small and medium-size business sector,” says co-chair Paul Martin, a former Canadian finance minister. Among the U.N.’s priorities: reforming civil bureaucracies, promoting microlending, and establishing basic property-ownership rights. The commission will also work closely with large domestic and multinational companies on projects in the developing world, though how this will lower barriers to entry for, say, a typical merchant in Djibouti is unclear. Indeed, only a handful of the group’s members have entrepreneurial experience; the majority are politicians and corporate types like Hewlett-Packard’s Carly Fiorina. But the participation of Ernesto Zedillo, Martin’s co-chair, is heartening. When he was president of Mexico from 1994 to 2000, an annual Kauffman Foundation study ranked the nation higher than most countries—including the U.S.—in terms of the number of start-up businesses. **Rod Kurtz**



CHANGE AGENCY: Zedillo (left), Annan, Martin, and Malloch Brown announce the formation of the commission.