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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

MESSAGE TO THE BUSINESS HUMANITARIAN FORUM

Geneva, 27 January 1999

It gives me great pleasure to convey my greetings to the first meeting of the Business Humanitarian Forum. *to go* The business community is fast becoming one of the United Nations' most important allies. I think you will agree that a fundamental shift has occurred in the UN-business relationship. *and the lead* The United Nations has developed a profound appreciation for the role of the private sector: its expertise, its innovative spirit, its unparalleled ability to create jobs and wealth. At the same time, business and industry are recognizing the many virtues of the Organization's work for political and social stability and for a predictable, rule-based environment for trade and investment. In a world of common challenges and common vulnerabilities, the United Nations and business are finding common ground.

I am particularly pleased to see the business community looking to forge even closer links with our humanitarian work in countries torn by conflict, poverty, famine or natural disaster. This is where the United Nations faces some of the most complex problems and some of the greatest despair. Typically, our activities must be carried out on several fronts at once: to promote democratic governance and effective public administration; to build and rebuild judicial systems; to clear fields of land-mines so that agriculture can resume; and to ensure the delivery of basic services and infrastructure -- roads, homes, schools, clinics, water and energy supplies.

The business community has a crucial role to play in all of this work. Indeed, the dialogue between the United Nations and the

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business community is based on the conviction that expanding markets and human security and well-being go hand in hand. That is why the Organization's doors are open to you as never before. Just last week, the United Nations launched a new website for the private sector: it is located at *www.un.org/partners* and is designed to function as a virtual enterprise liaison service -- a one-stop shop where executives can explore the potential for greater cooperation.

The tasks ahead are far from easy, nor will we succeed overnight. But together, as partners, we can do much to strengthen the pillars of peace and prosperity. In that spirit, please accept my best wishes for a successful forum.