

UNITED NATIONS



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**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**MESSAGE TO CONFERENCE ON “BUSINESS INVESTMENT  
AND HUMANITARIAN PROBLEMS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA”  
CO-SPONSORED BY THE BUSINESS HUMANITARIAN FORUM  
AND THE INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

**Delivered by Under Secretary-General Ibrahim A. Gambari,  
Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Africa**

**Paris, 6 December 2001**

It gives me great pleasure to send my greetings to this conference. I am grateful to the Business Humanitarian Forum and the International Chamber of Commerce for supporting the Global Compact initiative and for working with the United Nations to promote responsible corporate citizenship throughout the world.

Business has a clear stake in ending conflict and in alleviating the suffering caused by humanitarian emergencies. Businesses also have unique opportunities to help achieve these goals, and avoid the conditions that lead to violence. Through investment – in education, technology, infrastructure and human resources -- business can create the jobs and wealth that enable countries to overcome poverty. Through advocacy, business can promote the legal and regulatory frameworks needed for markets to take root. And through a commitment to transparency, business can set an example and break the cycle of corruption that undermines public and investor confidence.

In sub-Saharan Africa, the private sector can make an enormous difference in responding to the HIV/AIDS crisis, which has taken its place alongside the long-standing challenges of conflict and poverty. The disease has struck hardest in Africa, and in many places has become the leading obstacle to development. It has also caused business costs to expand, making AIDS a direct threat to profits and productivity. Companies can draw up effective AIDS policies and educate their work force, as some are already doing. Businesses can also integrate HIV awareness and prevention messages in marketing and public relations. And when staff are afflicted, businesses can and must support them and their families, notably by providing voluntary and confidential testing and counseling.

The United Nations welcomes the interest of the private sector in addressing pre- and post-conflict challenges. If societies are to prevent or overcome conflict and disaster, business stands to gain and should be on hand to assist. Thank you again for your support, and please accept my best wishes for a successful conference.