

BHF Newsletter

E-News for Friends of the BHF: July 2004

Honorary Co-Chairmen

George F. Russell, Jr.

The Honorable John C. Whitehead

The Business Humanitarian Forum brings the resources, energy and creativity of the private sector to bear on the world's most pressing humanitarian problems, promoting economic development, human security and well-being.

HEADLINES

- BHF Celebrates its Fifth Anniversary
- First Annual Business Humanitarian Award
- BHF Opens Field Office in Kabul
- Groundbreaking Ceremony for Afghan Generic Medicines Plant
- BHF holds Contact Group meeting with Afghan Investors at Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul
- Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Book Launch Event
- BHF Presents its Public-Private Partnership Projects at Bill Gates Foundation Program
- BHF Participates in International Training Courses in Geneva
- Website Activity

See full texts below:

BHF Celebrates its Fifth Anniversary

The Business Humanitarian Forum is five years old this year, and a reception and dinner were held on May 14 to celebrate the occasion. The reception was held at the picturesque Villa Rivebelle, on the shores of the lake near Geneva, and many of the BHF's founders and supporters were on hand. Comments were delivered by Honorary Co-Chairman George Russell, Co-founder Cornelio Sommaruga, and Executive Secretary Jean Freymond. All three were among the founders of the BHF in 1999, and have continued to be active supporters of the growing organization since that time. All comments during the reception were highly complimentary about the progress the BHF has made during this period, as well as its current and planned programs.

First Annual Business Humanitarian Award

At the BHF's Fifth Anniversary Reception the organization's first annual Business Humanitarian Award was presented to Rory O'Riordan, CEO of the Irish generic medicines company Clonmel and President of the European Generic medicines Association (EGA). Mr. O'Riordan was cited for his leadership in arranging a landmark

donation from the EGA of manufacturing equipment, training, advice and materials for the creation of generic medicines manufacturing facilities in Afghanistan. The first of these facilities, currently under construction near Kabul, will be locally owned and will provide badly-needed high quality medicines for the Afghan market. Similar facilities are planned for other major Afghan cities. The Business Humanitarian Award will be awarded annually to a business person who has provided leadership in bringing the resources, energy and creativity of the private sector to bear on humanitarian problems.

BHF Opens Field Office in Kabul

The BHF carried out a two-person mission to Afghanistan in early June, which was successful in moving a number of private sector development projects forward. Most notably, the mission established the BHF's first permanent field office in Kabul, staffed by an Afghan employee. This new local presence will permit the BHF to pursue existing projects and to capitalize more effectively, on a regular and on-going basis, on new opportunities in Afghanistan.

Groundbreaking Ceremony for Afghan Generic Medicines Plant

A groundbreaking ceremony was held on 7 June in Kabul to mark the beginning of construction of the first generic medicines plant being built under the BHF's generic medicines project for Afghanistan. The ceremony was attended by the Afghan Minister of Health, as well as Dr. Karim Baz, CEO of the new Afghan company that is developing the project, and Eleonore Kopera, Managing Director of the BHF. A dinner reception for 50 people was held the same evening to celebrate the event, and the National Afghan Television station broadcast the event on the evening news the following day.

BHF holds Contact Group meeting with Afghan Investors at Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul

The BHF organized a contact group meeting at the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul for interested Afghan investors from the private sector to discuss privatization of Afghanistan's five flourmills. Local investors are interested in taking over the flourmills, thereby ensuring proper rehabilitation and cost-effective management of the facilities. Participants at the meeting included the Deputy Minister of Light Industries, who is currently responsible for the mills, the Afghan International Bank, the Afghan International Chamber of Commerce and private investors. Keynote speakers included the Country Director of the World Food Program, a Nutrition Specialist from UNICEF, the Deputy Chief of Party of USAID's agricultural program and a private sector expert in mill construction. The meeting was a success since the Afghan investors expressed a strong interest in supporting the rehabilitation of the mills through their investments. They requested that the Afghan government decides on a privatization scheme as soon as possible, so that the repair of the facilities can be initiated. Flour constitutes a key ingredient in the Afghan diet, and both UNICEF and the Ministry of Health would like to fortify the flour with important micronutrients once the facilities are rehabilitated.

Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina

At the invitation of the UNDP Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the BHF sent a two-person Mission to that country in June to make an initial estimate of what BHF could do to help attract investment to local business opportunities. The BHF Mission met with a wide variety of interested persons and organizations, and submitted its report in July. The report analyzes the situation of opportunities in specific business sectors and regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and outlines actions to be pursued. Follow-up meetings are now being planned as this new BHF program focuses on activating potential business interest.

Book Launch event

BHF participated in a seminar and reception at the Institut de Hautes Etudes Internationales in Geneva on May 18 to mark the publication of the book "Business and Security; Public-Private Sector Relationships in a New Security Environment" published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) and the Oxford University Press. The book is based on the conference on this subject held by SIPRI in Liechtenstein in September of 2003. The agenda item of that conference on "Business and Conflict" was organized by the BHF and is reflected in a section of the new book.

BHF Presents its Public-Private Partnership Projects at Bill Gates Foundation Program

The BHF was invited by the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition, GAIN, one of the three health and nutrition related programs supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, to present its public-private partnership projects in Afghanistan to future project leaders at a training workshop. The BHF was the only organization to present concrete examples that illustrated the course's theoretical training on the methodology of building public-private partnerships. GAIN trainees were particularly interested in BHF's project to rehabilitate Afghanistan's flourmills to facilitate fortification of the flour. This will provide valuable micronutrients to children currently suffering from learning deficiencies because of a lack of such micronutrients and vitamins in their daily food basket. Participants learned from BHF's concrete examples how to build public-private partnerships effectively, and how to overcome potential obstacles and pitfalls in the process of building such partnerships.

BHF Participates in International Training Courses in Geneva

Two training modules on public-private cooperation for private sector development in post conflict and developing countries were supplied during June by BHF officials for established international training courses conducted in Geneva. These courses, given by UNITAR and Ecogia, were for mid-level national and international civil servants and diplomats. The BHF training modules focused on the benefits of dialogue and cooperation with the private sector, as well as specific techniques used for creating private sector development projects in areas where they are needed, especially post-conflict situations and very poor countries. BHF representatives used specific BHF

examples as case studies for cooperation. Invitations to the BHF to provide this component of training reflect increased recognition that engaging the private sector is a key to development, and that such engagement requires a special approach and readiness to form specific cooperative ventures with the private sector. The BHF is prepared to supply such training modules, based on its direct experience, where they are an appropriate component of existing training courses for civil servants, diplomats and NGO staff.

Website Activity

During the month of May, 2004, the BHF website (www.bhforum.org) was visited 17,653 times, for an average of over 500 visits per day. Of these, 5,302 visitors viewed our documents for an average visit length of over seven minutes. About 60% of our visitors were from the United States, and almost 40% were from other countries around the world. This reflects a dramatic increase in public interest in the BHF's activities, which we have also seen in direct contacts and inquiries from organizations and individuals.

Contact BHF

BHF personnel are available for speaking assignments on subjects related to the work of the BHF, on a mutually-convenient basis.

For further information on the BHF, please visit our website, at <http://www.bhforum.org/>

For inquiries and comments please contact the BHF at bhinfo@bhforum.org or by mail at:

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The Business Humanitarian Forum is a non-profit association registered under the laws of Switzerland. We welcome your support, which will help us to continue our work.

The Business Humanitarian Forum was established in 1999. Founders: Peter Bell, Jean Freymond, John Imle, John Maresca, Sadako Ogata, Vladimir Petrovsky, Jane and George Russell, Cornelio Sommaruga, John Whitehead and Robert Zoellick.