



# THE BUSINESS HUMANITARIAN FORUM ASSOCIATION

THE POSITIVE POTENTIAL OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR

## Press Release

New York, Geneva – March 31, 2009

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### **James Wolfensohn Receives Russell-Whitehead Business Humanitarian Award**

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**The Business Humanitarian Forum Association has presented its annual Russell-Whitehead Business Humanitarian Award to former President of the World Bank, Mr. James D. Wolfensohn, for his exemplary leadership in bringing about far-reaching institutional reforms and reshaping the Bank's approach to development. The award was conferred during a ceremony in New York on March 31 and attended by numerous heads of UN agencies, embassies as well as government and private sector representatives.**

The Business Humanitarian Forum Association (BHF), established in 1999, encourages private sector support for humanitarian efforts, and promotes sustainable economic development where it is needed most. The BHF does this by arranging for direct private sector involvement and investment in post-conflict and developing countries, and by providing training and facilitating dialogue between public organizations and private companies. The BHF has initiated and carried out several humanitarian and economic development projects in different parts of the world and has helped create partnerships between business, humanitarian agencies and local governments.

The Russell-Whitehead Business Humanitarian Award is named after the two Honorary Co-Chairmen of the BHF, Mr. George F. Russell Jr, and Mr. John C. Whitehead. The award was established in 2004 to honor an outstanding personality or organization for having made a significant contribution to facilitating private sector efforts to bring sustainable investment, job creation and economic development where they are needed most.

The 2009 award has been presented to the Ninth President of the World Bank, Mr. James D. Wolfensohn, in recognition of his leadership in adopting a much more inclusive, cooperative and decentralized decision-making process while at the same time increasing the accountability of governments to their own societies.

By redirecting the focus on the manifold aspects of poverty reduction, Mr. Wolfensohn not only put the interests of the Bank's most deprived clients first, he also spearheaded international efforts, notably the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.

At the same time he reengaged with the Bank's original mandate of post-conflict recovery and reconstruction, in the recognition that overcoming conflict and poverty requires sustained economic growth through a constructive partnership with the private sector.

The first award was presented to Mr. Rory O'Riordan, President of the European Generic Medicines Association, for his work in bringing the resources of the generic pharmaceutical sector to bear on providing essential medicines to post-conflict and developing areas. The second awardee, in 2006, was Mr. Farooq Kathwari, CEO of Ethan Allen Industries, for his humanitarian efforts relating to the problems of Kashmir. The third award was presented to the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, in honor of his exemplary work in encouraging responsible business policies and private sector support for humanitarian agencies of the United Nations.

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#### **Further information:**

More information on the Russell-Whitehead Business Humanitarian Award and the BHF can be found on [www.bhforum.org](http://www.bhforum.org) or via the BHF Secretariat in Geneva at +41 (0)22 795 18 00 or [info@bhforum.org](mailto:info@bhforum.org)