



MEDIA RELEASE

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UN Awards Bangladeshis among six honored in New York tomorrow

New York: On 30 October 2002, six people -- including two from Bangladesh -- who have dedicated their lives to the fight against poverty will be honored at the United Nations. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan will join Mark Malloch Brown, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), at the sixth annual Poverty Eradication Awards ceremony to honor the five awardees from developing countries. Also to be honored is John Demsey, President of M-A-C Cosmetics and founder of the M-A-C AIDS Fund, who will receive a Special Recognition award for his leadership in the fight against HIV/AIDS and his efforts to eradicate poverty.

The ceremony is part of a larger UNDP initiative to mark the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, which, this year on 17 October, was commemorated in nearly 100 countries throughout the world. People hosted fund-raisers for orphanages, taught special sessions in elementary schools, recited poems, organized soccer playoffs, presented concerts and simply took time out of their days to honor the global fight against poverty. This year's theme, Taking Action to Secure Earth's Future, underscores the link between environment and poverty.

The ceremony, a UNDP initiative, marks the sobering reality that there are more than one billion people living on this earth on less than US\$1 a day. The core of UNDP's mission is eliminating poverty and meeting the Millennium Development Goal of halving extreme poverty by 2015. With one out of five of the world's people living on less than a dollar a day and 56 percent of the developing world lacking the most basic sanitation, achieving this goal has never been more critical.

The awardees are recognized as outstanding examples representing the five continents where they have dedicated their lives to leading the fight against extreme poverty. Candidates were carefully evaluated and selected through UNDP's global network of country offices. This year's honorees include:

- Edi Rama, Mayor of Tirana, Albania. As mayor, Mr. Rama has taken creative approaches to urban planning and employment generation to fight the poverty that threatened to overwhelm Tirana. In 2000, Mr. Rama teamed up with UNDP to launch a project in Tirana to tackle environmental problems caused by the polluted Lana River. Through this project, Mr. Rama has been able to reduce unemployment while raising public awareness about the environment.



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- Maqsood Sinha and Iftekhar Enayetullah, Co-founders of Waste Concern in Bangladesh. In an effort to improve the incomes of poor urban communities in the capital city of Dhaka, Mr. Sinha and Mr. Enayetullah formed this non-governmental organization seven years ago to help communities transform garbage into cash through a simple technology. Through their efforts, the city's sanitary conditions have changed dramatically. Dhaka—with 10 million people—generates 4,000 tons of waste everyday and until this initiative was realized, most of the garbage was left for rot.
- Grâce Dotou, Founder/President of Qui dit Mieux in Benin. Nearly three decades ago, Ms. Dotou began organizing girls and women to collect, treat and recycle discarded plastic bags and, from them, create marketable handicrafts. In 1980 she founded Qui dit Mieux, initially a theatrical organization, which evolved in the 1990s to target young, uneducated and unemployed women, who were then trained to fashion products from recycled plastic bags. To date, 200 girls and women in the Oueme Prefecture have recycled two million plastic bags.
- Pablo Sándor, Executive Director/Co-founder of the Ayacara Foundation in Chile. Mr. Sándor, 30, has spent the last decade implementing a model for sustainable human development in a remote and poor area in southern Chile. In 1989, Mr. Sándor designed the Ayacara Project and Foundation and through them has established an environmental high school, a research station and four community micro enterprises based on local ancient traditions. UNDP is working with Mr. Sándor to replicate his methods and approaches in other parts of the world, helping to eradicate poverty and build better lives for people.
- Aref Kodeih, Founder of the Kobeyat Council for Environment in Lebanon. Mr. Kodeih has pioneered several initiatives, some of which have paved the way for new legislation to improve the local environment in the Akkar region in Northern Lebanon. Some 400,000 indigent people here are benefiting from his efforts. In 1988, Mr. Kodeih founded the Kobeyat Council for Environment whose projects have since raised environmental consciousness in many communities, highlighted issues of land degradation and launched income-generating enterprises such as eco-tourism.

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For more information on the Awards Ceremony, please contact: Trygve Olfarnes; 212-906-6606, trygve.olfarnes@undp.org. Erin Trowbridge; 212-906-5344, erin.trowbridge@undp.org

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