

Sign. Imp - Ita
T=4'50"

4 February 2002 - B

into 6

Sup. Ser

1189/c

Feb 0

TO BE 'PART OF THE SOLUTION' IN WAR AGAINST WORLD POVERTY

333 -01-1189 C sim 7

Following is the text of today's address by Secretary-General Kofi Annan to the closing session of the World Economic Forum in New York City:

It's good to be back in New York, and to find all of you here.

Even in the dark days of last September, I was confident that this great city would soon recover its traditional verve and vibrancy.

My message to you is still the same as it was in Davos last year, and even three years ago. But I believe it has gained greater urgency.

I believe this Conference offers us the best chance we have had, in many years, to unlock the financial resources that are so desperately needed for development. I believe tangible results are possible.

It is essentially up to the governments of the world to prove me right, and the sceptics wrong.

On the one hand, the Conference must strengthen and sharpen the consensus that now exists on the policies, mechanisms and institutional frameworks required, in developing countries, to mobilize domestic resources, and to attract and benefit from international private investment. In particular, there should be agreement to conclude a comprehensive international convention against corruption, providing, for example, for the repatriation of illicitly transferred funds.

But at the same time there must be real movement forward on four key issues that are of vital importance to all developing countries: trade, aid, debt, and the management of the global economy.

On trade, an event of great promise occurred in Doha last November, with the agreement to open a new round of negotiations that will address the concerns of developing countries. But so far, it is only a promise. We need results. The developed countries must negotiate in good faith, to stop flooding the world market with subsidized farm exports, to the detriment of developing countries, and to open their own markets to labour-intensive products from those countries.

Business needs enlightened partners in government, but it need not wait passively for them to appear. In many countries, the voice of business leaders plays a very important role in moulding the climate of opinion in which governments take their decisions.

And governments do indeed have a decisive role to play, in the months and years ahead, in determining whether globalization really is made to work for the poor, or whether, ~~even as it bridges geographical distance, it widens the material and psychological distance between the privileged and the powerless.~~

But even when a door is opened, you cannot walk through it without leg muscles. So, as trade barriers are removed, we must make sure that developing countries receive the assistance they need to develop their infrastructure and capacities.

It should also be the occasion for creditor countries to give a clear commitment to implement the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative fully and promptly, and indeed to go beyond it so that from now on the debts of those countries become truly sustainable. And something also needs to be done to ensure more equitable burden-sharing in financial crises involving middle-income countries, as in the recent tragic case of Argentina.

Finally, all these issues can no longer be settled in private conclave among the rich and powerful. The developing countries have as big a stake as anyone in the future of the world economy. Their views should count for something when decisions affecting it are taken. The Monterrey Conference should be the occasion for those who currently wield the greatest influence to show that they are taking this subject seriously.]

I am glad to say that many business leaders are showing a great interest in this Conference, and playing an active part in the preparations for it. I hope they will make a big effort between now and then to ensure that their governments take it equally seriously. No one is better placed than they are to refute the arguments of protectionists and penny-pinchers, making a persuasive case for genuinely open markets and more generous official assistance.

I think we all have a sense today of having come to a turning-point in history. We felt that already with the end of the cold war and the beginning of a new millennium—and then, last September, we found ourselves entering that new millennium through a gate of fire, such as none of us ever wished to see.

The forces of envy, despair and terror in today's world are stronger than many of us realized. But they are not invincible. Against them, we must bring a message of solidarity, of mutual respect and, above all, of hope. Business cannot afford to be seen as the problem. It must, working with government, and with all the other actors in society, be part of the solution.

Let that message go out today, from this stricken but indomitable city, and let us make it heard throughout the whole world.