

Press Release

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European foundations forge critical partnerships with United Nations

European foundations have dramatically increased their cooperation with the United Nations (UN), forming a strong partnership in working towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Driving this cooperation forward, Louise Fréchette, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, will speak at the European Foundation Centre's (EFC) 15th Annual General Assembly (AGA) and Conference, "Foundations for Europe: The Athens Agora - Bridging Civilisations and Cultures", to be held from May 30th - June 1st 2004 in Athens, Greece.

A key vehicle for this UN - European foundations partnership is the EFC's Europe in the World (EitW) initiative, which advocates and mobilises more leadership, resources, collaboration and knowledge-generating efforts for global development among foundations and in partnership with governments; multilateral and supranational institutions; business; and international development organisations. Amir Dossal, Executive Director of the UN Fund for International Partnerships, is a member of the EitW Steering Committee. The MDGs, along with the post-Madrid and post-September 11th challenges, act as the overarching framework of EitW.

To maximise European foundations' impact on the MDGs, EitW is now moving ahead with its core aim of persuading an ever-growing group of foundations to increase by one percent each year for the next five years the expenditure they devote to initiatives outside Europe. Some 30 EFC members already allocate more than 5 percent of their annual expenditure internationally, directly or through partnerships with international development organisations.

Within and around EitW, several cooperation initiatives between the EFC and the UN have materialised:

- The EFC Orpheus Programme, which compiles a public record and public information service on foundations throughout Europe, began working with UNAIDS in 2003 to map out European funding for the fight against HIV/AIDS. This research, which supports the work of the EFC European HIV/AIDS Funders Group, will seek to create a comprehensive picture of the status of HIV/AIDS funding in Europe.
- The UN and the EFC are working together to launch a funders network on global health issues, with the World Health Organisation playing a major role.
- For the past two years, the UN has been a member of the EFC AGA and Programme Committee, giving critical input into the shaping of the content of the world's most important gathering of European independent funders.
- The EFC International Committee is developing a structured dialogue with the UN, with UN representatives having participated in a number of International Committee meetings and events.

A number of EFC members have worked for years on specific projects with various bodies within the UN family. A major part of the EitW mandate is to better document these partnerships between European foundations and the UN. More foundation initiatives that are working for UN causes are outlined on the EitW website, www.europeintheworld.info

Foundations and the UN will begin exploring how the UN System could be used as a relay, advocacy and public affairs framework for European foundations work with the UN, and a facilitator between foundations and the governments in the countries concerned.

The EFC's cooperation with the UN took off at the 2001 EFC Annual General Assembly (AGA) and Conference – held May 20th - 23rd in Stockholm, Sweden – where Mr Dossal and Tim Wirth of the UN

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Foundation gave keynote speeches and experienced a three-day immersion in the world of European foundations.

From that beginning, a partnership arose including the EFC's dedication of one of its annual conferences to the theme of globalisation and its consequences for citizens around the world. At that conference, "Foundations for Europe: The Citizen Facing Challenges of Globalisation", held June 1st - 3rd 2003 in Lisbon, Portugal, Mark Malloch Brown of the UN Development Programme spoke of the urgent need for all actors, not least foundations, to come together to reach the MDGs. Michael Brophy of the Help for All Trust, announced the launch of the pilot phase of a new vehicle to help European foundations do their part – the EitW initiative.

The EFC is an independent international association that promotes and underpins the work of foundations and corporate funders active in and with Europe. Established in 1989 by seven of Europe's leading foundations, the EFC today serves a core membership of more than 200 members, associates and subscribers; 350 community philanthropy initiatives; as well as a further 50,000 organisations linked through a network of 58 information and support centres worldwide. The EFC hosts WINGS (Worldwide Initiatives for Grantmaker Support), a global network of some 100 grantmaker associations and support organisations.

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