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PRESS BRIEFING BY MILLENNIUM GOALS COORDINATOR

Participants in today's interactive round table on trade and poverty had agreed on the need for a level-playing field in international trade, Eveline Herfkens, Executive Coordinator of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals Campaign, said at a press conference in Sao Paulo this evening.

Reporting on the session, which she co-chaired with Hilde Johnson, Norway's Minister of International Development, she said participants had noted that the international trade rules had been set by rich countries to their own advantage and did not benefit the developing world.

She said participants had stressed the need for people in the poor countries to have access to rich-country markets, recalling that leaders from the developed world had promised that globalization would be of benefit to all. It was a means to an end rather than an end in itself.

Ms. Johnson said that the round table, which had included 13 interventions from the floor, had agreed on the need for major reforms involving the areas of international development assistance and making aid work better for trade; better governance to make it possible to lift the poor out of poverty; and greater mobilization of the private sector. While trade access was key, it was not enough on its own to reduce poverty. There was a need for trade, as well as aid, rather than trade instead of aid.

Asked whether the wealthy nations had shown any interest in changing the international trading rules, Ms. Herfkens said she had seen increasing interest in Europe, where there was a growing awareness of the impact of agricultural and trade policies on poor countries.

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