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SECRETARY-GENERAL, ADDRESSING PARTICIPANTS AT MILLENNIUM FORUM, CALLS FOR INTENSIFIED 'NGO REVOLUTION'

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Following is the text of Secretary-General Kofi Annan's keynote address to the Millennium Forum, delivered this morning:

I am delighted to welcome you all to the United Nations. Warm greetings also to those watching in Geneva, Nairobi, Vienna, Buenos Aires, Chicago -- and on the Web.

The sight of so many of you in the General Assembly chamber this morning is living proof of your commitment to work with the United Nations and governments to make the world a better place.

Not only do you bring to life the concept of "We, the Peoples", in whose name our United Nations Charter was written; you bring to us the promise that "people power" can make the Charter work for all the world's peoples in the twenty-first century.

In some circles of late, non-governmental organizations have acquired a bad name. Barely had the pepper fog settled over the Seattle protests before NGOs were branded as confrontational or even contrarian, disruptive or even destructive, anti-technology or even anti-progress.

Those labels overlook the pioneering role of NGOs on a range of vital issues, from human rights to the environment, from development to disarmament. We in the United Nations know that during the cycle of world conferences of the last decade, it was you who set the pace on many issues. You did that through advocacy and through action; by pressuring governments and by working with governments as partners and implementers.

We know that the NGO revolution was made possible by something you also understood before governments did: how to use to your advantage the tools of the information revolution. Communications technology has enabled you to connect and interact across

almost all frontiers. You have understood that problems without passports require blueprints without borders.

We can in fact safely say that the NGO revolution is one of the happier consequences of what has come to define our age: globalization. But while globalization has given you new tools, it has also stirred deep anxieties.

I personally witnessed that in Seattle. Though the meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) may not have been the appropriate forum to do it, I think

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the protesters were sending a message that many people feel lost and vulnerable in this fast-changing world -- that we need to reach out and explain to them the link between the local and the global.

In the world of the twenty-first century, not only people and nations are interconnected; issues are too.

And so just as each NGO has understood the need for global action to advance its particular cause, so many of you are starting to look beyond the single issue -- however big it may be -- to the bigger and more complex reality we live in today; to the link between the local and the global.

I also believe that whatever cause you champion, the cure does not lie in protesting against globalization itself. I believe the poor are poor not because of too much globalization, but because of too little -- because they are not part of it, because they are excluded.

I believe the overarching challenge of our times is to make globalization mean more than bigger markets. To make a success of this great upheaval we must learn how to govern better, and -- above all -- how to govern better together. We must learn to govern with the voice of the peoples, with a view to meeting the needs of peoples.

If there is a lesson to be learned from recent experience, it is that while globalization has produced winners and losers, the solution is not confrontation. It is not to make winners of the losers and losers of the winners.

It is to ensure that nobody sinks, but that we swim together with the current of our times. The way forward, I would venture, is for State and non-State actors to work together to address the challenges and consequences of globalization.

Whether your concern be the advancement of women or education, humanitarian assistance or health -- a prerequisite for its success is to spread the benefits of globalization more widely. Whether you are active in policy-setting or field work, in the

developed or the developing world, the continuing exclusion of whole regions from the global economy will frustrate your success.

Billions of people are currently marginalized. Until they become part of the new global community, you will not be able to reach them, to help them, or to mobilize them.

But it is within our power to extend the new opportunities to all. We must now summon the will.

You probably already know that I have asked Member States to make this their priority when they gather at the Millennium Summit in September.

You may already have read the Millennium Report I have presented to them ahead of the Summit, sketching out an action plan under the headings of "freedom from want", "freedom from fear", "sustaining our future" and "renewing the United Nations". Today, I am asking you NGOs to be both leaders and partners: where necessary, to lead and inspire governments to live up to your ideals; where appropriate, to work with governments to achieve their goals.

For although my Report is a way of challenging governments, it is equally a report to all of you. That is why it is called "We the Peoples". And while I am here to ask you to urge your elected leaders to embrace this action plan, I am also here to urge you to help me translate the goals of the Millennium Report into practice. You have succeeded brilliantly in encouraging States to set and accept new norms of international behaviour. Now we need to see those norms implemented.

There is much you can do. Let me give you just a few examples.

You can work at the international level to lift billions out of poverty by helping them participate in the global economy. Governments hold the key to opening their markets to the products of poor countries. They also hold the key to unlocking the shackles of debt and thereby freeing up resources for development in poor countries. They can also address the decline in official development assistance and target their aid more effectively.

Your continued advocacy on these three vital issues can go a long way in encouraging governments to make the right choices on behalf of the world's poor. And your work as implementing partners can ensure that those policy choices have a real impact on people's daily lives.

You can support the "Global Compact" that I proposed last year, challenging business to enact a set of core values in the areas of labour standards, human rights and the environment.

This initiative has been endorsed by a wide variety of business associations, labour groups and non-governmental organizations. By the summer, I hope to announce the first business leaders who are joining us to make the Global Compact an everyday reality.

The Global Compact allows all non-State actors to rally around common goals and to advance the implementation of universal values which governments have signed on to, but which are far from universally or uniformly practised on the ground.

By supporting it, you would help give global markets what they have been lacking so far -- social and environmental pillars. You would help create a market that is not a jungle where the strongest prevail, but a place of opportunity guided by social, environmental and human rights imperatives that apply to all.

You can help us bridge the digital divide, which at present is excluding whole regions from the benefits of information technology. Half the human race has yet to make or receive a phone call, let alone use a computer. Less than one per cent of all Africans have used the Internet.

That means that billions of people are not only deprived of a vital tool for development; they are also left out of your networks for change. These billions are not only your constituents; empowered by technology, they could be potential agents for advancing your cause.

To work for their inclusion, you can join one of the digital bridges initiatives announced in my Millennium Report, such as UNITEs -- the United Nations Information Technology Service.

This consortium of high-tech volunteers will train groups in developing countries in the uses and opportunities of information technology, and stimulate the creation of additional digital corps in the North and South. We are currently exploring external sources of funding, equipment and computer-savvy people to support UNITEs. You, who have already used information technology so effectively to your advantage, are surely well placed to share this skill with others.

You can use this and other skills to join the United Nations open partnership to educate girls, one of the priorities in my Report. As study after study has demonstrated, there is no more effective tool of social, economic or health policy than the education of girls. For our initiative to succeed, it needs your expertise, your energy and your expansive reach. Many NGOs have already made remarkable contributions towards girls' education in individual countries, and this year you have launched your own global alliance for universal basic schooling.

Surely such worldwide alliances among like-minded NGOs, which have already proved so successful on issues like debt relief and the International Criminal Court, are the shape of things to come -- on a much wider scale and on a more continuous basis. They make you an effective force for dealing with governments, and with us in the United Nations;

they allow you to expand your capabilities and your reach. I hope they will enable you to make a real difference on many broad issues in the future. One such issue is the illicit traffic in small arms.

This scourge of modern warfare is not only a security concern; it is a threat to human rights, development and good governance. Next year, the United Nations will convene the first conference on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons -- to which I hope civil society organizations will be invited to participate fully.

Alliances can help you work with us towards our stated goal of halting, and beginning to reverse, the spread of HIV/AIDS among young people.

We look to you to speak up on behalf of the men, women and children affected by this epidemic; to keep spreading the message of awareness and prevention; to insist on transparency and accountability from governments and from international organizations. I have challenged leaders around the world to break the conspiracy of silence that surrounds the epidemic in some countries. I have urged them to understand that silence is death.

You can continue to build on your successes in worldwide campaigns to strengthen multilateral norms and build legal regimes by pressuring governments to sign and ratify international treaties and conventions. Once they are ratified, you can help implement the norms they contain.

Since the birth of the United Nations, we have seen the conclusion of more than 500 multilateral conventions which, taken together, form a comprehensive legal framework for a better world.

The Millennium Summit will provide special facilities for governments to add their signatures to any treaty or convention of which I, as Secretary-General, am the depositary. I have written to governments ahead of the Summit to encourage them to make use of this opportunity. These treaties voice the concerns and dreams of the world's peoples, and have the potential to improve their daily lives. Here too, I look to all of you to do what you do so well: galvanize governments into action by demanding that the reasons of state answer to the voice of the people.

Whatever voice you use to answer the demands of this complex age, common to them all is this: by translating your concerns into collective action, you will be heard more loudly. By working through consensus rather than confrontation, you will be involved more closely. By forging alliances rather than risk competition, you will pool your resources more effectively. By looking beyond special interests to the common interest, by making the connection between the local and the global, you will make a difference more widely.

With a strong and united voice, you can help us make globalization work in favour of all the world's peoples: you can work to implement the globalization of solidarity.

That is what my Millennium Report is asking governments to do, and I hope that is what it will do. And that is the promise of global "people power" we see brought to life in this Chamber today. For if it takes only one person in a room full of people to create a majority, then surely you will become the new superpower. I, for one, will work to ensure that our other partners in the international community listen to you very carefully.

I thank you all for listening to me; for being here; and above all, for making this Millennium year, 55 years after the birth of our United Nations, the time when "we the peoples" have the chance to find common ground again. I very much look forward to hearing the outcome of your deliberations.

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