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10th Session of UNIDO General Conference 1 – 5 December, 2003 focus on need to improve productivity in developing countries

Carlos Magarinos, Director-General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the UN Agency specializing in increasing the productivity of industry in developing countries, said the tenth session of the organization's General Conference will be one of the most important ones it has held in recent years and will be going much deeper into substantive issues than it has in the past.

The General Conference, which is UNIDO's main governing body, will also be marked by the attendance of more high-level delegates than most at UNIDO can remember. Among delegates will be President Xanana Gusmao of Timor-Leste, President Ravalomanana of Madagascar, President Museveni of Uganda, Prime Minister Sumaye of Tanzania and no less than 50 Ministers.

General Conference number 10 will feature an Industrial Development Forum on *The Role of Industrial Development in the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals*, comprising six roundtables on poverty, trade, post conflict reconstruction, investment, environment, and transition in Eastern Europe.

Outstanding personalities, like Mr. Jeffrey Sachs, Professor and Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University and Special Advisor to the United Nations Secretary-General; Mr. Rubens Ricupero, Secretary-General of UNCTAD; Mr. Alan Bryden, Secretary-General of ISO; Ms. Danuta Hubner, Minister of European Affairs of Poland; Mr. V. Khoroshkovsky, Minister for Economics and European Integration of Ukraine; and many others will take part in the discussions.

Director-General Magarinos has been campaigning for a number of years for a new development agenda, "built not on the rejection of the current one, but on the realization that its chief elements: macroeconomic stability; trade liberalization; good governance; have not brought about productivity gains that translate into social benefits", to quote from his book on the subject.

"The need for tangible and lasting social benefits is most apparent in post-conflict reconstruction. And over recent years there has been a growing recognition of the fact that stopping conflict is only a small part of the story. In many countries conflict has become an integral part of the economy. For peace to last, a private sector that can establish viable industries that provide productive employment has to be nurtured", said Director-General Magariños.

"But the need for a vibrant private sector is not confined to the extreme case of post conflict economies", the Director-General continued, "Achieving sustained productivity gains is a first-order priority for the developing world. The continuity of reform processes depends on it. The reason is straightforward - without such gains it is impossible to raise the standard of living of the population at large and avoid undermining the popular consensus that is required for reform programmes to succeed - or, even worse, risking a growing consensus against such programmes, as a result of the ensuing disappointment".

More information on the 10th session of UNIDO's General Conference is at <http://www.unido.org/gc/>.