



Initiatives of Change - International *Initiatives et Changement -International*

Press release

Genève, 1 December 2006

Mohamed Sahnoun, new President of Initiatives of Change- International

Cornelio Sommaruga hands over the Presidency of the *Initiatives of Change – International Association (IofC)* to Mohamed Sahnoun on 1 January 2007.

The Association was created in 2002 to federate different national bodies of *Initiatives of Change* around the world and represent them at the UN and other international organisations.

Cornelio Sommaruga took over the Presidency of the Swiss *Caux Foundation* at the end of his mandate as the head of the *International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)* in 2000. Following the change of name from '*Moral Re-Armament*' to '*Initiatives of Change*' in 2001, he initiated the creation of the *International Association*, based in Switzerland. Sommaruga brought a new visibility to the movement and his great humanity helped in bridging differences to enhance the Association's reconciliation and peace-building efforts in the Great Lakes region of Central Africa, Sierra Leone, and other situations.

Mohamed Sahnoun is currently UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Special Adviser on developments in the Horn of Africa region. He has had a distinguished diplomatic career that included Deputy Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and Deputy Secretary-General of the League of Arab States in charge of the Africa-Arab dialogue. He served as Algeria's Ambassador to Germany, France, the United States and Morocco, as well as the United Nations.

As the new President of the *Initiatives of Change – International Association* Mohamed Sahnoun brings a vast knowledge of the developing world and a commitment to peace-making. He was co-chair of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty and was a member of the World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission), which produced the report 'Our Common Future'.

Initiatives of Change is a diverse, global network active in 60 countries and formally incorporated in 39 countries, on every continent, committed to building trust across the world's divides. It comprises people of diverse cultures, beliefs and backgrounds who are committed to transforming society through change in individuals and relationships. It was first known as The Oxford Group, arising from its work among university students in the late 1920s. In 1938, as European nations re-armed military, its originator, Frank Buchman, called for 'moral and spiritual rearmament' as the way to build a 'hate-free, fear-free, greed-free world'.

Following World War II, *Moral Re-Armament (MRA)* launched a programme of moral and spiritual reconstruction to foster change in private and public life based on a change in motivation and character. It played a part in the reconciliation between France and Germany. During the 1950s it worked for teamwork in industry and assisted the process of decolonisation in many countries. It continues to work for reconciliation between racial and religious groups and in the struggle for the rights of indigenous peoples. More recently, it has been involved in the emerging democracies of Central and Eastern Europe and in the quest for 'good governance' particularly in India, Africa and the Pacific. National bodies are financed by individual gifts and by foundations, and for certain specific programmes, by institutional grants.

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NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) and in Participatory Status at the Council of Europe.

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