

**A Conference
on
PEACE THROUGH COMMERCE
Partnerships As The New Paradigm**

**University of Notre Dame
November 12-14, 2006**

At the founding of the UN in 1945, political and business leaders as well as scholars shared the conviction that commerce could play an important role in fostering peace. Half a century later, with the emergence of the interlocking global economy and the enormous new reach of business, the business community faces new challenges in its engagement with societies emerging from conflict.

While business still retains its core responsibilities of creating jobs and wealth and thus contributing to poverty alleviation, under the rubric of global corporate citizenship, business is increasingly developing new policies and practices aimed at promoting human rights, preventing violent conflict, and contributing to more peaceful societies. A prominent forum for such efforts is the United Nations Global Compact, a new initiative (started in 2000) intended to increase and to diffuse the benefits of global economic development through voluntary corporate policies and actions. Over 2,000 businesses have already signed on as participants.

Commitment to these goals has brought businesses into new collaborative relationships with an unlikely partner: non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In places such as Sri Lanka, Kosovo, Nigeria, and Mexico, NGOs and private firms are combining their unique capacities and strengths to provide an important new avenue for achieving social development.

To be sure, this new paradigm is not without its problems. This may appear to be a marriage of convenience or perhaps even an attempt to mix oil and water. Some of these issues have surfaced in debates over NGO participation in the Global Compact; several NGOs have actively participated as members of the Compact to promote change, even as others vigorously denounced it. Yet there is evidence that, at their best, such partnerships can yield positive results for developing countries while at the same time fulfilling the goals of the participating partners.

This conference will be keynoted by Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations (subject to UN schedule) and will bring together academics, corporations, NGOs and government leaders to explore the characteristics of successful partnerships. It seeks to advance the understanding of the role of business in society and to encourage new and more effective partnerships. The conference also hopes to lay the foundation for new courses in business schools on Peace Through Commerce.

The conference is being convened by AACSB International—The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, the United Nations Global Compact Office, the Center for Ethics and Religious Values in Business of the Mendoza College of Business at the University of Notre Dame, and the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies of the University of Notre Dame.