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UNIDO and METRO Group to cooperate on combating hunger in developing countries and economies in transition

VIENNA/DÜSSELDORF, 9 December 2009 – Promoting social and economic development in developing countries and economies in transition is the aim of the strategic partnership signed between the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the METRO Group, one of the world's largest retailing companies.

The agreement, which focuses on joint projects that will help develop better food standards and therewith combat hunger, was signed today in Vienna by UNIDO Director-General, Kandeh K. Yumkella, and Eckhard Cordes, CEO of METRO Group.

“Developing the capacity of suppliers along supply chains and upgrading them in terms of quality, safety and compliance with market requirements will help them access domestic markets and in a further step export markets, which, in turn, will generate new jobs and higher income in developing countries.” said Yumkella.

“This form of partnership will take our highly successful model of supplier qualification to a new level. One key aspect is that the farmers and producers can also sell their products; this in turn benefits the population. This way you effectively help the people,” said Cordes.

UNIDO and METRO are already working together in Egypt, upgrading suppliers in food safety issues thus allowing them to comply with international quality standards under the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) scheme. The project will also enable farmers and small and medium-size businesses to market their products nationally and in a further step at the international level. Further joint projects are planned for Kazakhstan, Pakistan and India.

The wholesale division Metro Cash & Carry is the partner of local producers: Metro Cash & Carry sources up to 90 percent of its merchandise locally and also resells it locally – for example to hotels, restaurants and small retailers. Metro Cash & Carry also supports and strengthens the existing infrastructure in terms of food safety, improving the livelihood of many people.

“The cooperation is a first important step to facilitate a healthy and regular nutrition for thousands of people,” said Cordes. Cooperation between UNIDO and METRO Group is deliberately not exclusive and open for other partners to join. The existing projects are to be continued unchanged.

Since 2002, METRO Group, and in particular its wholesale division Metro Cash & Carry, has been actively working on improving the food standards in developing countries and economies in transition. It has trained tens of thousands of farmers and suppliers on quality, hygiene and cooling chain issues. In Vietnam and India, the sales division launched training programmes for farmers and fishermen. In India, 40,000 shepherds and 1,150 fishermen have been trained and 1 million sheep vaccinated. Similar projects are managed by METRO Group in China and Pakistan.

“With METRO Group, we found a responsible partner for whom sustainability is a core priority. METRO Group not only has a longstanding experience in qualifying suppliers but also offers local producers a reliable outlet for their products,” said Yumkella. METRO Group is the first partner of UNIDO in international retailing.

The joint activities between the METRO Group and UNIDO are a great opportunity to give economic growth a distinct inclusive edge. The entire chain of small growers and producers directly benefit from globalization by enhancing their knowledge and improving their deliveries. Customers have better, safer products, and the retailer can rely on a network of local resources in order to supply the people in the local community with local products. Through the increased demand for locally-produced goods, the joint activities clearly stimulate the local economy and help to combat hunger. At the same time, they already have a huge impact on the wellbeing of farmers and small and medium-size businesses, as well as their employees and families.

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Note for editors

UNIDO is a specialized agency of the United Nations system that works towards improving the quality of life of the world's poor by helping countries achieve sustainable industrial development. UNIDO views industrial development as a means of creating employment and income to overcome poverty. It helps developing countries and economies in transition to produce goods they can trade on the global market. It also helps provide the tools – training, technology, and investment – to make them competitive. At the same time, it encourages production processes that will neither harm the environment nor place too heavy a burden on a country's limited energy resources. UNIDO has 173 Member States and has its headquarters in Vienna, Austria. See also www.unido.org

METRO Group is one of the largest and most important international retailing companies. In 2008 the Group reached sales of € 68 billion. The company has a headcount of some 300,000 employees and operates around 2,100 stores in 33 countries. The Group's performance is based on the strength of its sales divisions which operate independently in their respective market segment: Metro/Makro Cash & Carry – the international leader in self-service wholesale, Real hypermarkets, Media Markt and Saturn – European market leader in consumer electronics retailing, and Galeria Kaufhof department stores. More information at: www.metrogroup.de