

FINAL AS DELIVERED

Ad Melkert Remarks

Appointment of Maria Sharapova GWA

February 14, 2007

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On behalf of the UNDP and on behalf of the entire UN family, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have joined us here today at the United Nations for this special occasion. For some of you it may be the first time you have visited this historic building, as also the case for Maria who visited the General Assembly and Security Council. I would like to extend a warm personal welcome to you.

We are here today because of the generosity of Maria Sharapova. I would like to thank you, Maria, for dazzling us with your tennis skills and now, for helping us in our work to make a difference in the lives of the poorest people around the world. We are proud to have you as the newest member of our family and honored- in just a few minutes - to call you the newest global UNDP Goodwill Ambassador.

UNDP currently is lucky enough to have 5 other UNDP Goodwill Ambassadors. They are Misako Konno, the famous actress from Japan, HRH Haakon Crown Prince of Norway, and the three soccer players Ronaldo de Lima, Zinedine Zidane, and Didier Drogba. The mission of our Goodwill Ambassadors is to rally support for our campaign against poverty by making pro-bono public service announcements and doing other activities to galvanize global support for the fight against poverty, like the Match Against Poverty organized by Ronaldo and Zidane. Additionally, they each make at least one field visit per year to call attention to some of the poorest areas in the world. Importantly, they do this in their spare time and they pay for all of the costs.

While Ms. Sharapova will focus on global issues in her role as Goodwill Ambassador, we are pleased that she will also have a special focus on Chernobyl recovery and development efforts in a region often lacking in resources and a region with special personal significance for Ms. Sharapova. I was fortunate to have visited this region last April on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Chernobyl incident and saw first-hand the acute needs of the affected areas. I also witnessed the great work the UN is doing on the ground to help communities rediscover their former lives. I'm sure it will be extremely encouraging for the people there that you will also be there - working with them towards their future with the help of the UN.

In addition to this generous gift, her special interest in young people, responsible choices, and healthy lifestyles make Maria the ideal role model not only for people in the region but really for young people everywhere. Her strength and determination will only add to our determination to face the challenges we address every day around the world to fight poverty.

The challenges we face now in the world are very serious, and they are daunting. As we approach the half-way mark to the Millennium Development Goals, it is clear that, while

we have made progress - we need to rally all of our allies around the world if we hope to achieve them. We struggle with the knowledge that 1 billion people do not even have access to a glass of drinkable water and 2 billion people do not have access to electricity. Therefore, we must work with the private sector, with foundations, with individuals like Maria Sharapova who have the talent and commitment to join us.

Maria has demonstrated she is the best in the world in tennis. I have no doubt she will help to make us the best in the world in helping developing countries and people achieve their goals, a more decent life, more fairness, and more equality.

With that I am very happy to have Maria. Sharapova sign this Letter of Designation – which must be for the smallest amount of money she has ever signed for, one dollar a year.

I now present to you, on behalf of UNDP, this diploma. You are now part of the family.

