



United Nations Development Programme

PRESS RELEASE

MARIA SHARAPOVA IS APPOINTED UNDP GOODWILL AMBASSADOR

Tennis star donates US\$100,000 to eight Chernobyl recovery projects in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine

New York, 14 February 2007—At a ceremony today at United Nations headquarters, the world's top-ranked women's tennis player, Maria Sharapova, was appointed a Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). At the same time, Sharapova announced a donation of \$100,000 to UNDP Chernobyl-recovery projects.

“UNDP works around the world making a positive difference in people's lives, and I am proud to add my personal commitment to its work,” said Sharapova, who will serve in her new role to rally support for the global campaign against poverty. “UNDP's efforts in the fight against poverty are crucial for young people everywhere to achieve their potential. I am looking forward to working with UNDP.”

Sharapova's work with UNDP will include promoting international efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Adopted by 189 countries in 2000, the Goals are clear, time-bound targets for achieving measurable improvements in the lives of the world's poorest people. They aim at eradicating poverty, putting children in schools, promoting women's rights, fighting killer diseases, and providing access to safe drinking water. UNDP is working to help countries around the world achieve these goals by 2015.

“UNDP is very proud to welcome Ms. Sharapova as our Goodwill Ambassador,” said Ad Melkert, UNDP's Associate Administrator and UN's Under-Secretary-General. “She is a role model for young people who face challenging conditions in life. She is already building on her success as a top athlete to create concrete opportunities for disadvantaged young people to improve their lives.”

At the ceremony, Sharapova announced a \$100,000 contribution to eight youth-oriented projects in rural communities in Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine that still suffer the after-effects of the Chernobyl disaster of 1986.

Sharapova's donation from the newly created Maria Sharapova Foundation will fund projects aimed at improving computer access, promoting ecological awareness, and restoring sports facilities and hospitals in the three countries most affected by Chernobyl. These projects complement a broad portfolio of UN work helping Chernobyl-affected

communities regain a sense of self-sufficiency, build new livelihoods, and bring a once-blighted region back to life.

“My first step is to focus on the Chernobyl-affected region, where my family has roots,” said Sharapova. “Today, it is poverty and lack of opportunities that pose the greatest threat for young people in the Chernobyl region.”

“UNDP is especially pleased that Ms. Sharapova is targeting a region that is often overlooked by donors,” concluded Melkert. “We know that community-recovery projects of the sort that she has targeted for her generous donation hold great promise.”

Maria Sharapova joins an elite group of UNDP Goodwill Ambassadors, which includes soccer stars Ronaldo of Brazil, Zinedine Zidane of France, and newly appointed Didier Drogba of Cote d’Ivoire; Japanese actress Misako Konno; and Crown Prince Haakon Magnus of Norway.

She was born on 19 April, 1987 in Nyagan, Siberia, after her family fled the city of Gomel in Belarus in the wake of the Chernobyl accident. The family lived in Nyagan for 2 years and then moved to the Black Sea town of Sochi. In 1995, Sharapova left Russia and became a full-time student at IMG’s Nick Bolletieri Tennis Academy. She made her first WTA tournament appearance in 2002. In 2004 she won her first Grand Slam title at Wimbledon and was named WTA player of the year. In 2006 she won the U.S. Open. She is currently ranked No. 1 in the world.

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