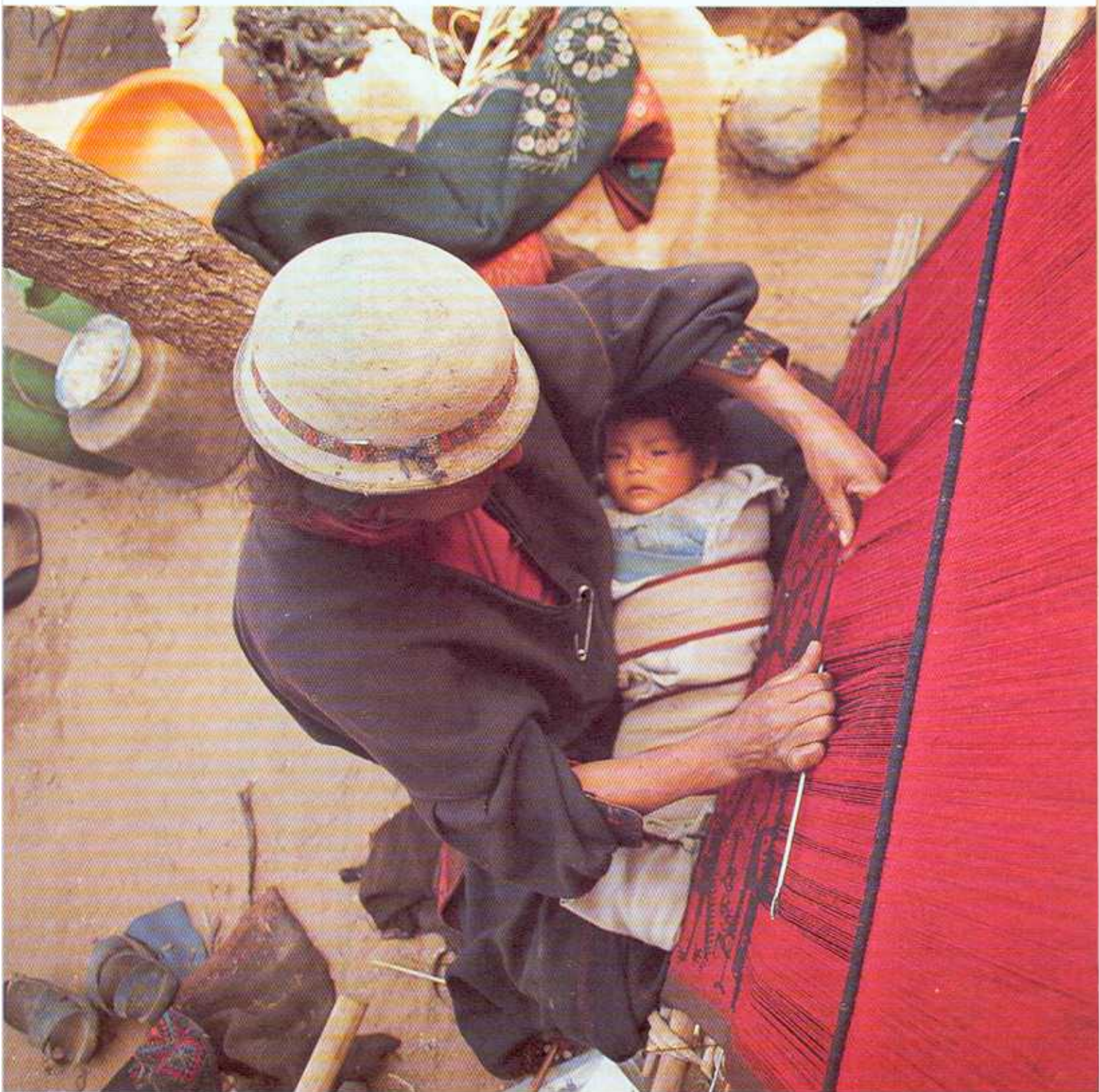


# *A New Agenda*

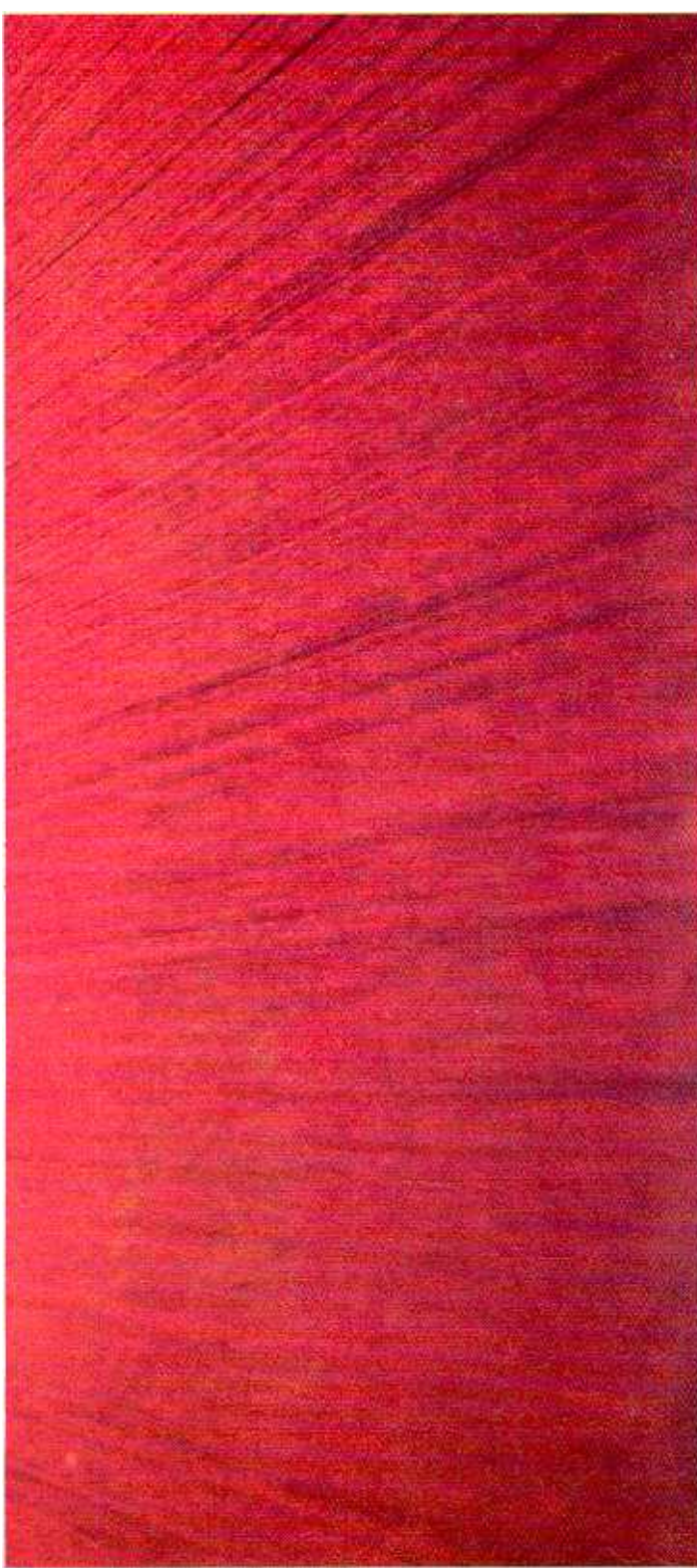


**Employment is moving in the direction of household enterprises and small private firms and cooperatives.**  
*A Bolivian weaver at work.*



## *~ responsibilities of the corporate sector*

- *Corporate citizenship*
- *Sustainable development*
- *New partnerships*
- *Responsible investment*



**D**ownsizing and lay-offs continue even as corporate performance improves...stock prices gyrate wildly irrespective of supply and demand of goods and services...global currency markets are in upheaval...population growth and civil unrest are creating a litany of social problems...cities around the world are in trouble...the burden of national debt rises around the world."

At a time of unprecedented change and upheaval in the world, business managers are frequently uncertain as to where their responsibilities lie. On the one hand, business leaders are encouraged to become 'good corporate citizens' and direct their companies' significant resources towards addressing and solving social problems. On the other hand, the financial and competitive pressures on them are stronger than ever before. In what London Business School's Charles Handy calls 'the age of paradox' what, if anything, are a business's social obligations? And how have these obligations evolved over time?

To these queries, there exist two opposed viewpoints that have been argued back and forth for years. The traditional response has been that business's sole responsibility is to make a profit – and thus business has no social obligations. To justify and prove this view, economists and business leaders refer to the works of Adam Smith, Milton Friedman and others. At the other end of the spectrum is the view that business has purposely exploited and destroyed the system in a selfish attempt to maximize profits at the expense of society.

A more accurate interpretation of the social obligation of business is a path between these two extremes. What results is neither a condemnation of business nor an attack on profit-making. Rather, what emerges is a fresh and enlightened understanding of both economics and the purpose of business in our globalized society. The shift in thinking which will occur is that one cannot separate the social obligations of business from the financial, ethical or management obligations – it is all part of the whole package. As such it is not a question as to whether or not business has social obligations because, quite clearly, all institutions in society have social obligations. The choice for business becomes whether to address their social obligations proactively through such innovations as public-private partnerships, privatization efforts and the creation of pollution rights markets, or passively and reactively, via taxes, fines and other regulatory requirements.

Business functions by public consent and its basic purpose is to serve, constructively, the needs of society – to the satisfaction of society not merely to maximize profits. This fundamental shift in the view and understanding of the purpose of business has profound implications on how business is managed and perceived. Additionally, this definition presents a very different set of expectations for shareholders and stakeholders of corporations. Keeping this definition in mind, most would agree that the social order is imbalanced. A greater affluence for a small group of individuals amid a deteriorating environment and decaying community life just does not make sense. Indeed, the sluggishness of social progress is producing rising criticism from all major institutions in society: government, schools, churches, as well as business. In this context, companies are undergoing the most searching public scrutiny. Certainly, statistics show that the majority of the public think that corporations have not been sufficiently concerned about the problems society faces. Two-thirds believe business now has a moral obligation to help achieve progress in society even at the expense of profitability.

So business is being asked to contribute more to the quality of life than just supplying quantities of goods and services and, inasmuch as it exists to serve society, the future of business will depend on its sensitivity to the changing demands of the

consumer. It is, after all, in the interests of business to enlarge its markets and improve its workforce by helping disadvantaged people to develop into customers and workers and to fulfil their economic potential. Likewise, it is in the direct self-interest of companies to help reduce the mounting costs of welfare, crime, disease and homelessness, for much of the cost of these maladies is placed on business through higher taxation rates and increasing expenditures on security. It is therefore not unreasonable to suggest that if business does not accept a fair measure of responsibility for social improvement, then the interests of the corporation may actually be jeopardized.

### **Public-private partnership**

One of the significant outcomes of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro was the agreement that business was given a role in shaping the new agenda and a responsibility for making it happen – both in its own everyday operations, by moving towards eco-efficient processes and products, as well as in consort with the public sector in addressing specific problems on the ground. A stable policy regime enables and encourages business and industry to operate responsibly and efficiently and implement long-term policies.

There has also been a fundamental shift in the way governments perceive the role of private capital in economic development, especially foreign investment. More and more state economies are abandoning central planning as a way of bringing prosperity to the economy at large. Foreign investment is now looked upon as the engine of growth and the agent of advancement.

Transnational corporations are playing a central role in this change. Since the 1970s, economic growth has been increasingly associated with new technologies rather than with the use of such natural resources as energy and minerals. Production has become less materials-intensive and more skill- and technology-intensive. New communication technologies are inducing a far greater degree of economic internationalization than was previously possible. Transnational corporations and their global strategies are a major vehicle for transfer and diffusion of technology in developing countries.



The widespread liberalization and the internationalization of production has accorded greater freedom to business. More freedom also means more responsibility, including social responsibility. The term 'good corporate citizen' suggests that the transnational corporations have an obligation to act as responsible members of societies that grant them legal standing. True, business cannot redress every social ill and thus substitute for the government's role, but businesses are increasingly adopting their own codes of conduct. Among them, those relating to employment and human resources development are particularly pronounced. Basic terms of employment are governed by local laws. But corporate standards can impart norms that are considered to be desirable from an international perspective. Elimination of child labour and forced labour by prisoners is an example of where the global production system has positively imposed values on national standards. Both in hiring practices and in treatment of workers, social responsibility standards could be expected to prohibit discrimination on the basis of such factors as race, sex, religion or ethnicity. The challenge is in instituting this where discrimination is legally sanctioned or socially entrenched, setting in motion a ripple reaction that goes far beyond the immediate domain of the factories.

It is generally agreed that the workforce directly employed by transnational corporations enjoys superior wages and benefits relative to the conditions prevailing in local firms. Business has accepted the tenet that a well-trained and well-motivated workforce is an invaluable asset. Therefore going beyond the minimal compliance with the local labour laws to provide better working conditions, imparting better training and better health care facilities is in its own self-interest. This, in turn, facilitates improvement of the infrastructure and transfer of technology to developing countries. In a similar vein, corporations are increasingly taking steps to reduce their adverse effects on the environment and to put in place effective environmental management. This is a positive sign that business has come to recognize the fragility of the environment and the eco-systems. Forestry companies are instituting policies to regenerate tree species if only out of self-interest. Mining and chemical companies are taking steps to clean up the environment. The cost of achieving higher-than-necessary compliance with

environmental guidelines is viewed as a form of insurance, a reserve against changing public opinion and social values.

Agribusiness can often be a significant creator of seasonal jobs and improve self-employment opportunities among the rural poor. Plantation-based, vertically-integrated marketing systems dominated by transnational corporations can increase rural employment opportunities for many of the landless poor in a number of developing countries. Contract farming arrangements in the cultivation of labour-intensive crops can increase the returns of smallholders in certain developing countries.

Human resource development is also central to economic growth and development. Human capital created through investment in education and the development of skills emerges as one of the most significant factors not only of economic development but also of international competitiveness. But building up a stock of human capital requires more than just public investment in education. Specialized training is fundamental to the creation of sustainable competitiveness advantage. The business community is in an excellent position to judge priorities in skill formation and therefore has an important complementary role to play in the provision of education and training.

To understand why big businesses, and transnational corporations in particular, wield such an influence, one need only look at the reach of transnational corporations across national boundaries.

The universe of transnational corporations is now estimated to comprise about 37,000 parent firms which control over 200,000 foreign affiliates worldwide. The top hundred transnational corporations now hold about \$3.4 trillion in global assets, about \$1.3 trillion of which is held outside of their respective home countries. Foreign affiliates generated sales of more than \$4.8 trillion in 1991, slightly more than world exports of goods and non-factor services. Transnational corporations are estimated to employ around 73 million people directly and control some one-third of world output. The number of jobs created by them indirectly is much greater – estimated to be around 150 million.









## *The role of the United Nations*

As the UN agency charged with accelerating and coordinating industrialization, the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) has played a part in encouraging multinationals and foreign investors to invest their capital in the South.

The agency overrode doubts about the benefits of multinational investment in the South, and, in 1978, created a worldwide network of investment offices – in close cooperation with the World Bank – to help open the doors to foreign investors. In 1986, when UNIDO was transformed into a specialized agency of the UN, its mandate was broadened to include working with the private – as well as with the public and cooperative – sectors of industry.

The guiding principle behind UNIDO's approach to investment is to develop the most effective channel for transferring know-how, managerial expertise, market access and manufacturing capacities to developing nations, while providing local sponsors with reliable overseas partners. Through its World Investment Network Service (WINS), UNIDO links businesses around the world and swaps country data, industrial technology and financing opportunities. It encourages governments and business to adopt policies for environmental management with emphasis on pollution prevention, assisting and supporting business associations to put cleaner production programmes into practice. According to UNIDO, the agency generated nearly \$5,500 million worth of investments for more than 1,600 projects between 1986 and 1993.

With the majority of UNIDO's clients being small- and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs), investment goes straight to the heart of development needs. SMEs often out-perform larger enterprises because of their potential to respond more quickly to market changes and opportunities to develop specialized products, and to absorb technological innovations. This adaptability also means more jobs as smaller businesses expand. For example, a UNIDO training programme for Kenyan entrepreneurs in the small-scale textile sector has given some 400 businesswomen the chance to acquire a comprehensive set of skills ranging from product design and development, through management and financing to

marketing and presentation. They in turn are passing these newly acquired skills on to other women opening up opportunities for greater female participation in the country's development.

The UN Development Programme (UNDP) works closely with Sustainable Project Management (SPM), an initiative created by the Business Council for Sustainable Development (BCSD) to aid greater private sector involvement in support of sustainable development. The focus is to identify and prepare bankable projects which result in the establishment of new profitable companies, owned partly by municipal authorities and partly by private interests, that help provide urban and industrial infrastructure services in three key areas: water treatment/recycling, waste management/minimization and energy efficiency/demand management.

In Wuhan and Shanghai, China, a new public-private service company will manage eco-efficiency improvements to thermal power plants in the city, including improving generation capacity, energy efficiency, flue gas and dust control, and waste water treatment. The project also includes the installation of a co-generation unit for district heating in Wuhan and the nearby industrial estate. Similar projects are planned for four more cities in China.

*“to help  
open the  
doors to  
foreign  
investors”*



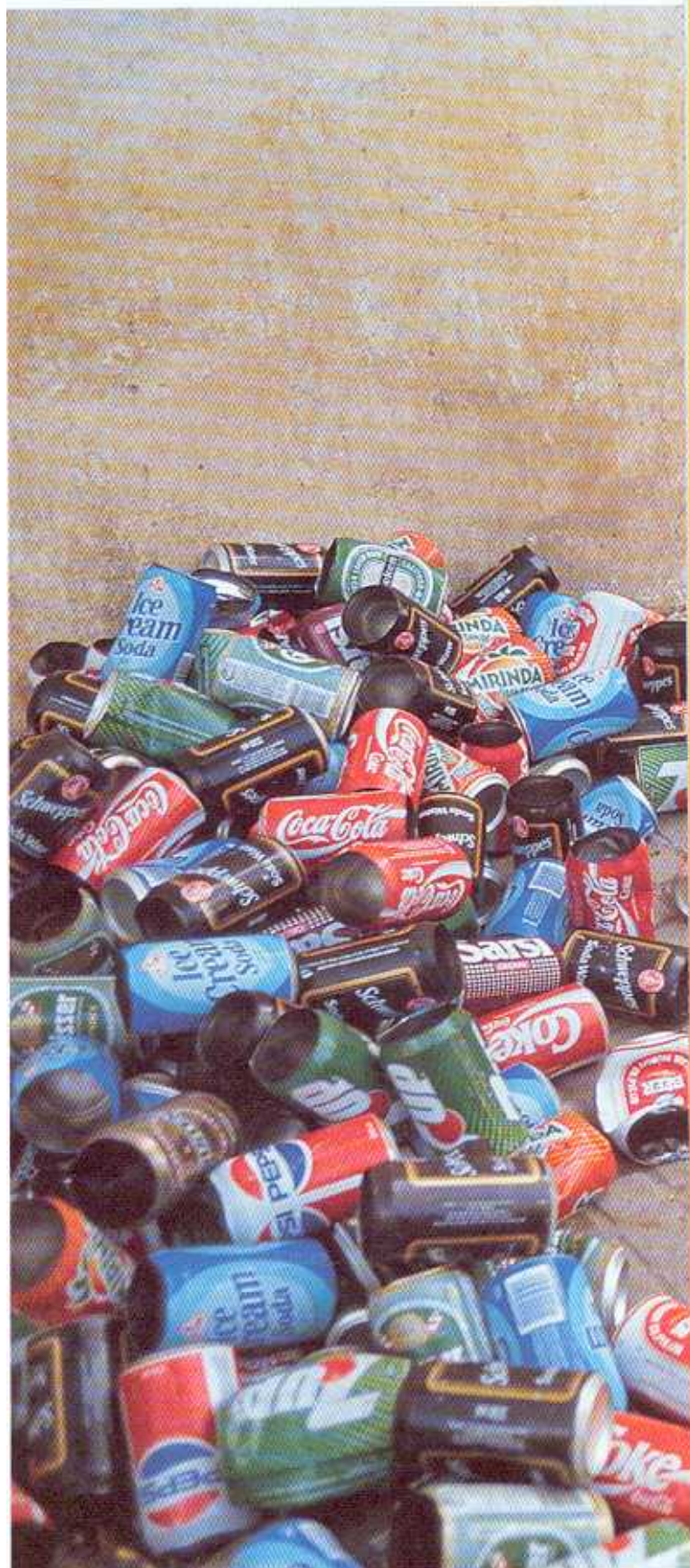
In Madras, India, SPM expects to establish a new public-private company to recycle waste water and sewage water from the city for reuse by industry. This project enjoys strong support from the municipal authorities, local industry and government at central and state levels. It is expected that the project will be duplicated in other cities in India through similar companies working with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and the private sector.

In Colombia, a public-private company is being set up to introduce new eco-efficient technologies to decontaminate waste water from the coffee industry and provide clean supplies for the local people. This project will shortly be replicated in three other states of Colombia as well as in other coffee-producing countries.

Reviewing these programmes, Gus Speth, the UNDP Administrator, has stated: 'These initiatives are the result of our assessment of the needs and opportunities for greater private sector involvement in support of sustainable development.... The innovative perspective of this programme is that it allows for a direct communication channel between local authorities and the private sector at various levels – creating opportunities for technology dissemination and a positive impact on the most pressing urban environmental problems.'

Further examples include introducing energy management programmes and new technologies for suburban electrification in the Andean countries, recycling sewage water using zoo plankton technology in Costa Rica, establishing an urban capacity building centre for eco-efficiency in Gaza and Jericho, introducing new technologies for peri-urban electrification in South Africa and dealing with solid waste problems in the Czech Republic.

This type of public-private sector cooperation turns problems in the developing world and emerging economies into viable business opportunities. In the process, it makes a real difference to many of our most vulnerable fellow citizens. It is indeed a fresh approach to tackle some of the most pressing social ills because the old approach has failed: purely public sector projects are subject to budgetary constraints, while totally private sector projects emphasize short-term profitability.



**Human resourcefulness and initiative are the motor that drives successful business.**  
*An old woman recycling metal from used drink cans in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.*







### **New business agenda in Asia**

Today, most of the nations which make up East Asia are considered the world's fastest growing economies. Eight Asian countries have achieved annual average growth rates of over five per cent from 1965 onwards to 1989, with some of the tiger economies in southeast Asia growing at significantly higher rates of six per cent to eight per cent a year.

But progress has also had some negative impact and raises new challenges on the economic, political and social front. Poverty, particularly rural poverty, remains the region's largest problem. The effects of rapid growth in the region have largely been felt in urban areas, while rural areas continue to wallow in relative or absolute poverty. Because growth is directed towards urban areas, internal migration flows into cities will result in even more rapid

of society – concerns that often escape the attention of the corporate manager. These are the issues of relevance to billions of poor, issues such as endemic poverty, population growth and basic human rights.

Business has often distanced itself from the bigger moral obligation to help the government solve such an overwhelming challenge. However, government cannot do it alone. Unless the business world is willing to do more to alleviate the burden of poverty, many of the societies in which they operate will not move beyond current hand-to-mouth existence. Business that exists in such a precarious environment will eventually be forced to bow out.

Hence, poverty, population and environment are all intertwined. One is affected by the progress or

## *‘a new trend emerging in business’*

urbanization of the region. By the turn of the century, all the countries of southeast Asia will be at least 50 per cent urbanized. While that creates larger consumer markets which are good for business, it also creates strains on the system as transport, water, power, education, housing and health care resources are stretched to their limits. Rapid economic development is also placing more strain on environmental resources.

The Earth Summit inspired the Association of Southern Asian Nations (ASEAN) Chamber of Commerce and Industry to adopt Business Principles on Sustainable Development. As a result, individual ASEAN countries have each set up sustainable development councils to ensure corporations keep an eye on their environmental and social responsibilities.

While it may be significant to see this new trend emerging in business, there is still considerable neglect for areas that are deemed priority concerns

degeneration of the other. UN initiatives have shown that only through the improved standards of living in developing countries can population growth be slowed down and the environmental consequences of poverty be avoided.

One of the best examples of a business-led partnership in Asia that has focused on helping alleviate the plight of the poor is the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP). It has mobilized the financial, technical and managerial resources of companies for over 20 years in partnership programmes to promote sustainable development at the grassroots level in urban and rural communities. Today it has some 120 member companies, each pledging one per cent of its net profit to social development, of which 20 per cent goes to PBSP and hundreds of non-governmental organization (NGO) partnerships which have worked together to implement approximately 3,000 rural and urban development projects benefiting 1.5 million people.



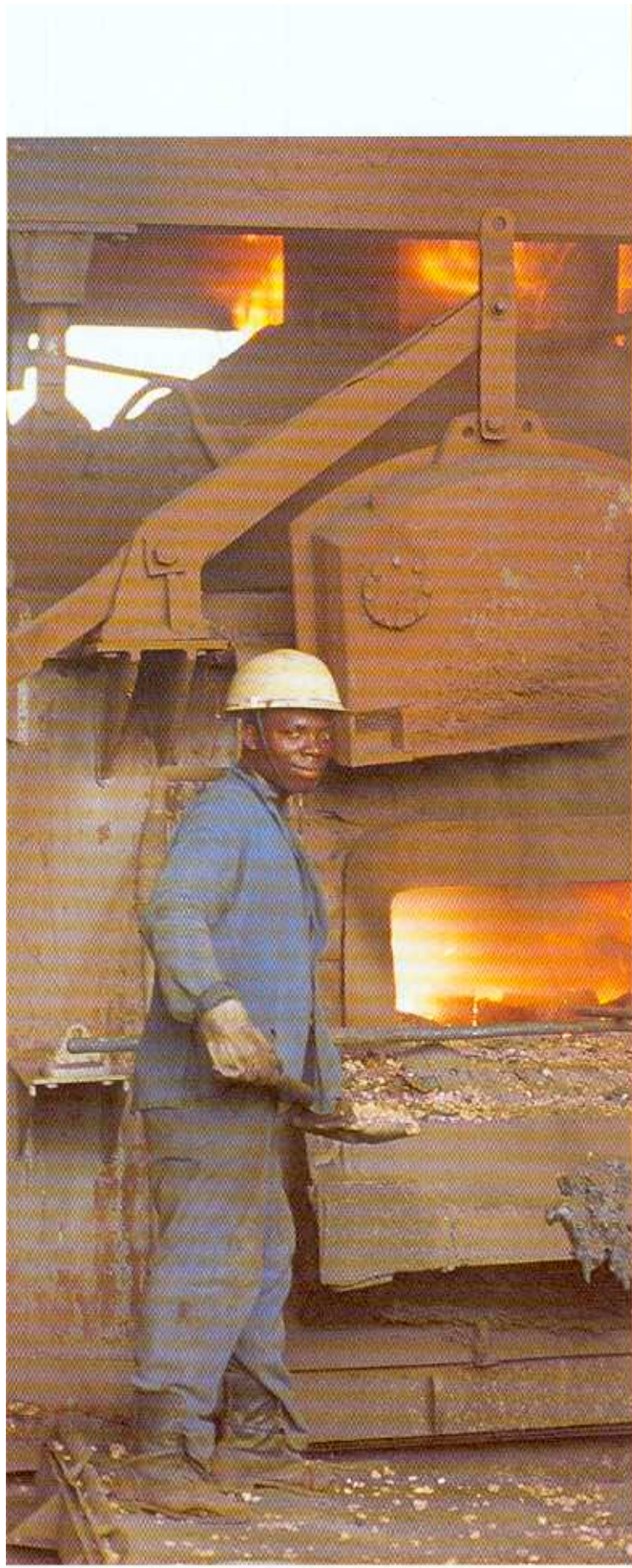
Because business and economic growth thrive in an environment of peace and stability, the business community will also need to speak up and be heard on issues it does not normally address. In the Philippines, the business community has been involved in exercises such as the peace process and elections because of the community's underlying belief that there can be no prosperity without political stability.

In the early 1980s, business groups, civic associations, NGOs, educational and religious institutions, and professional and trade associations banded together to form a movement which became known as the National Citizens Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL).

Since 1984, NAMFREL has been active in voter education, legislative reforms and poll-watching, and holds an independent parallel count of election returns. The business community has supported NAMFREL in these projects, not only through financial assistance but, more importantly, by seconding managers to help run its operations and lending equipment and facilities for the critical task of protecting the integrity of the ballots and the electoral count. At every election in the Philippines, poll-watching groups, such as NAMFREL, the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting and all their affiliates and partner organizations, have mobilized up to half a million volunteers to safeguard the polls.

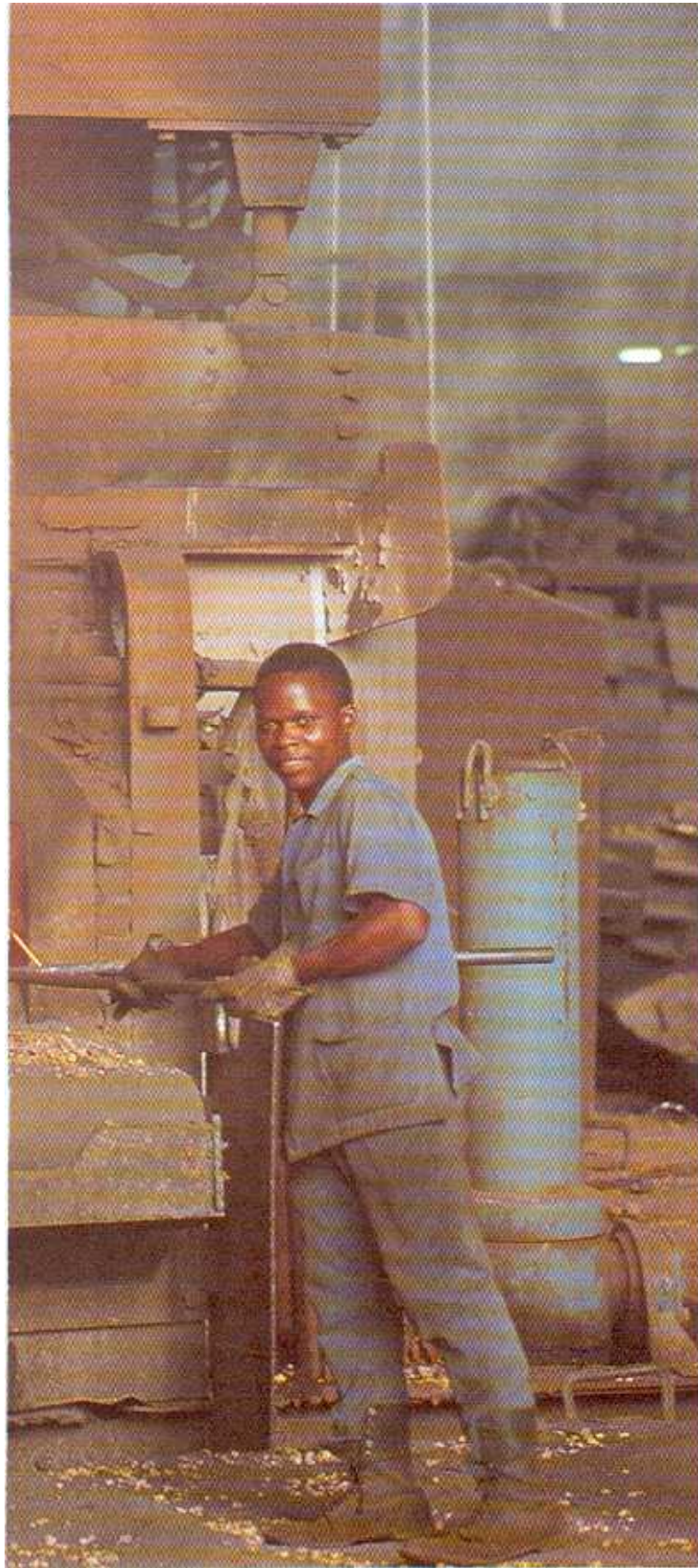
But the business community also realized that stability had to go beyond safeguarding the ballot. A multisectoral effort was put together under the government's auspices. This became known as the National Unification Commission (NUC). As part of its mission to oversee the entire peace process, NUC drew on the support and feedback of many sectors – including the business community – to search for ways to attain a sustainable peace.

This new advocacy role will bring new demands on the business community as well as non-traditional constituencies to deal with. If, in the past, individual businesses lobbied governments for vested interests, today businesses will need more and more to deal with governments and consider the national interest. Moreover, NGOs and community-based peoples' organizations are becoming increasingly a



***Business is gradually becoming aware of its social obligations.***  
*A steel recycling plant in Tanzania creates jobs and prevents waste*





© Ron Gilling/Panos

fact of life in many countries and therefore business will have to work with them as partners in nation building.

Within the region, a strong tradition has already been established where businesses support many community projects. For instance, foundations established by corporations in the Philippines and Thailand encourage them to set aside a fixed percentage of their profits annually, which are then devoted to community projects. If the top 1,000 companies in ASEAN set aside one per cent of their profits a year, business corporations could inject over \$80 million into community projects.

There is another task which the business community may have to face. As standards of living rise, so will expectations of political and individual freedoms. Is it possible to liberalize continually the economy and still maintain a closed society? Obviously each country will have to make its own choice. The relevant question for the business sector, however, is what role, if any, it should play in this regard. Political instability automatically translates to economic uncertainty. Should business stand aside and simply allow events to transpire and do its best to pick up the pieces after a political upheaval? The Philippine and Eastern European experience would seem to indicate the opposite course of action. Similarly, after Korea attained a high degree of economic development and liberalization, democratization of the political process quickly followed. In the long run, empirical evidence shows that free markets and political freedom can co-exist and reinforce each other.

In India, the CII invited the resident representative of UNDP in India to be a member of various committees overseeing the formulation and implementation of a number of corporate citizenship programmes. In 1991, the CII mounted a study to examine the benefits that business derives by adopting a socially responsible attitude. The study revealed that every dollar invested by companies in these 'Community Through Employee' activities brings a benefit of five dollars directly or indirectly. The survey convinced a number of businesses that these activities were as important as manufacturing and marketing and that such investments were akin to 'an insurance premium'.



For example, in the city of Pune in western India, business is spearheading an effort called Total Quality Community Project, aimed at poverty alleviation, education and environmental improvement. Similarly in Bombay, business has committed itself to converting Bombay, the big eyesore, to Bombay, the big apple. In rural areas business has been proactive in introducing programmes ranging from the adoption of villages for comprehensive development, to initiatives such as the provision of safe drinking water, afforestation and maternal and child health care programmes, including family planning, adult education and literacy campaigns for women. This renewed vigour on the part of Indian industry has sprung not merely out of a sense of moral responsibility but from a realization that such long-term investments result in a more conducive industrial climate, lower absenteeism, good industrial relations and a sustained rise in productivity.

### **The Latin American story**

Latin America is the most urbanized region of the developing world. More than 73 per cent of the population of Brazil and Mexico and 86 per cent in Chile and Argentina live in cities. São Paulo, Mexico City and Buenos Aires are among the 10 largest cities in the world. Together with Uruguay and Venezuela, these four countries have the most developed economies in Latin America with very similar per capita incomes.

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) of Latin America argues that, in order to promote efficient trading and environmental policies, it is important to minimize subsidies, to improve regulations and to abolish the vested interests that result from them. Their damaging effects are most keenly felt in agriculture, energy and in public sector purchases. Indeed, business leaders believe that government interference prevents private companies and most citizens from participating in open markets, and that the restrictive regulations impair not only economic growth but also social improvement.

The definition of property rights is also a controversial issue that has to be tackled. The opening up of markets without a clear or equitable definition of

property rights – especially those relating to land – often fails to result in sustainable growth in important sectors. Lack of an ownership stake in resources has also been shown to contribute to marginalization of the poor and to exert pressure on natural resources. For example, in many rural areas of Latin America, farmers have no recognized title to land. In view of the uncertainty of the prevailing conditions, countless smallholders are prepared to invest only small amounts of money short-term, to the serious detriment of the economy, the environment and society as a whole.

Clearer ground rules would also stimulate cooperation among companies in the Americas. A good example is the 'CO<sub>2</sub> trading schemes' which have drawn on the findings of recent research to facilitate more efficient use of environmentally-sound investment. Instead of investing additional capital in end-of-the-pipe measures and factories in the North, money could be invested more profitably, and with greater marginal utility, in forestry and timber projects in the South. This would not only improve the CO<sub>2</sub> balance in the atmosphere but also make a great contribution towards development. But projects like this cannot be implemented until clearly defined legal title is extended to more types of property.

Funding for the environment has been one of the issues covered by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and special attention has been paid to the US-Mexico border, an area with significant local and cross-border environmental problems. A number of promising initiatives – some based on regional cooperation, others from the private sector and the use of market incentives – have already been proposed. One of these would address the critical air pollution problems in the El Paso/Juarez, US-Mexico border.

The WBCSD has taken a leadership role in devising innovative ways to encourage partnership projects with the private sector, especially in developing countries. Since its inception, it has seen the need to establish a strong relationship with such organizations as UNDP and the World Bank, to encourage and facilitate technology cooperation and to continue a high level policy dialogue.



### **The South African model**

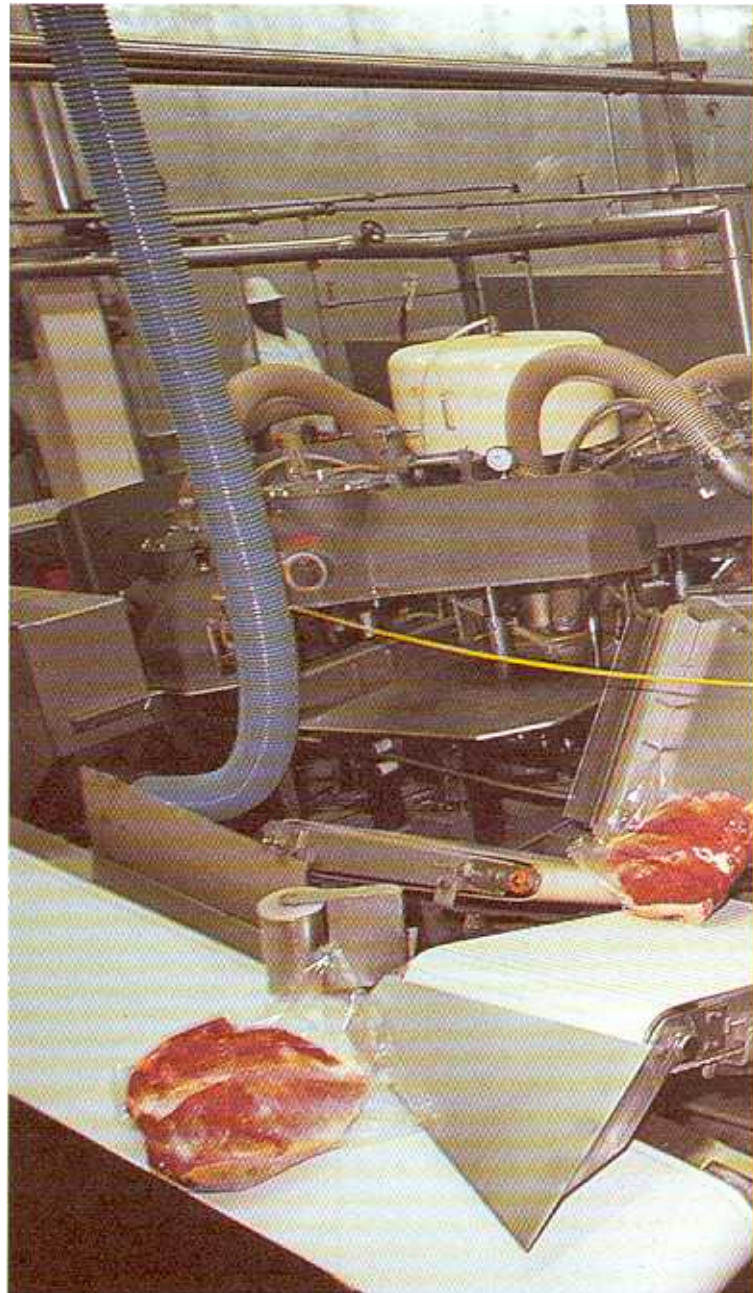
In 1995, with the dramatic political changes in the country, freer dialogue between South Africa and the UN and its agencies is now possible. This has been met with scepticism in some South African quarters where the UN has not historically been seen as an ally. Nonetheless there is also evident enthusiasm in other quarters to contribute to international initiatives.

Traditionally, the UN and its agencies have worked with governments, not the private sector. However there is a need for the UN and business to review their links and develop active, practical, goal-oriented approaches. Governments' responsibilities essentially rest within national boundaries – they may influence broader fields but legitimately they are nationally focused. The activities of the multinational, private sector, on the other hand, regularly transcend such political boundaries, as do many environmental concerns.

Officially absent from the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the majority of South Africans remain unaware of their responsibilities in terms of the resultant conventions and Agenda 21. However, a South African business delegation was at Rio, clearly conscious that the principal responsibility for converting Rio's outputs into meaningful outcomes would rest with the business community, not government.

It is clear, therefore, that nowhere will there be a sustained political settlement without sustained economic growth driven by the private sector. In turn, sustained economic growth cannot be achieved without wise environmental management. Poverty forces people to disregard the sustainability of the resources around them in their quest to survive from day to day.

In addition, there is a need to build strong partnerships between the NGO community and the private sector. Yet the history of adversity between the two and the ostensible monopoly on the moral high ground claimed by the NGOs complicates this process. It is essential that the NGO community better understands the needs and constraints of business, while the business community develops a more sympathetic approach to popular concerns. As



all South Africans now have a say in their future, fairer access to gainful employment and the ability to acquire property give them a vested interest in the quality of their environment.

According to some estimates, up to 50 per cent of South Africa's population do not have formal employment. Apartheid had largely denied black entrepreneurs business opportunity. The lack of business outlets within townships resulted in not only transport problems, but also a lack of a viable tax base with which to support local government



*High business standards enable countries to succeed in a competitive world market.  
A meat factory in Botswana.*

© David Reed/Panos



services. The financial sector has been reluctant to offer high risk loans to black entrepreneurs who could not provide collateral – a situation now being addressed by the development of the 'community' and 'micro' banks to encourage small business development and a move away from perpetually sponsoring unemployment.

It is in the area of creating small-scale, income-generating enterprises where attention is most needed. These new enterprises could involve converting one company's waste into another's

input (making compost from abattoir wastes is one recent example in Johannesburg) or developing sanitation, water purification and recycling schemes. The major electrification programme under way in South Africa increases access to affordable electricity for numerous potential enterprises, while some paper and pulp companies are encouraging the development of small-scale nurseries of indigenous, medicinal plants on the periphery of their forest operations to protect indigenous species (which provide seed banks) in enclaves within their commercial forests.



## *A final word*

As a result of the dramatic, political, military and economic shifts of the past decade, an opportunity presents itself for a new breed of global leaders to emerge. The skills necessary to lead in this new era – diplomacy, negotiation, financial leverage, management, persuasiveness, relationship building, communicating and a respect for individuals – are not limited to the world's politicians or government bureaucracies. These skills are shared by people throughout the world regardless of profession, nationality, gender or race.

Indeed, as borders between nations lose their significance in terms of economic importance, businessmen and women are being thrust into a position of stewardship for the citizens of the world. As US Secretary of Labour Robert Reich notes in his book *The Wealth of Nations*, business leaders are becoming transnational statesmen of this and future generations.

Farsighted corporate leaders are not blind to the systemic, societal disorders of this generation, fully realizing that business cannot flourish in a climate of turmoil and poverty where resources are being channelled destructively. Regardless of implicit or explicit acknowledgement, all businesses in all countries operate and exist in a public policy environment. Thus, becoming actively involved in the successful resolution of geo-political issues to further global stability is in the direct self-interest of international business.

Because business and the UN both seek world peace and prosperity, it is natural that they support each others' activities. Already the UN is assisting the business community in many ways through the World Bank, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and UNIDO. Similarly, the diverse activities of UN agencies dealing with labour, human rights, food and agriculture, health, civil aviation, telecommunications, intellectual property and industrial development have advanced international trade and commerce.

The UN Secretary-General recently stated that 'Never before in its history has the United Nations

been so action-oriented, so actively engaged, and so widely expected to respond to needs both immediate and persuasive. Clearly, it is in our power to bring about a renaissance – to create a new United Nations for a new international era.'

If business is to respond positively to this challenge, it will require greater efforts, a closer cooperation and the development of new and innovative approaches in its relationship with the UN and its agencies.

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**An African NGO works in partnership with business to help people in marginalized communities in Zimbabwe develop income opportunities.**

*A team working on a low-cost solar energy system for recharging batteries.*