Open letter to Secretary-General of the United Nations
Appointment of the next Secretary-General of UNCTAD

15 January 2013

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

Later this year, you will be nominating to the General Assembly your choice of the next Secretary-General of UNCTAD. The personal attributes of the chief executive of an international organisation are key factors affecting its performance and credibility. Thus the selection is crucial and for that, UNCTAD is no exception, especially at this time of global economic uncertainty.

We very strongly urge that the next Secretary-General of UNCTAD, in addition to all the necessary experience, knowledge and management abilities, should have in particular the capacity and courage for independent thought. It is this characteristic that has been the distinguishing factor among the eminent persons who have held the post over nearly 50 years of UNCTAD’s existence.

A demonstrated ability to provide strong and independent leadership to global analysis from a development perspective and to promote fresh thinking on trade and development issues is needed today more than ever. The world clamours for innovative economic thinking that charts a sustainable way out of the current crisis and that contributes to development and poverty reduction. We would regard the capacity to stimulate such thinking and to articulate the resulting policy approaches in the relevant forums as the single most important consideration when sifting among possible candidates in the requisite consultations with member States. The growing weight of developing countries in global matters requires an intellectually outstanding personality as the new leader of UNCTAD.

The undersigned comprise those from public life and academia who respect the work of UNCTAD in one area or another as well as former UN and UNCTAD staff members who remain committed to its ideals and values. We have an interest in the outcome of this matter, but no interest in a particular candidate. We all fervently believe in the value to the international community, particularly developing countries, of ensuring a strong and credible UNCTAD that serves to focus inter-governmental debates on how the workings of the global economy affect developing countries.

We are confident you will select that eminent person who best epitomizes the capacity and the courage for independent thought on trade and development.

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*This letter in no way engages any responsibility on part of any of the organisations with which any of the signatories are currently affiliated.

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