

Press Release

Paris, 9 October 2008

PlaNNet Finance to host the first ever “International Microfinance Awards”

On October the 28th PlaNNet Finance celebrates its 10th birthday by hosting the first ever “International Microfinance Awards” – an occasion which will recognise the achievements of the world’s top microentrepreneurs.

PlaNNet Finance – the microfinance organisation

25,000 people across the world die from poverty and hunger every day. Within this global geopolitical and economic context, microfinance has emerged as one of the most effective weapons in the war on poverty. It gives people the means to turn their plans for creating their own businesses into reality, offering them a life-changing escape route from poverty.

2.3 billion people live on less than \$2 a day. Over the last fifteen years, microfinance has enabled 150 million of them to gain access to loan facilities. The people who benefit from these loans are all too often ignored by the big development projects run by governments and multilateral institutions. Thanks to microfinance, however, they have been able to develop gainful economic activities and to improve the lives and living standards of their families.

Today, 10,000 microfinance institutions (MFIs) are working alongside state-funded initiatives and around 100 specialist private funds to promote and develop microfinance.

Since it was established in 1998, PlaNNet Finance has contributed to improving the performance of MFIs by providing technical support, rating services and advice for funders. It has opened up new ways of strengthening the impact of microfinance: particularly in areas like insurance and new technologies and through investing in newly-created MFIs.

Microentrepreneurs to be honoured at the “International Microfinance Awards”

The world’s top microentrepreneurs of 2008 will receive their awards at a ceremony at the **Institut du Monde Arabe** on Paris’ Left Bank. The awards ceremony will be held on **Tuesday October the 28th at 6 o’clock** and has been organised by PlaNNet Finance as part of its 10th birthday celebrations.

The jury will be awarding 1st prizes in six categories to microentrepreneurs from across the world who will be attending the ceremony. The categories are:

- Education
- New Technologies
- The Environment
- Women
- Innovation
- Health

Members of the jury, all of whom are actively involved in microfinance, are:

- Alexandre Allard ;
- Arthur Arnold, Chief Executive Officer, FMO (the Netherlands Development Bank);
- Jean-Philippe Courtois, President, Microsoft International & Senior Vice-President, Microsoft Corporation;
- Abdou Diouf, Former President of the Republic of Senegal and Secretary General of the international French-speaking Union, L’Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie;
- Corinne Evens, Chair of the Evens Foundation;

- Clara Gaymard, Chairman of General Electric, France;
- Bernard Kouchner, French Minister of Foreign and European Affairs;
- Elizabeth Littlefield, a Director of the World Bank and Chief Executive Officer of CGAP (Consultative Group to Assist the Poor) - represented by Alexia Latortue, Senior Microfinance Specialist at CGAP;
- Caroline Mille, Senior Vice-President of Communications and Brand, France Télécom/Orange;
- Felix G. Rohatyn, President, Rohatyn Associates;
- Luc-François Salvador, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Sogeti;
- Dr. Robert Sebbag, Vice-President, Access to Medicines, Sanofi-Aventis;
- Jean-Michel Severino, Chief Executive Officer, Agence Française de Développement - represented by Pierre Jacquet, Director of Strategy and Chief Economist, Agence Française de Développement;
- Philippe Zaouati, Director of Development, Natixis Asset Management.

Funding for the prizes has come from Microsoft, Natixis Asset Management, France Télécom/Orange, Sanofi-Aventis and Sogeti.

In selecting the prize winners, the jury based its decisions on the following criteria:

- Personal: motivation, initiative, independence
- Financial: regular repayment of loans, profitability, growth potential
- Social: improving living standards and responding to unmet needs

The “**International Microfinance Awards**” will be an annual prize-giving event.

About PlaNet Finance:

PlaNet Finance is a non-profit international development organisation dedicated to using microfinance (microloans and microinsurance) to reduce global poverty.

In its 10 years of existence PlaNet Finance has supported more than 1500 microfinance institutions, providing funds which have given more than 30 million microentrepreneurs a life-changing escape route from poverty. Based in Paris, PlaNet Finance is active in more than 60 countries and has a network of 29 bureaux in Europe, North America, Latin America, Asia, Africa and the Middle East.

Visit PlaNet Finance’s website at: <http://www.planetfinancegroup.org>

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