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UNHCR and business partners give refugee kids a voice through ninemillion.org campaign

DAVOS, Switzerland - UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres on Wednesday briefed participants at the World Economic Forum on an innovative way to give voice to many of the world's nine million refugee children.

Addressing international media executives at an opening luncheon for the annual meeting in Davos, Guterres said the aim of the campaign, "ninemillion.org" (www.ninemillion.org), is to help raise awareness for the world's nine million refugee children and provide them with greater access to education and sport programs.

The ninemillion.org campaign was launched in June 2006 by UNHCR and its founding campaign partners, Nike and Microsoft, to bring much-needed attention and support to refugee youth.

"These are nine million children who are often forgotten and unheard; nine million stories of being forced to flee homes because of war, or parents who have been killed, or being born in refugee camps; nine million children who should have access to education and sport, like any other child should," said Guterres, a former Portuguese prime minister.

"Refugee children are among the most marginalized people on earth. Especially with protracted and complex crises such as in Darfur/Sudan and Somalia, we tend to forget that beyond the 20-second news flashes there are millions of refugees, many of them children, living for years in often unbearable conditions, robbed of their chances for personal development. Today, UNHCR is trying to give a voice to some nine million refugee children. But we can't do it alone. If the refugee voice is to be heard and understood, we need all the help we can get. And that's where our corporate partners and ninemillion.org come in."

ninemillion.org is the flagship among the UNHCR Council of Business Leaders' initiatives. Launched in Davos in 2005, it includes Manpower, Microsoft, Merck, Nike and PricewaterhouseCoopers. It is a unique public-

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private partnership supported by some of the world's major corporations and foundations as well as a major sport federation, the NBA and WNBA.

Since its kick-off, the ninemillion.org campaign has attracted some 2 million visitors and raised approximately US\$1.5 million.

Already, education and sport projects are being implemented with NGOs such as Right To Play International. The bulk of the money raised will be invested in Kenyan and Ugandan refugee communities for local education and sport projects.

The campaign aims also at connecting young people through new online communities such as nine-million.spaces.live.com using Windows Live Spaces, Microsoft's free blogging platform.

On January 17, Microsoft launched "Click for a Cause", highlighting ninemillion.org as the first project to benefit from this new innovation in online search. Microsoft Windows Live will donate to the ninemillion.org campaign every time someone initiates a search from <http://click4acause.Live.com>.

In addition to using modern technology, ninemillion.org has enrolled the support of a successful refugee band to reach out to a larger, younger audience. Performing at the media lunch were the Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars, former refugees who formed a band while in exile in a West African refugee camp and who have now performed throughout the world. Living proof that refugees can become a source of creativity and support to those who shelter them from war, Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars are now using their album, "Living Like a Refugee," to raise awareness and funds for the ninemillion.org campaign.

For more information about the campaign, please visit ninemillion.org, or contact Olivier Delarue at UNHCR (delarue@unhcr.org or phone +41-79-214-24-54).

About UNHCR

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was established on December 14, 1950, by the United Nations General Assembly. The agency is mandated to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees and others of concern. It strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another state, with the option to return home voluntarily, integrate locally or to resettle in a third country.



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In more than five decades, the agency has helped an estimated 50 million people restart their lives, earning two Nobel Peace Prizes in 1954 and 1981. Today, its staff of more than 6,600 work in some 120 countries to help 20.8 million refugees, displaced people and others of concern.

The following link will take you to the above:

www.unhcr.org/press-releases

For more information, please contact spokesperson Paal Aarsaether, UNHCR Regional Office for the Baltic and Nordic Countries, in Stockholm on tel. +46 8 457 48 86 or e-mail aarsaeth@unhcr.org.

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