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Korea Joins the Millennium Villages Project

NEW YORK, NY – Gyeongsangbuk-do Province in Korea, the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), the UN World Tourism Organization Sustainable Tourism – Eliminating Poverty (ST-EP) Foundation and Millennium Promise today announced a five-year partnership for the Millennium Villages Project (MVP). The partnership unites the resources and development expertise of Korea with the MVP, a joint initiative of the Earth Institute at Columbia University, Millennium Promise and the United Nations Development Programme that aims to demonstrate how extreme poverty can be ended in the poorest regions of rural Africa. At a ceremony to sign a Memorandum of Understanding for the partnership, Korea committed \$8 million over five years (2009-2013) for the implementation of the Project.

“Korea is living proof that communities must be empowered to lead in their own development, and with its unique history of development, Korea wants to share its experience and knowledge with Millennium Promise by participating in the MVP,” says Amb. Dae Won Park, President of KOICA. “We are thrilled to embark on this collaboration,” states John McArthur, CEO of Millennium Promise. “Millennium Promise strives to bridge action-oriented partnerships across civil society, business, government, and academia in support of the Millennium Development Goals. We anticipate that Korean leadership will help catalyze important new successes in building on the tremendous early results of the Millennium Villages.”

According to Mr. Kwan Yong Kim, Governor of Gyeongsangbuk-do Province, “Gyeongsangbuk-do is especially proud to contribute to the Korean Millennium Village Project and in a special way bring the SaeMaeul Movement (*“New Community” Movement – backbone of Korean economic development*) to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals.” “In line with the core mission of the UNWTO ST-EP Foundation,” added Ms. Young Shim Dho, Chairperson of the Foundation Board of Directors, “we look forward to working with our partners towards the development and success of the Korean Millennium Village Project for poverty elimination.”

The ceremony was attended by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and representatives of the four partners: Gyeongsangbuk-do Province Governor Mr. Kwan Yong Kim, KOICA President Amb. Dae Won Park, ST-EP Foundation Board of Directors Chairperson Ms. Young Shim Dho, and Millennium Promise CEO Mr. John McArthur. Professor Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University, co-founder of Millennium Promise and Special Advisor to the Secretary-General on the Millennium Development Goals, also participated. H.E. Mr. Francis K. Butagira, Amb. Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Permanent Mission of Uganda to the United Nations, and Ms. Joyce Kafanabo, Chargé d’Affaire of the Permanent Mission of the United Republic of Tanzania to the United Nations, in whose countries the villages are located, attended the ceremony as well.

The MVP began in 2004 to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in sub-Saharan Africa. The Project helps impoverished rural communities lift themselves out of poverty through community-led and integrated investments in agriculture, education, health and infrastructure. A recently released independent review by London-based Overseas Development Institute found that the project "has achieved remarkable results and has demonstrated the impact of greater investment in evidence-based, low-cost interventions at the village level to make progress on the Millennium Development Goals." Korea will join existing MVP clusters in Tanzania and Uganda, supporting two villages in each cluster. KOICA, Korea's leading grant-aid government agency, will contribute \$6.5 million and ST-EP Foundation and Gyeongsangbuk-do Province will each contribute \$750,000.

Korea's participation in the Project is noteworthy not only in the context of its growing contributions to the MDGs, but also because Korea drew itself out of poverty through a similar new village construction movement known as "Saemaeul Undong" in the 1970s. Therefore, Korea, a nation with a unique history of development, is expected to bring along accumulated development knowledge as well as financial support into the Project.

"Korea is one of the world's greatest development successes in modern history, a country which rose from poverty to wealth in two generations. It has similarly gone from being an aid recipient to an increasingly prominent and far-sighted aid donor, eager to share its development insights with today's poorest countries," says Professor Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University and Co-Founder of Millennium Promise. "Mobilizing the experience of Korea in the Millennium Villages project will support the Millennium Development Goals of helping impoverished communities to escape from the trap of extreme poverty."

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Millennium Villages Project

The Millennium Villages p\Project is a partnership between the Earth Institute at Columbia University, Millennium Promise and the United Nations Development Programme. The Millennium Villages are a proof of concept initiative to demonstrate that the Millennium Development Goals can be achieved in even the poorest and most remote rural communities in Africa by combining the best scientific and local knowledge to chart a course for ground-level, community-based support for agriculture, health, education, infrastructure and business development.