

**Message from Zahra Nuru, UNDP Resident Representative for Malawi at the Launch of International Year of Volunteers 2001 on 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2000.**

Warm greetings to everyone who is here to celebrate the Launch of International Year of Volunteers

Every country depends on volunteers. They look after orphans, the elderly and the sick. They help educate our children, keep the environment clean, they are the lifeblood of healthy societies everywhere.

Now the challenge is to harness the enormous power and commitment of all these volunteers and recruit hundreds of millions more like them in the battle against poverty and HIV/AIDS.

At the Millenium Summit in New York last September, world leaders pledged to halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015. But that is not a goal governments can simply legislate. It will require broad based national and global efforts that include private sector, civil society and volunteers for all parts of the world and all walks of life.

I now invite specialized agencies, other organizations of the United Nations System and Non Governmental Organizations that provide, are affiliated with or benefit from Volunteer Service to undertake and promote activities to stimulate greater awareness of the contributions made by volunteers.

It is with that goal in mind that the United Nations General Assembly dedicates this International Volunteer Day to mark the Launch of the International Year of Volunteers 2001. From helping to give young people new skills for today' competitive, knowledge- driven job market; to assisting villagers to simply working to break the stigma of people living with HIV/AIDS, volunteers will in many cases prove the difference between success or failure in meeting these ambitious goals.

Ladies and Gentlemen I want to assure you that UNDP is ready to support the Government of Malawi in reviving the

National Volunteer scheme. that will enable a number of Malawian Nationals to acquire the experience of working with an International Agency and also to transfer to or share their skills with others.

So ladies and Gentlemen, Volunteers are a cause for real celebrations and hope for the future. I wish you the best of success on International Year of Volunteer Day 2000, and throughout the year 2001.