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Introductory speech to
The World Bank and International Finance Corporation's
Doing Business 2008 report launch

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Good morning everyone. I am very pleased to welcome you all to our new-look, very recently re-opened, corporate headquarters in London.

And this building is, I think, a good metaphor for change.

On the inside, completely transformed: new, modern, vital – all things we want Unilever to be associated with in the twenty-first century. Yet on the outside, essentially the same; a powerful symbol of Unilever's heritage and a reminder that our values haven't changed.

Today, we believe just as strongly as we ever did that as a business it is possible to do good and do well. That a healthy company is directly linked to being part of a healthy community.

This applies particularly to the developing world, where Unilever has a long heritage but also a very important future: we are fast approaching the time when we will do half of our global business in developing world markets. So we are a clear stakeholder in their sustainable economic growth.

In Africa we have over 100 years of experience. Today, we have a business of some €2bn, manufacturing in 14 African countries and employing around 40,000 people.

But our footprint goes much wider. Building on some ground-breaking work in Indonesia with Oxfam, we are now working with INSEAD development economist, Professor Ethan Kapstein, to understand the full impact of our business in South Africa.

The results should be available early in 2008 , and I believe they will show the multifaceted nature of our business' involvement in society: starting from the pure economics of doing business, making our products and getting them to people at prices they can afford; to taking on a wider developmental role in terms of building capacity in our own workforce, training people and promoting better health - of which a good example is the private sector work on HIV/AIDS.

We also have a wider engagement in the community and the environment, best exemplified in Africa by our sustainability and small-grower programmes for our palm-oil and tea businesses.

Beyond that we have relations with governments and other partners with whom we work to deliver tangible improvements on the ground. For example, changes that promote business and enterprise such as customs reform or enterprise development via Business Action for Africa or the Investment Climate Facility. Or those that make a difference to people's health and well-being, such as our hygiene and nutrition programmes with UNICEF and the World Food Programme.

We need to make a clearer link between our business and this development value. A good example is our recent decision to have the supply chain for all our tea brands certified for sustainability by Rainforest Alliance, a leading NGO. I will be in Kenya in two weeks to see for myself how this work is progressing.

Partnership is of course the key theme for today. It is only through engaging with one another that we can hope to succeed. And I am keen to see us work to clear and measurable objectives. This is why I am particularly pleased that the World Bank 'Doing Business' Report for 2008 is having its European launch here today. It is a very practical way of mapping a country's growth potential, which in developing countries is one of the key platforms for improving livelihoods and meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

For Unilever, a key part of doing well in Africa is conditional on being able to move our goods across the continent more quickly and with less additional cost at each and every turn. This is both a physical and a process issue. But it is also a question of local political will, governance and ownership. So the commitment of African governments to help create a better climate for business is welcome and crucial. I am therefore very pleased to welcome their excellencies the Ministers from Ghana, Kenya and Mauritius.

It is their commitment to reform (and the commitment of those like them) that we hope to leverage through the Investment Climate Facility, whose CEO Omari Issa we are also pleased to welcome here today.

Let me invite Shriti Vadera to speak. I am delighted to see her bring her energy and vision to her new ministerial role at the Department for

International Development. With an impressive track-record in business, government and the NGO world, she is ideally placed to help us better deliver against both business and development goals.

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