



For Immediate Release:
January 5, 2009

Contact: Whitney Simon
Global Fairness Initiative
+1 202-898-9022

FORMER PRESIDENT OF COSTA RICA TO CHAIR GFI BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President José María Figueres of Costa Rica (1994-1998) to take leadership of the Global Fairness Initiative Board as Former President Clinton steps down as Chair

Washington, DC – The Global Fairness Initiative (GFI), a leading NGO dedicated to improving livelihoods for the working poor, announced today that Former President of Costa Rica, José María Figueres will take over as head of the GFI Board of Directors replacing outgoing Chair William Jefferson Clinton.

The Global Fairness Initiative is a non-profit organization that works towards a more equitable, sustainable approach to globalization by creating and nurturing innovations in economic development for the global South. GFI has implemented programs that improve wages and generate opportunity for the working poor in Cambodia, Central America, India, Indonesia, Kenya Ukraine, and the US.

“The Global Fairness Initiative has been a leader in creating sustainable economic opportunity for the working poor,” said President Figueres, “I thank President Clinton for his leadership of the GFI Board and I look forward to further advancing their essential mission.”

President Figueres has been an active member of the GFI Board since 2005 and is recognized as a global leader in Sustainable Economic Development. He was the youngest President of a Central American country in modern times serving from 1994 to 1998. During his tenure he created a comprehensive Sustainable Development strategy through investment in human development and the implementation of innovative environmental policies. Prior to serving as President he was Costa Rica’s Minister of Foreign Trade (1987-1988) and Minister of Agriculture (1988-1990).

“We are thrilled that President Figueres will be taking the position as our new Board Chair, his leadership will play a key role in our work to address the challenges of globalization in this difficult economic environment,” said Karen Tramontano, founder of the Global Fairness Initiative. “We also want to thank President Clinton for his tremendous commitment to GFI over his 6 years as Board Chair. He has been an invaluable part of our team and we wish him and his family the best of luck and our sincere gratitude.”

###

Global Fairness Initiative Priorities

Engaging Governments

GFI is a leading innovator in the development of public policy interventions that support small producers and create economic opportunity for the working poor. Leveraging the GFI Women's Trade and Finance Council and a partnership with the Brookings Institution, GFI engages governments on strategic initiatives that incentivize participation and create lasting links between constituent worker groups and the governments that serve them.

Investing in Woman Producers

Seventy percent of the world's poor are women. Women and adolescent girls provide over 60% of all subsistence agricultural labor worldwide and make up more than 50% of the informal sector workforce. GFI believes that women represent the greatest potential for putting an end to the cycle of poverty that undermines development around the globe. GFI programs work with women agricultural and textile producers to remove the economic, technical and public policy barriers that prevent women from bringing their goods to sustainable markets at a fair price.

Building Workforce Capacity

Sustainable economic development that reaches genuine scale requires the engagement of a well-trained and productive workforce. Organized labor and engaged workforce communities have always been a cornerstone of civil society and leaders in social equity and human rights movements. By engaging unions and other organized formal and informal worker groups, GFI seeks to expand the reach of economic development initiatives and broaden the impact of social services in the countries where GFI works. Whether in post-conflict Guatemala, or in the challenging political environment of Nicaragua, GFI creates the common linkages that bring Government, Private Sector and Workforce communities together to solve economic challenges and broadly impact poverty reduction goals.

Improving Access to Markets

Access to stable, high-value markets for the working poor is one of the most important poverty alleviation priorities in the developing world today. Building on a unique multi-stakeholder process, GFI is working with private sector leaders to identify market opportunities and remove the obstacles that prevent quality products from reaching markets and producers from earning a fair price. With partnerships built around innovative market data technology, efficient storage and transportation processes and proven agricultural input technologies, GFI offers an efficient and highly strategic model for eliminating market access barriers for the working poor.

Bringing Fairness to Free Trade

In the modern global economy the greatest challenge developing countries face is to create fair opportunities for their people to access the benefits that globalization brings. As nations struggle to define fairness, GFI has led the way to broaden inclusion in the free trade process by bringing traditionally-excluded workforce stakeholders to the bargaining table. Engaging governments and large private interest holders, GFI has successfully created opportunities for worker communities to represent the interests of the working poor who have the most to gain and lose in a free trade environment.