



## **Fifty NGOs, prominent public figures and corporations make commitments to support microcredit alongside Muhammad Yunus**

**For Mary Robinson, who is chairing the association's Honorary Committee, "Friends of Grameen's first duty is to protect the integrity of Professor Yunus and the independence of Grameen Bank".**

**Paris, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2011** - While the campaign of misinformation against Professor Yunus and Grameen Bank continues with increasingly aggressive attacks, support in favour of the Nobel Peace Prize laureates is also getting organised. Released today, the list of the founding members of Friends of Grameen (enclosed) illustrates through its geographic, social and economic diversity the extreme concern and strong mobilization of people who consider microcredit as defined by Professor Yunus and applied by Grameen bank, to be an essential tool in the fight against poverty in the world.

According to Honorary Committee Chair **Mary Robinson**, former President of Ireland and former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "The members of Friends of Grameen are all deeply concerned by the continued attacks against Professor Yunus and Grameen Bank, that are politically orchestrated. Some highly visible private microcredit experiences turned themselves into financially lucrative enterprises, in countries like Mexico and others. Professor Yunus and Grameen Bank paved the way more than 30 years ago for a sustainable model, with very transparent and reasonable interest rates, and making borrowers the owners of their bank."

She added, "Because of the importance of such a role model, our duty is to protect the integrity of Professor Yunus and the independence of Grameen Bank. One of our immediate focus points will be to urge an independent monitoring of the fairness and legality of the current dealings of the Government of Bangladesh and its appointed Chairman and representatives with Grameen Bank, its board, employees and Managing Director Muhammad Yunus, through the Review Committee and beyond."

### **Concerns about the government's recent appointments**

Knowledgeable observer of the Bangladesh political life, **Dr Kamal Hossain**, member of the Honorary Committee and founder of Kamal Hossain & Associates, one of the most reputable law firms in Bangladesh, said, "Every citizen of Bangladesh is proud of Grameen Bank as a unique achievement of millions of poor women who have been able through their membership to attain self reliance and dignity. This has been possible through continuing innovation and expansion of its operations inspired and guided by its founder and Managing Director, Pr Muhammad Yunus."

He continued, "In Bangladesh, we all need to come together to protect this institution by ensuring that its corporate governance remains vested in the millions of women who are its shareholders. Strengthening of its governance structure should start by the

appointment to its Chair of a person fully committed to the cause of the poor and widely respected for his or her independence and integrity.”

***See following page with the list of members***

***About Friends of Grameen***

*“Friends of Grameen” is a voluntary association established under the French law of 1901. The purpose of the association is the promotion and development of microcredit and social business, in particular the microcredit activities of Grameen Bank and its affiliates. The Honorary Committee is chaired by Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Executive Committee is chaired by Maria Nowak, President of ADIE, a pioneering French microfinance institution created in 1989.*

***Press contacts: Burson-Marsteller Paris***

*Xavier Bossaert: 00 33 1 41 86 76 97 / 00 33 6 19 41 50 18*

*Lorie Lichtlen : 00 33 1 41 86 76 60 / 00 33 1 6 03 40 36 38*

*Emilie Rapley: 00 33 1 41 86 76 14 / 00 33 6 29 22 82 01*

## Founding members

### HONORARY COMMITTEE:

- **Mary Robinson**, Chairman of the Friends of Grameen Honorary Committee, former President of Ireland and former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- **William Drayton**, Founder and current Chair of Ashoka
- **Kamal Hossain**, founder of Kamal Hossain & Associates, principal author of the Constitution of Bangladesh, first Law Minister of Bangladesh, former Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, former Chairman of the Transparency International advisory council
- **Jagdish Sharan Verma**, former Chief Justice of India and former Chair of the National Human Rights Commission of India
- **James D. Wolfensohn**, former President of World Bank, Chairman and CEO Wolfensohn Fund Management, L.P.

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

- **Maria Nowak**, President of the Friends of Grameen Executive Committee. President of ADIE (French pioneering NGO for microcredit)

*Other members of the Executive Committee will be announced in the coming days*

### OTHER FOUNDING MEMBERS:

- **Liam Black**, Social Entrepreneur in the UK and Co-founder Wavelength Companies Ltd
- **Connie Evans**, CEO, Association for Enterprise Opportunity (AEO) the association of microenterprise groups working in the US (African-American)
- **Martin Hirsch**, Former French minister of poverty alleviation and now president of French youth civil service
- **Faisal Rahman**, Managing Director Fair Finance
- **Hajiyeva Jahle**, Chairwoman of Microfinance Center and Executive Director of Azerbaijan Micro-finance Association and Board member of the SEEP Network
- **Pamela Hartigan**, Director of the Skoll Centre at Oxford University
- **Jérôme Auriac**, Founding Director of Be-Linked, business and community intelligence

- **Jean-Marc Borello**, Head of Groupe SOS
- **Saskia Bruysten**, CEO and Strategic Director of Grameen Creative Lab
- **Samantha Caccamo**, Founder and CEO of Social Business Earth
- **Alex Counts**, President Grameen Foundation
- **Frédéric Dalsace**, Head of HEC chair for Social Business
- **Susan Davis**, President BRAC USA
- **Emmanuel De Lutz**, President of Initiative et Changement NGO
- **Huzaifa Khorakiwala**, Inspiration – Wockhardt Foundation movement
- **Vidar Jorgensen**, President, Grameen America and Grameen Research
- **Krishan Khanna**, Chairman, i Watch a not-for-profit Social Organization
- **Manoj Kumar**, CEO Naandi Foundation
- **Jean-Michel Severino**, Former head of AFD, French Agency of Development and now head of I&P, a development fund for small enterprises in Africa
- **Laurent Laffont**, French Editor
- **Eric Lesueur**, Project Director Grameen Veolia Water
- **Jean-Luc Perron**, Managing Director Grameen Crédit Agricole Foundation
- **Emmanuel Marchant**, Deputy General Manager danone.communities
- **Paul Martitz**, Grameen Foundation Chair and former #3 at Microsoft, current CEO of VM Ware
- **Susan McCaw**, Former US Ambassador to Austria
- **Arnaud Poissonnier**, Founding director of Babyloan micro-finance on the web
- **Prof. Masa Okada**, Kyushu University, Head of GCL@Kyushu, Japan
- **Hans Reitz**, Creative Director of Yunus Center
- **Sam Daley-Harris**, Director, Microcredit Summit Campaign
- **Shekhar Kapur**, Film Maker / Direction
- **Thierry Sibieude**, Chair of Social Entrepreneurship at ESSEC Business School
- **Yardley Smith**, Actress
- **Nick Stace**, Ceo Choice, Australian consumers association
- **Unni Beate Sekkesæter**, Microcredit in Norway
- **Erika Watson**, Founder of Prowess and Full Circle Fund
- **Marian Wright Edelman**, Founder of the Children's Defense Fund
- **Mel Young**, Social entrepreneur; Homeless World Cup
- **Jan Evers**, Evers and Jung Director
- **Klaas Motenaar**, President of European Microfinance network