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## **PRESIDENT MKAPA NEW CHAIRMAN OF SOUTH CENTRE BOARD**

Geneva, 17 October, 2006 -- Mr. Benjamin William Mkapa, former President of Tanzania, has assumed the office of the Chairman of the Board of the South Centre – an intergovernmental body of the developing countries. President Mkapa takes up this leadership role from Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who has served a full three year term.

President Mkapa was elected by acclamation for a regular term of 3 years as the new Chairman by the Council of Representatives, which consists of representatives of the 51 developing country Member States of the Centre, at their meeting held here last evening.

“This decision of yours is a great honour and an enormous privilege to me, for I know I am being asked to walk in the footsteps of great personalities who have assumed this Chair in the South Centre in the last ten years,” President Mkapa told the Council of Representatives. “Having worked under the founder Chairman Julius K. Nyerere and worked with the immediate past Chairman – Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali – with him as a Fellow Foreign Minister and with him as the Secretary General of the United Nations, I feel very much at a disadvantage in walking in their footsteps. I just hope that some of the enormous skills and wisdom that they have displayed in their leadership role will, by my association with them, have rubbed some of it on to me.”

Over the last three years, President Mkapa has served on a number of international Commissions and panels of Eminent Persons on matters of interest and vital concerns to the international community. He was Co-Chair, along with the President of Finland, of the Commission on Social Dimensions of Globalisation set up by the International Labour Organization; subsequently, in the Commission for Africa to help eradicate poverty in the African continent; and then on the recent Panel which was reviewed the work of UNCTAD to see how its role can be strengthened in the immediate future in the light of the anticipated reform of the United Nations institutions and structures. Currently, he is involved in the conclusion, along with colleagues, of a report on the efficiency and coherence of the United Nations and its Institutions and Agencies and their operations in the areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Environment.

“One conclusion that I made out of these undertakings was the fact that we have a long way to go to build that bridge between the North and South and between South and South, in order to bring about a more just, equitable, prosperous and peaceful world community of nations,” President Mkapa said. “And because of the representations that I have had, I have also been confirmed in my view that the Centre’s mandate is far from obsolete. On the contrary, I believe that it is more in need now than it has ever been before.”

A number of Council Representatives paid tributes to Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali and welcomed President Mkapa as the new Chairman of the South Centre Board. Upon request by some of the member governments, President Mkapa will be meeting with the Council members in the next few weeks. The new Chairman also met with the Board members this morning as well as with the staff of the Centre.