



WORLD SAVINGS BANKS INSTITUTE

## PRESS INFORMATION

Brussels, 17 July 2006

### **United Nations salute work of WSBI members in building accessible financial sectors**

United Nations Under-Secretary General, Mr. José Antonio Ocampo saluted the work of WSBI members in building accessible financial sectors in their countries at the occasion of the formal launch of the United Nations' Blue Book.

The *Blue Book* is one of the results of the United Nations Year of Microcredit and analyses the constraints and the opportunities to increase access to finance. Access to finance is considered to be one of the main factors of socio-economic and financial development. The objective of the *Blue Book* is to provide a pathway to governments, international organisations and relevant stakeholders to building national financial development strategies.

WSBI was one of the main contributors to the *Blue Book*, supporting the authors with case studies from WSBI members, facilitating information about the specificities of savings and socially committed retail banks. WSBI members are since long on the forefront of access to finance. Various research papers\* have pointed out that savings banks provide three quarters of the 1.4 billion identified accessible accounts in the world. The *Blue Book* presents several WSBI members as best practice examples of financial institutions committed to expand access to finance. The *Blue Book* also presents proximity banking as a successful model to reach the population with a range of financial services.

Chris De Noose, Chairman of the WSBI Management Committee declared: *“The attention and the support of the United Nations for the development of proximity banking, which is the distinctive characteristic of all WSBI members, is a great encouragement to continue our efforts in the field of access to finance”*.

\*\*\*\*\*

#### **Notes to Editors:**

#### **United Nations Blue Book**

To download the Blue Book, follow the following link: <http://www.uncdf.org/bluebook>.

---

\* Perspectives 49: *Access to Finance – What does it mean and how do savings banks foster access*. Available at [info@savings-banks.com](mailto:info@savings-banks.com).

**Press Contacts:**

Dirk Smet, Tel: +32 211 11 90 [dirk.smet@savings-banks.com](mailto:dirk.smet@savings-banks.com)

Alessandra Pertot, Tel: +32 211 11 91 [alessandra.pertot@savings-banks.com](mailto:alessandra.pertot@savings-banks.com)

**About WSBI**

**WSBI (World Savings Banks Institute)** is the only global representative of savings and retail banks. Founded in 1924, it represents savings and retail banks and associations thereof in 86 countries of the world (Asia-Pacific, the Americas, Africa and Europe – via the European Savings Banks Group). As the international voice of savings and retail banking, WSBI works closely with international financial institutions and donor agencies. It thereby represents savings and retail banks' interests at an international level while also facilitating the provision of access to financial sectors worldwide, e.g., through training, consultancy services, etc., be it in developing or developed regions. WSBI members are typically savings and retail banks or associations thereof. They are often organised in decentralised networks and offer their services throughout their region. WSBI member banks have reinvested responsibly in their region for many decades and are one distinct benchmark for corporate social responsibility activities throughout the world.