

“Individually, we are one drop.  
Together, we are an ocean.” - Ryunosuke Satoro



Contact: Amanda Massello  
Manager of Marketing and Communications  
media@unitedplanet.org  
617-267-7763

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Celebrating International Volunteerism: Ambassador John Simon Early Supporter of the Serve America Act Joins United Planet’s International Advisory Board**

**Boston, MA, April 24, 2009** – President Obama signed into law the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act this week, at a ceremony celebrating the law’s sponsor, Massachusetts Senator Kennedy. Massachusetts Representatives Markey and Frank were also among the 275 supporters to pass the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act on March 31<sup>st</sup>. The \$5.7 national billion service bill supports the President’s call for Americans to serve their country through volunteerism, both at home and abroad. It allocates \$10 million to Volunteers for Prosperity (VFP) for 2010 in order to support 50% of the cost of sending skilled American workers to donate their services abroad—allowing Americans in greater numbers to participate in international volunteerism.

“Volunteers for Prosperity was the result of the President’s belief that America’s contribution to the peace and prosperity around the world should not only be measured in dollars and cents, but also in the willingness of American Citizens to give their own time and energy to the global community,” says Ambassador John Simon, who was an early supporter of VFP during his days at the White House. He is currently a visiting fellow at the Center for Global Development.

“Now that this concept has been enshrined into law, it is clear it is a universal one that is shared across the political spectrum in our country – one that both George W. Bush and Edward M. Kennedy can be proud to be associated with. And for me, it is a nice feeling to know I played a small part in the development of such a unifying program.”

Today, Back Bay-based United Planet is pleased to announce that Ambassador Simon will bring his commitment to volunteerism and his international expertise to the International Advisory Board of

11 Arlington Street, Boston, MA 02116  
Local: 617.267.7763 | Toll-free: 800.292.2316 | Fax: 617.267.7764  
Email: team@unitedplanet.org | Web: www.unitedplanet.org

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United Planet, the Boston-based non-profit organization whose mission is to promote cross-cultural understanding and address shared global challenges through innovative initiatives worldwide.

Ambassador Simon shares United Planet’s philosophy of Relational Diplomacy—the idea that individual relationships are the building blocks of increased global cooperation and mutual understanding. “Having traveled across the world to some of its most desperate places, I can say there is nothing like the positive reaction people-to-people connections create,” declared Simon. United Planet volunteers serve as goodwill ambassadors in over 50 countries worldwide.

“It is an honor to be associated with an organization that has taken the lead in reaching out across the globe to foster the type of partnerships that are critical to the peaceful development of this planet we share.”

Ambassador John Simon recently served as the United States Ambassador to the African Union in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Prior to that appointment, he was the Executive Vice President of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC).

Mr. Simon’s work at OPIC saw him leading efforts to promote private investment in the developing world, especially the creation of new private equity funds focused on social impact investment in Africa. He previously served at the White House as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Relief, Stabilization and Development on the National Security Council (NSC) staff and at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as Deputy Assistant Administrator for Policy and Program Coordination. At the White House, Mr. Simon was responsible for several new development initiatives including the Millennium Challenge Account, the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, and the President’s Malaria Initiative. He also oversaw relief efforts for international disasters, including the South Asia Earthquake of 2005.

#### About United Planet:

United Planet is an international non-profit organization with 501(c) 3 status, based in Boston, MA. United Planet's global network of leaders and volunteers fosters cross-cultural understanding and

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addresses shared challenges to unite the world in a community beyond borders. In 2008, United Planet was selected by CNN as one of only ten organizations for its 'Be the Change' initiative. United Planet conducts a strategic range of local, online, and international initiatives, including international volunteer programs from one week to one year in 50 countries.

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