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IATP Announces New President - Jim Harkness

New Leadership Brings Expertise on Global Sustainable Development and Asia

Minneapolis - The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) named Jim Harkness as its new president today. Harkness, a Minnesota native, will replace current IATP president and founder, Mark Ritchie, who is resigning to run for public office in Minnesota.

Harkness joins IATP from the World Wildlife Fund in China, where he oversaw the growth of WWF China from a staff of 10 in 1999 to a staff of 70 in 2005. Previously, Harkness worked for five years for the Ford Foundation in China as its Environment and Development Program Officer. Jim has also served as an advisor for several United Nations agencies including the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Bank. He is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin where he majored in Asian Studies. He received his graduate degree in Development Sociology from Cornell University.

“Jim’s remarkable experience in Asia will be a tremendous asset for IATP as we respond to the challenges of globalization for rural communities in Minnesota and around the world,” said outgoing IATP President Mark Ritchie. “Jim’s expertise, contacts and vision for the continued expansion of our current work in China, the Philippines and other parts of Asia bring a perfect complement to our existing strong presence in Europe. IATP is celebrating 20 years of strengthening connections between the global and local, and Jim is an excellent person to lead the organization into our next 20 years.”

“Jim is an exceptional person, a real internationalist with rich and broad experience, and a strong vision for global sustainability,” said IATP Board President Dr. Arie van den Brand. IATP’s ten-member board began its search for a new president last August. The board was looking for a president to continue IATP’s commitment to internationalism, global democracy, sustainable development, and the rights of farmers worldwide. The board considered over 100 applicants before making this decision.

“IATP already has a well-earned reputation as a leader in supporting sustainable development and rural communities with information, innovation and advocacy,” said Harkness. “I look forward to continuing this great work to build social and environmental values into global institutions, and promote innovative solutions for rural communities in the Midwest and around the world.”

IATP has over 35 staff and offices in Minneapolis and Geneva, Switzerland. For 20 years, IATP has put forward cutting edge ideas to strengthen rural communities around the world. Examples include: helping to found the first fair trade certification body in the U.S. and starting the Minneapolis-based Peace Coffee; supporting community-based wind and renewable energy in rural communities; promoting the value of rural landscapes; strengthening local food systems by connecting farmers with consumers; and establishing the Midwest’s first small landowners’ certified sustainable forestry cooperative.

IATP supporters can meet Harkness at the organization’s 20th Anniversary gala celebration on April 22 at the Depot in Minneapolis. A short interview with Harkness is posted at: www.iatp.org.

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy promotes resilient family farms, rural communities and ecosystems around the world through research and education, science and technology, and advocacy.

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