Global Gathering at Columbia

By Katherine Moore

Columbia University welcomed United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan and more than 40 presidents and senior faculty experts from universities throughout the world for the first Global Colloquium of University Presidents, Jan. 18-19 in Columbia, New York. University, Princeton University, the University of Pennsylvania and Yale University launched the forum. Among its top priorities are addressing shared academic challenges and tackling growing international policy concerns.

The two-day colloquium, chaired by the United Nations secretary-general, is envisioned as an annual event. This year, academic freedom and international migration were designated topics. “Universities are tremendously important partners of the United Nations,” said Annan at an opening dinner on Jan. 18 to greet the conference participants. “As educators, as restorers and creators of knowledge, as people deeply involved in helping the world address the issues of our times, you have a special responsibility to work together on the world’s problems,” said Columbia President Lee C. Bollinger. “We need to work on issues of fair trade, protecting the environment, fighting poverty and disease, and fostering religious pluralism. Other institutions, whether government or businesses, play their unique roles, and we in the academy also have a unique role to play.”

The conference included a public address by Jan O. Karsun, cochair of the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM), stressing the importance of an international dialogue on migration. The conference also was to raise international migration to the top of the United Nations and world community agenda. For more information, see page 7.

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