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The Right Choice at the U.N.

In nominating Kemal Dervis to head the United Nations Development Program, Secretary General Kofi Annan has affirmed the potential of the world body and elevated the stature of international civil service. Both men deserve congratulations: Mr. Dervis for securing the nomination in a field of top-notch candidates, and Mr. Annan for conducting a thorough and successful search.

Mr. Dervis is from Turkey and is currently a member of Parliament. He is also widely credited with rescuing Turkey from economic oblivion in the early years of this decade. After the Turkish fiscal collapse of 2000 unleashed triple-digit inflation and soaring interest rates, Mr. Dervis left the World Bank, where he had served for 22 years, to become Turkey's finance minister, achieving in less than two years a level of economic stability that has long eluded similarly stressed countries. Turkey is now a candidate for membership in the European Union.

Beyond his impressive biography, Mr. Dervis's nomination has special significance because the administrator of the U.N. development program - the third-highest U.N. official, after the secretary general and his deputy - has usually been an American. The sole exception was the last administrator, who is British; he is now Mr. Annan's chief of staff.

Mr. Dervis will be the first administrator from a country that has been on the receiving end of development aid. That perspective, along with his experience as a development banker, will be a big plus as Mr. Dervis addresses both the concerns of the countries that give and the needs of those that get.

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