

## **PRESS RELEASE**

Young social engagement receives international support

### **Ashoka en Staples launch Youth Venture in the Netherlands**

**Amsterdam, October 29, 2009** – Ashoka, the largest global association of social entrepreneurs, today announced the launch of Youth Venture in the Netherlands, which is made possible by support from Staples, Inc., the world’s largest office products company. Today, Ashoka will host an event bringing together Dutch youth at No Limit, a youth centre in Amsterdam Zuidoost, to begin an intensive experience of designing, launching and leading their own ventures to drive positive change in their community.

#### **Youth Venture in the Netherlands**

Youth Venture is partnering with schools and youth centres to inspire and support local youth to become changemakers – people who are civically engaged in an entrepreneurial way. Today’s launch at youth centre No Limit is in an area that has seen increasing violence, especially among youth. Many teenagers have the ideas and the desire to change their neighbourhood, but need a platform, support, and the practical means to make their ideas a reality. Youth Venture will provide them with workshops, personal coaching and seed funding to launch and lead their own lasting civic ventures. Through this experience young people develop the leadership, team, entrepreneurial and life skills that will help put them on a successful path as changemakers throughout their lives. Ashoka aims to support thousands of Dutch youth to become changemakers and join a network of likeminded young changemakers spanning 17 countries.

#### **Fostering social engagement among youth**

“Ashoka’s Youth Venture fosters teenagers’ enthusiasm for entrepreneurship, civic engagement and leadership”, explains Bill Drayton, founder and CEO of Ashoka. “Their dreams and passions are the starting point. We support them in developing ideas for sustainable social ventures, and offer seed funding and organisational support for the realisation of their ideas. Having dramatically more changemakers is the key factor for success for every part of society, from a school to a company to an entire country.”

“Ashoka’s commitment to enable social entrepreneurs to realise their dreams of improving society is very much in line with the entrepreneurial roots and spirit of Staples”, said Theo van Brandenburg, President European Retail at Staples. “In supporting the civic leadership of our youth, we believe we also support them in their personal development and future careers. If you realise that your own deeds can bring about positive impact, you are likely to continue to take initiative and lead change in your work, school and community throughout your life.”

#### **Partnership for social change**

In partnership with Staples, Ashoka has reached 3,500 youth teams involving over 70,000 youth volunteers throughout the world with the transformative experience of taking initiative and making a difference in their communities. The ventures address all types of social issues, including poverty, health, the elderly, the environment, education, diversity issues and the arts.

Staples supports Youth Venture through its private charitable arm, Staples Foundation for Learning, and has enabled the program to expand to five countries in Europe. The Netherlands is now the fifth European country where this groundbreaking youth initiative will be launched. Since 2006, Staples has invested more than USD \$2 million in Youth Venture which allowed it to spread across the

Americas and Europe. Staples has also engaged its executives at the highest levels of the company to provide mentoring and support to the young changemakers.

#### **About Ashoka**

Ashoka is the world's community of leading social entrepreneurs—individuals with innovative and practical ideas for addressing social needs. Since its founding in 1981, Ashoka has launched more than 2,000 leading social entrepreneurs serving over 60 countries. Working with these social entrepreneurs, Ashoka builds communities of innovators who work collectively to transform society and design new ways for the social sector to become more productive, entrepreneurial and globally integrated. For more information, please visit [www.ashoka.org](http://www.ashoka.org).

#### **About Ashoka's Youth Venture**

Ashoka's Youth Venture aims to help an entire generation of young people develop as leaders who will improve their communities now and throughout their lives. Youth Venture inspires and supports teams of young people to launch and lead their own civic-minded organisations and businesses. Youth teams access workshops, tools, adult allies, a global network of like-minded young changemakers, and seed funding to establish their own ventures that solve problems around them. We believe that the greatest contribution we can make to the world is to increase dramatically the number of changemakers today and in every future generation. This is the key factor for success for every part of society, from a school to a company to an entire country. Youth Venture operates in 17 countries and online at [www.GenV.net](http://www.GenV.net).

#### **About Staples Foundation for Learning**

The mission of Staples Foundation for Learning, Inc. is to teach, train and inspire. Founded in 2002, the foundation has contributed more than (USD) \$17 million dollars to national and local charities that provide educational opportunities and job skills for all people, with a special emphasis on disadvantaged youth. Staples Foundation for Learning has also developed lasting relationships with Boys & Girls Clubs of America, Earth Force, Hispanic Heritage Foundation and the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City. In addition, Staples Foundation for Learning supports Ashoka in nine countries: Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Netherlands, Spain and the United States. For more information about the foundation or how to apply for a grant, please visit [www.staplesfoundation.org](http://www.staplesfoundation.org).

#### **Note to the editorial staff**

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