

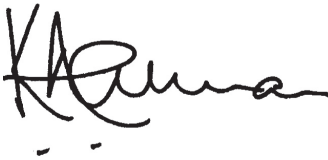
Preface

Since the series was launched in 1952, the *Report on the World Social Situation* has served as a foundation for discussions and policy analysis of socio-economic issues at the intergovernmental level. It has served to identify emerging social trends of international concern and analyze relationships among major development issues with national, regional and international dimensions.

The *2005 Report* continues that tradition by addressing the subject of inequality. In particular, it focuses on some of the growing inequalities that make it challenging, but all the more imperative, to reach the Millennium Development Goals. It shows us that we cannot advance the development agenda without addressing the challenges of inequality within and between countries—the widening gap between skilled and unskilled workers, the chasm between the formal and informal economies, the growing disparities in health, education and opportunities for social and political participation.

The *Report* identifies four areas of particular importance: addressing worldwide asymmetries resulting from globalization; incorporating explicitly the goal of reducing inequality in policies and programmes designed to achieve poverty reduction; expanding opportunities for employment, with particular attention to improving conditions in the informal economy; and promoting social integration and cohesion as key to development, peace and security.

By detailing some of the most critical issues affecting social development today, the *Report* can help guide decisive action to build a more secure and prosperous world in which people are better able to enjoy their fundamental human rights and freedoms. Overcoming the inequality predicament is an essential element of this quest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Annan', with a small dash below it.

KOFI A. ANNAN
Secretary-General