

FOREWORD

Addressing UN Member States in late 2003, at the end of a difficult and divisive period for the international community, I expressed my belief that the world had come to a fork in the road. In one direction lay an outdated international security system, ill-equipped to handle the challenges of the twenty-first century; in the other, a renewed commitment to international cooperation, and reformed mechanisms able to address problems without passports.

In 2004, the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change proposed a new conceptualization of collective security for the 21st century. Addressing a broad range of issues from the use of force to global public health, it recommended fundamental changes in our approach and in the UN itself, and generated lively global debate.

But even as a reform blueprint took shape, the world faced extraordinary challenges. International terrorism wreaked havoc, with attacks in Madrid and Beslan proving the most prominent. Renewed volatility in the Middle East, and an armed conflict in the Darfur region of western Sudan, caused immense suffering. Three new peacekeeping missions were established in quick succession—in Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire and Haiti. And at the end of 2004, a tsunami devastated coastal communities in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India and Thailand, triggering an unprecedented humanitarian operation.

Throughout an eventful year, the United Nations also continued its long-standing mission to help people achieve the Millennium Development Goals and build better lives for themselves and their children. This work encompassed efforts to combat extreme poverty, end hunger, fight human rights abuse, slow the spread of HIV/AIDS, and ease the plight of refugees and displaced persons. Aided by the report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations, we sought greater engagement with civil society actors in achieving shared goals.

This edition of the *Yearbook of the United Nations* provides a comprehensive account of the activities undertaken by the United Nations in 2004. It is my hope that it will serve as an important reference tool for all those seeking to learn about our efforts to revitalize our Organization and to create a more peaceful and prosperous world.



KOFI A. ANNAN

Secretary-General of the United Nations
New York, May 2006