THE YEAR 1997, my first as Secretary-General of the United Nations, was marked by global transition and institutional change. As the United Nations continued to meet the challenges of poverty, war and human rights abuses around the world, we knew that our Organization needed to adapt to a new era of globalization and international organization. We knew that if the United Nations was to retain the support of the world's peoples, it needed to reflect their desires for a more effective, more dynamic and more responsive Organization.

To that end, I presented the most sweeping reform agenda in the Organization's history, seeking to enhance coherence and consistency in every aspect of our mission, and to bring us closer to the peoples we serve. The reaction of Member States was characterized by a genuine desire to renew the United Nations for a new era.

While peace and security matters continued to receive great attention, new impetus was given to our development efforts, both in my reform plan and by the General Assembly, which adopted the Agenda for Development and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21—both documents aimed at invigorating a partnership for sustainable development based on interdependence and mutual benefit. Finally, the year 1997 witnessed a revitalization of our activities in the area of human rights. Mary Robinson took up her position as High Commissioner for Human Rights, and I was privileged to address audiences in Harare and Tehran about the universality of human rights in a diverse world.

This volume of the Yearbook of the United Nations records the Organization's efforts to adapt to far-reaching changes in its external environment and its first steps to reshape itself as a truly effective Organization for the betterment of humankind in the twenty-first century.

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