

Foreword

Looking back on 1998 and evaluating its contribution to human development in Latvia, we can conclude that this year has brought an ever clearer understanding of the values that strengthen Latvia's identity as a democratic European state by being accepted and put into everyday practice in our society.

There has been an ever deeper discussion on the proper path to an integrated society, which is one of the most important preconditions for human development. Work on the national programme for the formation of an integrated society was begun in 1998 and will continue in 1999. The state which is being formed by our common efforts must respect the fundamental rights of the individual which are set down in the Satversme – Latvia's Constitution.

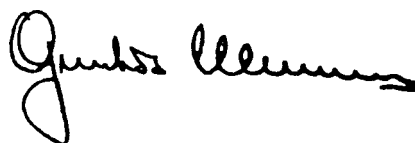
The most important task facing our society is the consolidation of all the people living in Latvia, strengthening our national, multicultural, and democratic state. The Latvian state and its citizens have enacted amendments to the Citizenship Law which are liberal, in line with European standards, and ratified by a referendum, thus clearly taking responsibility for a qualitatively new level of involvement in Latvia's development by the non-citizens living here.

To make sure that the opportunities created by independence and democracy are used effectively to enhance human development, the strengthening of the partnership between the individual and the state and of their mutual responsibility for each other must be given top priority. The development of trust between the state and the individual, the formation of institutions characteristic of civil society, the stimulation of non-governmental organizations, and the prevention of poverty are tasks which demand immediate action by our state and society.

During the process of forming an integrated society in Latvia much greater attention must be paid to the development of a responsible three-way discourse between employers, employees, and the state. The state, the employer, and the employee must understand clearly their respective roles in human development and the strengthening of the democratic Latvian state.

The present trends in Latvian human development, the priorities mentioned above, and the practical opportunities for achieving them are analyzed in the UNDP **Latvia Human Development Report 1998**. The **Report** is a wide-ranging source of analysis and practical information for those who deal with human development issues every day and for those who wish to better understand events in Latvia today.

I wish to express my gratitude to the management and staff of UNDP Latvia and to all the authors involved in making this **Report** for this contribution to the strengthening of Latvia as a democratic, European state.



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President of the Republic of Latvia
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