

# Foreword

A team of Latvian academics, in intense, year-long consultations, has prepared the **Latvia Human Development Report 2002/2003**. The team has consulted with government advisors and policy makers; with experts in international academe, regional institutions and the United Nations system. I should like to sincerely thank and congratulate everyone who was involved in producing this fine report – the editor-in-chief and her colleagues, the authors, our peer reviewers and commentators, my colleagues in the UN system, and our support team – for their manifold contributions.

The **Latvia Human Development Report 2002/2003** examines human development through the prism of human security – an issue at the heart of societal development in a country where individuals, social groups, and government institutions have gone through a series of painful and radical transformations over the past decade. The topic of human security is aptly chosen, since Latvia is currently experiencing another period of transformation. UNDP Latvia believes that it is crucial for individuals to feel empowered – both subjectively and objectively – to cope with and address situations of human insecurity. The Government of Latvia must also be aware of the issues and concerns surrounding human security.

I feel that the outcome of this **Report** is path-breaking in several respects.

Conceptually, the **Report** builds on and enriches the international debate on the notion of human security. It focuses on people's perceptions regarding their human security – the degree to which they feel “free of fear and free of want” (Kofi Annan). Drawing on the expanding literature on the topic of human security, the authors have developed an innovative approach to formulating and organising human security issues. They have introduced new concepts into the debate, which will render the notion of human security amenable to policy making.

First, the authors have developed the concept of *securitability* – the individual's ability to avoid, cope with and overcome situations of human insecurity. Second, they present the idea of *securitability factors* –

the sets of traits in individuals and the capabilities of communities and governments to enhance human security. The notion of *security constellations* refers to the coordinated strategies of actors in human security.

Methodologically, too, the **Report** is novel. Taking an empirical survey as its point of departure, it draws on the seemingly disparate disciplines of psychology, sociology, political science and economics. Thus, it synthesizes findings from the literature on sexual abuse with the reflections of political analysts and economists. It illustrates how human insecurity can be amplified if several negative factors converge – for instance when an individual suffers from the combined impact of childhood abuse, unemployment and a lack of social support networks.

Politically – and this is its most crucial feature – the **Report** offers a platform for public policy debate. Given Latvia's experience as a transition society, there are significant perceptions of insecurity in the country. Specifically, the **Report's** findings reveal several major human security concerns. Among them are the predictability and level of incomes, access to quality and affordable health services, and the impact of domestic violence and organised crime.

Some of the fears regarding human security are justified, others are exaggerated, a few are unwarranted, but all merit attention. As one interviewee put it, Latvia is “a nervous society,” one that has undergone dramatic political and socio-economic changes over the past 15 years. These have been marked by new chasms in regional development and personal incomes, and by an upheaval in the provision of social services, such as for health or welfare.

Despite Latvia's many accomplishments – which include guaranteeing human rights, democratic rule and a well-structured system of public administration, as well as facilitating enterprise development and economic growth – there remains a deep-seated wariness of the public domain. The contribution of the **Report**, in this sense, is to provide a preliminary list of ideas around which to identify and arrange priorities for action so as to address human security concerns. Its recommendations address not only the con-

ventional partners of the UNDP – government and civil society – but also place the spotlight on the roles and responsibilities of the individual. This is an unusual and creative approach.

It is hoped that these ideas can assist in policy debates and decisions not only in Latvia, but also in other transition societies and in every society facing challenges to human security.

Like its predecessors, this **Report** on human development in Latvia is uncomfortable, and deliberately so. Its purpose is to disturb, to analyze, to instigate change and to advocate for sustainable human development.



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