

Foreword

The publishing of the **Latvia Human Development Report 2002/2003** coincides with a new phase of development in the history of the Latvian nation.

Over the centuries, Latvia has experienced numerous and sudden reversals of fortune. Times of rapid change are never simple for the people of any nation. However, it is precisely the ability to face these kinds of challenges directly that has become a hallmark of our people. "Every man forges his own destiny," says an old Latvian proverb.

While Latvia's full integration into the political and economic life of Europe and into the global community will open up many new opportunities, it is important to understand those who view this period in history with trepidation and caution.

This year's **Human Development Report** is noteworthy in its focus on the human need for a sense of security, and on the factors that need to be addressed in order to enhance people's self-confidence. The **Report** identifies and analyzes those spheres and events that create the most insecurity in the population, and alerts the government and authorities to the deleterious effects of not addressing these issues. It emphasizes the urgent necessity of mutual cooperation in seeking solutions, and it asks for transparency and the free flow of information from governing institutions – recognizing this as a critical factor in reducing insecurity among Latvia's population.

The **Report** also addresses every individual in Latvia. Everyone will be able to recognize, among the myriad causes of insecurity, those that they are experiencing. They will realize that they have been understood and have been offered solutions for a way out. The authors of the **Report** identify five factors – which, if enhanced by the State, by communities, by NGOs, and by each individual – would increase the population's sense of security and its ability to act positively in the face of threats to its security.

Individual action is not always the most effective. This **Report** encourages people to be active in forming networks of cooperation with a common goal of influencing events at the local, national, regional and global level.

The majority of the people in Latvia are capable of actively shaping their lives, and are eager to influence the development of the nation in a spirit of cooperation – thus strengthening both their individual and our common sense of security. However, for various reasons, a number of our compatriots have fallen below the poverty threshold. Their sense of security is very low and they are weakened by anxiety. It is precisely these people who are the urgent responsibility of our State. Their sense of security must be restored. They must be led over the threshold. They must be shown that they have not been written off, and that there is room for them on our common path to a decent life.

Every newly published **UNDP Latvia Human Development Report** initiates public discussions about issues that are critical to our nation. The previous year's edition triggered debate that led to a reformed system of public policy planning, rapidly bringing it into the 21st century. I am convinced that this **Report** will once again serve as the basis for serious public debate about human security and the sense of security in Latvia, and that it will serve to enhance people's self-confidence.



Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga,
President of the Republic of Latvia