

Preface

The world faces important decisions on how we generate energy and manage our natural assets—choices with implications that will reverberate for generations to come. Against a backdrop of a rising global population and unceasing pressure on the natural environment, this 2011 edition of the *World Economic and Social Survey* can guide our collective efforts to achieve a much-needed technological transformation to a greener, cleaner global economy.

The past two decades have seen considerable economic growth, particularly in the emerging economies. Hundreds of millions of people have risen from poverty—in Asia, Latin America and, increasingly, in Africa.

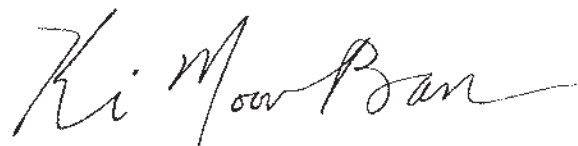
But with global population expected to reach 9 billion by 2050, we need to accelerate the pace of productive economic expansion. At the same time, this growth must be balanced with respect for the human and natural capital that is its foundation, lest we risk profound and potentially irreversible changes in the planet's ability to sustain progress.

Rather than viewing growth and sustainability as competing goals on a collision course, we must see them as complementary and mutually supportive imperatives. This becomes possible when we embrace a low-carbon, resource-efficient, pro-poor economic model.

A comprehensive global energy transition is critical to this process. With data, analysis and careful projections, this *Survey* illustrates the feasibility of such a transformation. It also highlights the hurdles, and outlines what will be required of governments and the international community as a whole to make the most of available green technologies—and to generate new applications and inventions that meet the needs of countries at different levels of development.

The *Survey* also addresses the challenge of feeding a global population that will be nearly 35 per cent larger in 2050 than it is today—looking back at the first green revolution in agriculture, and ahead to future models that can be far more effective in improving the global food supply while protecting its sources.

Green economic thinking can unleash the government policies and business opportunities that will power sustainable growth, reduce poverty and protect our natural resources. By providing a wealth of information, insights and practical recommendations, this *Survey* can help advance the global debate on the critical role that a transformation in technology can play in ushering in a greener future. Its publication is especially timely as the world prepares for next year's Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, and I commend it to policy-makers, non-governmental partners, business executives and concerned individuals everywhere who can help realize this shared goal.



BAN KI-MOON
Secretary-General