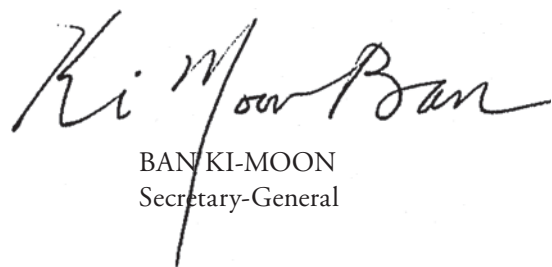


Preface

In rich and poor countries alike, economic security is under threat. Sixty years ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirmed that everyone should have access to a standard of living adequate for their health and well-being, “...including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control” (article 25). Yet, despite considerable progress since then at all levels, heightened risks and new threats jeopardize a more secure future and the goal of achieving development for all.

Climate change and the damage to economic livelihoods caused by natural disasters, whether droughts in Australia or floods in Bangladesh, are stark warnings of the consequences of complacency. Health pandemics, such as that of HIV/AIDS, raise similar concerns. Further, it is the world’s poorest and most vulnerable communities that are on the front line of exposure to these truly global threats. In 2008, rising food prices have triggered serious political unrest in a number of countries and led to renewed support for putting food security back in the international agenda. The recent financial turmoil in the world economy still threatens a sharp growth slowdown which will endanger livelihoods in rich and poor countries alike.

The *World Economic and Social Survey 2008* argues that unregulated markets have contributed to increased economic insecurity without providing adequate social protection. The *Survey* calls for a different approach—one that utilizes more proactive and coherent policy responses, at both national and international levels, to help communities better manage economic risks, cope with economic insecurity and secure their livelihoods. It promises to make for stimulating reading for policymaker, practitioner and concerned citizen alike.



BAN KI-MOON
Secretary-General