

Preface

Unprecedented steps have been taken to halt the global financial meltdown and to enable the world to recover from the economic crisis that emerged in 2008. But the world also faces a climate crisis which has been building over a much longer period of time. If we do not bring to this challenge the same determination and sense of common cause with which we have addressed the economic crisis, not only will the climate catastrophe feared by the scientific community occur, but recovering from it will be an impossibility. Fortunately, the appropriate responses to the climate crisis can also contribute to long-term economic prosperity.

Scientists warn that global emissions must peak within a decade or we will face grave consequences, particularly in the developing world, where the vast majority of humanity live and where the vulnerability to climate impacts is greatest. If rising incomes in the developing world are to be achieved through high-emissions growth, such as that pursued by today's developed countries, then our environmental fabric will be stretched to the breaking point.

Indeed, the tremendous scale of the climate challenge reflects two centuries of unchecked emissions growth. Continuing along this route is not what was promised under the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The sad fact is that we have missed multiple opportunities to change course. Developing countries are the first—and worst—sufferers from a problem for which, from a historical perspective, they bear the least responsibility. Issues of equity and burden-sharing must be addressed.

The United Nations Climate Change Conference, to be held in Copenhagen in December 2009, will provide an unprecedented opportunity to map out a more sustainable economic future. As the advanced economies have the resources and the responsibility to lead the way, they will be required to make bold commitments to reducing their emissions and helping developing nations undertake mitigation and adaptation.

Climate change represents a global challenge whose impact can be addressed only through open, inclusive and frank dialogue. The United Nations is at the heart of that dialogue. The *World Economic and Social Survey 2009* makes the case for meeting both the climate challenge and the development challenge by recognizing the links between the two and proceeding along low-emissions, high-growth pathways.

There is no single blueprint for achieving these goals. The *Survey* examines the key building blocks in order to assess the best possible options available to countries at different levels of development. At the same time, it rejects the polarization of mitigation and adaptation and the notion that one must choose between them. Both are essential, as are the financial and technological resources needed to support them.

There are huge synergies to be generated through big investments in energy efficiency, renewable energy, reduction of vulnerability and broader development projects. This will necessitate truly integrated policy responses, as well as enormous adjustments in the global economy. Yet, we must demand no less of ourselves if we are to put the world on a more sustainable path of development. The onus is on the international community to deliver the resources and leadership required to ensure that whatever is feasible becomes both practical and fair. The present *Survey* makes a timely contribution to that effort, and I commend it to a wide global audience.



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