

# FOREWORD

Asian and Pacific nations are rapidly emerging as engines of global growth. In 2006, the 7.9 per cent increase in the size of the region's developing economies represented a third of worldwide growth. Significantly, these gains were broadly distributed among all subregions. The area's developed economies expanded by a healthy 2.2 per cent, while even countries affected by the 1997 Asian financial crisis reported robust 5 per cent growth and a reassuring macroeconomic outlook, with inflation under control, improved external accounts and stronger financial systems.

These encouraging trends are set out in the *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2007*. However, the *Survey* cautions against complacency. Deeper integration into the global economy offers exciting opportunities for Asian and Pacific nations, but it also poses its own unique challenges. This year's *Survey* identifies some of these concerns, and analyses the near- and medium-term policy implications.

The *Survey* also addresses the issue of gender discrimination. Restrictions on women's choices and opportunities carry significant socio-economic costs at all levels of society. The *Survey* proposes action in four basic sectors: economic participation; education; health; and empowerment. In each area, examples of best practices illustrate the proven efficacy of the recommendations.

This publication is a timely and valuable contribution towards a better understanding of the many development challenges faced by the nations of Asia and the Pacific. I hope it will prove particularly useful to policymakers as they work to grow their economies and achieve the Millennium Development Goals.



Ban Ki-moon  
Secretary-General

March 2007