

**GLOBAL PUBLIC GOODS;
INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



Office of Development Studies (ODS)
Bureau for Development Policy (BDP)
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Contents

Introduction	2
1. Why this book?	3
2. What are global public goods?	3
3. Are global public goods anything new?	4
4. What is UNDP's interest in this issue?	6
5. Are (global) public goods necessarily state-provided goods?	7
6. Isn't it just semantics to introduce the concept "global public goods"?	7
7. Does "public" mean that everyone values the good equally?	8
8. What does "global" mean in " <i>global</i> public goods"?	9
9. How are global public goods to be produced?	10
10. What are the major policy recommendations of the book?	10
11. How can these recommendations be made operational?	11
12. How feasible are these policy recommendations?	13
Annex 1: Contents of the Book	14
Annex 2: Contributors to the Book	16

Introduction

The present *Questions and Answers* is intended to provide an introduction to the book entitled *Global Public Goods; International Cooperation in the 21st Century*, which will be published in May 1999 for UNDP by Oxford University Press, New York.

The book's list of contents and a list of contributors are presented, for ease of reference, in annexes 1 and 2 of this note.

The note tries to answer some of the questions that were repeatedly posed to us, the editors, when preparing the book. We hope this *Q & A* also refers to the queries you have. However, if you have additional points that you would like to raise, please, feel to contact us. Our addresses are given elsewhere in this note as well as on the web site www.undp.org/globalpublicgoods/ that was created to present – and discuss – *Global Public Goods*. We would greatly appreciate receiving any comments and observations which you may have.

We hope you find *Global Public Goods* an interesting and useful publication.

The Editors*

Inge Kaul

Isabelle Grunberg

Marc Stern

* The views expressed in the book *Global Public Goods* and in this note are those of the editors/authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the organization with which they are affiliated.

1. Why this book?

Looking at today's world, one gets the impression that crises are emerging "everywhere". There is no stable peace in sight after the end of the cold war, and in fact the number of refugees are growing. Analysts are warning that globalization may have gone too far and backlashes could occur; climate change and other drastic modifications of life as we now know it could be occurring; transnational crime is on the rise and the social fabric is fraying in many regions, and new disease strains are emerging.

No doubt, the world is busy trying to cope with these challenges in all the different issue areas.

What *Global Public Goods* tries to do, in addition, is to examine today's major policy problems **across the board**. Two questions are of special interest:

- What are the common characteristics, if any, of the challenges we are facing?
- And if common properties exist, what are the policy implications of that fact. Is it possible that we have to change some of the basic structures of policy-making in order to be better able to cope with the present-day concerns?

To these two questions, we answer:

- Yes, today's major policy concerns share a common characteristic: they constitute *global public goods* (and we will explain this term next).
- Three structural policy deficits prevent policy-makers today from effectively dealing with global public goods. These are: a jurisdictional gap; a participation gap; and an incentive gap (all explained below, in point...). And therefore: yes, basic adjustments have to be made in the present system of public policy (see below, points 10 and 11 for details).

A more detailed comment on "Why the book?" is to be found in the book's *Introduction*.

2. What are global public goods?

To answer this question, we would, first of all, like to point the reader to the detailed discussions on the concept of global public good, contained in the *Introduction* chapter to *Global Public Goods*; the chapter by the editors on "Defining Global Public Goods"; and Todd Sandler's chapter on "Intergenerational Intergenerational Public Goods: Strategies, Efficiency and Institutions".

In short, global public goods are probably best understood in comparison to private goods, such as a loaf of bread or shoes. Private goods are "excludable" and "rival". For

example, shoes that have been sold to you are yours and you can "rightly" prevent me from wearing them. That makes shoes an excludable good. Shoes are also rival in consumption – two people cannot wear the same pair of shoes at the same time.

Now, consider a traffic light: my crossing the street when the light shows "green" doesn't make the green light become dimmer, so that it would lose its utility for you. Thus, the benefits of a traffic light – and the norms and rules that underpin its functioning – are non-rival in consumption. They are also largely non-excludable – it would be extremely difficult and costly to make traffic lights "private". Imagine a private traffic light on a busy road, i.e. a light to be used only by one individual, compelling all other pedestrians to walk long detours in order to find another "public" crossing.

Goods ("things") whose characteristics of publicness (non-rivalry in consumption and non-excludability of benefits) extend to more than one set of countries or more than one geographic region and don't discriminate against any population groups or generations (present and future) are *global public goods*.

3. Are global public goods anything new?

No, but we now see a new class of global public goods gaining prominence.

The concept of public goods is a well established one. Even Adam Smith referred to such public goods as defense or institutions of justice in order to discuss what is the role of markets and what that of states. Paul Samuelson then introduced the concept systematically into the theory of economics in the 1950s. Ever since, the concept has guided much of the policy work that has been undertaken all over the world in carving out the role of the state and that of public finance. For a long time, public goods have, more or less automatically, been taken to mean "national" (including "local") public goods.

Yet traffic lights and traffic rules have an equivalent at the global level. Just think of the international transportation or communication regimes! Similarly, other regimes (sets of norms, rules and standards) have characteristics of publicness, including the international free trade regime, negotiated within the context of GATT and the WTO. In fact, global public goods in the form of such "international traffic rules" have existed for many years, and began to expand rapidly since the mid 19th century when technological advances enabled us to reach more easily across borders.

In addition, we could refer to the ozone shield and to the atmosphere which are so-called "pre-existing" global public goods: we don't have to produce them; they exist naturally.

With globalization, governments world-wide embarked on policies of enhanced openness. Many layers of political and economic border controls were removed, spawning increased

international activities. (For a more detailed discussion on this change, see the book's concluding chapter, section 1.)

Now, public goods, that constitute policy outcomes, such as "financial stability" or "health", have turned into *global* public goods: they will, in large measure, only emerge – and exist locally and nationally -- to the extent that all countries, or certain international key players, also help produce them. For example, if somewhere there is an under-supply of financial stability, many other countries, even the world as a whole, may suffer, too.

We distinguish in our concluding chapter between three types of global public goods:

- Natural global commons – such as the ozone shield, or the atmosphere;
- Human-made commons – such as the world's knowledge stock or universal norms and standards;
- Policy outcomes – such as international market efficiency, financial stability, equity, peace and security, environmental sustainability¹; or health.

Global Public Goods focuses primarily on the third category of global public goods, global public policy outcomes, and on a few other goods (such as the Internet and knowledge) which have not yet been fully explored as global public goods.

In brief, the answer to the question "Is there anything new?" is:

- No – global public goods have been around for some time, especially international regimes. But they typically concerned *between-country issues* (such as the regulation of countries' access to the high seas) or *at-the-border issues* (such as tariffs).
- Yes – The class of global public goods, we are primarily addressing here, concern *behind-the-border* issues and call for international cooperation on domestic policy concerns; and in part, they refer to new policy concerns, as in the case of the Internet or knowledge, which is becoming increasingly important as the world employs more and more knowledge-based technologies.

¹ It is probably worth adding here a special comment as regards the concern of environmental sustainability. The "natural global commons" typically don't appear on our policy agenda lest there is a problem, such as, for example, that of the thinning of the ozone layer. But the problem that then becomes a policy challenge is really not the ozone layer as such but the sustainable management of substances such as the CFCs. Hence, "environmental sustainability" is a "policy regime", a global public good apart from that of the ozone layer or any other natural commons per se.

4. What is UNDP's interest in this issue?

There are several reasons for UNDP's interest in the present study. Three stand out in particular:

- UNDP is a development agency, and as such, it has a major professional interest – and responsibility – to fully understand how development works, what factors retard progress and what changes can set the world on a route towards more sustainable and people-centred development.
- If development poses new challenges, then UNDP will want to know whether the new policy requirements demand new technical assistance products, modalities and services – a question that goes to the heart of what UNDP is all about.
- Similarly, UNDP must be concerned when a rapidly expanding agenda of international cooperation is being accommodated in a shrinking overall ODA (official development assistance) budget --- to the detriment of the poorest countries.

Let us in particular, elaborate somewhat the last point concerning ODA.

ODA has been declining over the past several years, although some donor countries are now trying to move the trend again somewhat upward. At the same time, the international community had to find resources for such challenges as: the depletion of the ozone layer; controlling pollution and combating global warming; bailing out countries in financial crises (which siphoned off billions of dollars); re-building war-torn and crisis-ridden countries in the aftermath of the cold war; avoiding over-population; and containing drug trafficking and the spread of weapons. All of these challenges constitute tasks of "global house-keeping": making sure that the world remains in balance, economically, socially, environmentally and in a military-strategic sense.

These are extremely important tasks; and it is laudable that the international community has begun to finance them, even though by placing some charges against the ODA budget which is to be for aid purposes, for the poorest countries.

It can be argued that even the ODA-supported global house-keeping expenditures benefit the poorer countries. That's true. But a country's development needs broad-based support, in a very country-specific way. "Aid" to poorer countries to help them in making their contributions to keeping the world in order should be *additional* – *because it is in the common interest of all, it is spending on a global public good.*

5. Are (global) public goods necessarily state-provided goods?

The answer is unambiguously: "no".

Many public goods are privately provided. Just think of knowledge: it is being produced by millions and billions of people, in a highly decentralized way, all over the world.

Or, think of human rights or other concerns of equity and justice, such as gender equality. As Amartya Sen's chapter underlines, many of our concerns about equity are independent of our citizenship or nationality. Rather, in promoting global public goods, we may act as women, as environmentalists or human-rights advocates.

In fact, in several instances human rights have been curtailed by governments; and it was often thanks to civil society that such restrictions were lifted.

A further example of privately produced public goods is "clean air", or its opposite, the global public "bad" of pollution. The interested reader might want to refer for a discussion on this issue in particular to the Geoffrey Heal's chapter.

6. Isn't it just semantics to introduce the concept "global public goods"?

To act effectively, we need to see clearly.

The concept of global public good is an extremely important lens in order to find the right policy responses to today's major global problems. Here's why:

- The concept helps us see that the problems we face are not just technical (e.g. too high a level of pollution, or lack of international health or financial-market surveillance). Issue- or sector-specific solutions therefore won't suffice. Today's world requires *a new approach to public policy-making: one that includes international cooperation as one of its core elements.*
- Since cooperation is now so important, we also have to re-think our "external affairs" strategies. To begin with: the dividing lines between "domestic" and external" have become blurred as a result of openness and growing interdependence among countries. And therefore, strategies such as "keeping problems out" are no longer very effective. Therefore, cooperation must now be geared more towards *problem-solving and bringing everyone on board, towards prevention rather than reaction.*

- The concept of "global public goods" puts a common denominator under all the different – and quite diverse – challenges the international community is facing. Thus, these problems become comparable – and because they are equals, they become in a way "tradable". For example, a country could offer to help the international community in achieving certain reduced pollution targets in return for, let's say, enhanced access to a certain technology. The concept of global public goods opens up *a whole new world of modalities for international cooperation*.
- And to repeat (because it is such an important point), the concept of global public goods allows us *to distinguish clearly between what the international community does in terms of "aid" and what it does in the mutual interest of all in terms of global housekeeping*.

Hence, to introduce the concept of global public goods is not just a question of semantics. Rather, the global-public-goods lens provides a unifying focus for guiding our policy attention – and action – to the fact that we have entered a new policy era; and that this new era requires a new approach to public policy-making.

7. Does "public" mean that everyone values the good equally?

Not at all: different people have different preferences; and the same holds true for countries.

Consider the following example. A poor farmer in a rural area in a developing country may have little interest in international financial markets. Her interest might be more in controlling tropical diseases. Granted, her life in many respects may also depend on these markets: she may be producing some crops, whose price could be affected by financial volatility; and she might be the one who has to take care of her nephew, who now lives in the city, should financial turmoil make the urban unemployment rates soar. A New York banker, of course, might be keenly interested in financial markets, and less so in tropical diseases, although, she may also be concerned about those, because her next business trip may lead her into a so-called emerging market.

Although both persons have different preferences, both goods, financial stability and reduced threat of disease, are public, i.e. non-rival and non-excludable. In other words, whether or not a good is public, depends on its properties, not on how much it is liked by the public.

But if the farmer had more of her "first-choice" good, and the banker hers, both would have gained some utility.

Of course, if no one finds a public good desirable, then it is either a public "bad", or nothing at all.

It is important to recognise that the question of which global public goods to produce and how much of each is a *political* one: it has to be decided through public dialogue and participatory, democratic decision-making.

8. What does "global" mean in "*global public goods*"?

Does "global" mean that the goods are extra territorial? Some global goods, no doubt, are "out there". For example, the ozone shield or the high seas. But most are closely linked to what is happening at the country level; and many would not exist without decentralized, local and national-level action.

In this connection, it is interesting to look at Charles Wyplosz' chapter on financial stability. Wyplosz clearly underlines that the production of financial stability has to start *at the national level*. How else would it be possible to ensure such "goods" as adequate financial regulation or banking supervision? Or, as Mark Zacher in his chapter on health surveillance argues, if countries don't collect reliable and timely statistics, how would international surveillance be possible? Or, as Geoffrey Heal points out, pollution reduction depends on changes in the pattern of production and consumption of a myriad of individual actors: it is a "privately provided global public good". Of course, in order to encourage the myriad of actors to change their patterns of behaviour in the same direction, something else has to happen: governments have to decide jointly to set requisite norms and standards at the national level.

Thus, we see that many global public goods are an *outcome*, often produced by many actors, in a decentralized fashion. But when the goods exist, many people, across borders, often even humanity as a whole, benefit. The *globality of their benefits* is primarily what makes these goods global.

Their production can vary --- from a "best-shot" effort (e.g. a disease control effort undertaken by one of the world's leading centres, such as the US Centers for Disease Control) to a "pivotal actors" effort (e.g. forestry preservation by the countries with the world's major forest-resources) or a "summation effort" to which all countries and actors have to contribute, on to a "weakest link" effort, which typically depends on even the very last actor's coming on board.

But, since many actors might indeed be interested in enjoying the benefits of the global public goods, they also have an interest in encouraging all the others, on whose contribution the existence of the good depends, actually to make that contribution. Global public goods thus *depend on successful international cooperation*. That is the second dimension of their globality.

9. How are global public goods to be produced?

It varies according to the type of good we are talking about. There are different methods. For example,

- a "best-shot" effort (e.g. a global disease control effort undertaken by one of the world's leading centres, such as the US Centers for Disease Control) or
- a "pivotal actors" effort (e.g. forestry preservation by the countries with the world's major forest-resources) or
- a "summation effort" to which all countries and actors have to contribute, or
- a "weakest link" effort: for example, disease eradication depends on the effort of the last countries in the world to eliminate a disease.

But, since many actors might indeed be interested in enjoying the benefits of the global public goods, they also have an interest in encouraging all the others, on whose contribution the existence of the good depends, to make that contribution. Global public goods thus *depend on successful international cooperation*.

10. What are the major policy recommendations of the book?

In brief:

- We need a new approach to public policy, one that has *international cooperation at its core*. To this end, international cooperation has to be rooted nationally: each country should have as its major policy principle to "*internalize*" its negative cross-border spill-overs as far as possible; and it should have reasonable expectations that if it produces positive spill-overs that benefit other countries or the world as a whole, that it is being credited for that.
- International organizations should be re-oriented to be more *issue-* (global-public-good-) *focused* and to be able to assist countries as an "honest broker" in managing international externalities: adopting agreements (such as the Montreal Protocol), or where appropriate and necessary, help arrange *externality exchanges*.²

² Public goods, including global public goods, can be generated in different ways. One way is to deliberately produce them. For example, the international community can deliberately decide as it did, to enter into a series of negotiations in order to build a free-trade regime. Another possibility would be that the goods (or their opposite, the bads) result from externalities: effects that result from individual (private) actors' activities, without being intended by them or entering into their cost/benefit calculations. For example, if a person ensures his or her health, society as a whole will benefit, because the person concerned may be more productive than a sickly person would be.

- In order to make this type of cooperation work, justice and fairness are key: this means in large measure designing a *new international architecture*.
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11. How can these recommendations be made operational?

In brief, some of the action proposals are as follows:

1. *Rooting cooperation nationally* --

- forging national consensus on the key principle of "internalizing externalities, wherever possible";
- preparing national externality profiles;
- re-considering where to place, and how to structure, the responsibility for "foreign affairs" (Should it continue being concentrated in the traditional ministry for external relations or deconcentrated, a shared responsibility of all ministries with significant external linkages?);
- a dual-track national budget, distinguishing between domestic expenditures and expenditures to support international cooperation.

2. *Managing global public goods and facilitating externality exchanges* --

- ensure that each global public good has a "home", an international organization primarily responsible for it; ³
- use wherever possible, market based mechanisms for the suggested externality exchanges;⁴
- recognise that many global public goods follow a "summation" technology or a "weakest-link" technology, and in the common interest, consider assisting poorer countries to meet their international commitments;⁵
- reverse the logic of globalization: globalise from "the bottom up" rather than "from the top down", and in the same vein, place added emphasis on regional development approaches;⁶
- in order to avoid negotiations getting bogged down due to collective action problems among states, create a new UN Global Trusteeship Council to support the UN

³ Knowledge is an example of a global public good that at present, as Joseph Stiglitz in his chapter argues, lacks such a clear home. Accordingly, his suggestion is to create a knowledge bank, within the fold of the World Bank. Another arrangement could be, as we suggest in the concluding chapter, to create a link between WIPO and UNESCO.

⁴ See in particular, the chapter by Geoffrey Heal on this point.

⁵ See in particular, Jayaraman and Kanbur.

⁶ Charles Wyplosz in particular highlights this point, but it is also echoed in several other chapters. For example, the regional dimension and the club approach is also discussed by Nancy Birdsall and Robert Lawrence (in respect of free trade) and by Lisa D. Cook and Jeffrey Sachs in respect of aid.

Secretary-General in his role as "honest broker" who could assist countries in complex negotiations to find cooperative solutions.⁷

3. *Creating a more just and democratic international architecture—*

- review the composition of the boards of international organizations to ensure that they are fully representative (in terms of North-South; gender; all generations; and all major actors – governments, business and civil society, etc.);⁸
- follow a principle of subsidiarity, and linked to that, a principle of mutual recognition in order to combine globalization (and behind-the-border policy harmonization) with diversity and region/country- specificity. One way to make this principle operational is also to place increased emphasis on regional approaches, both when setting priorities and when designing implementation strategies for international agreements (as discussed above; re-visit also footnote 6);
- demonstrate a clear commitment to the "global public good" by supporting unwaveringly the creation of a minimal amount of global equality – the eradication of the worst forms of poverty (as already decided by the world's leaders at the World Summit for Social Development in 1995);⁹
- create a Global Participation Fund to strengthen the position of developing countries in international negotiations by providing resources for such initiatives as preparation of background studies on issues under negotiation or information activities that could foster public support for Southern positions;¹⁰
- expand the G7/8 group of major industrial countries to a G16, adding eight major developing countries.¹¹

⁷ This proposal is set forth in the concluding policy chapter of the book. It is important to underline that this Council is suggested to be created based on a fresh UN General Assembly resolution. We are not suggesting to revive the former Trusteeship Council that helped facilitate decolonization processes.

⁸ Note that this proposal raises the interesting question of how to combine national democracy with international democracy. Take the case of NGOs or business: the members of these communities have the opportunity to vote nationally (at least in most instances) and are thus represented internationally by their elected governments. Hence, it is important systematically to think through the implications of enhanced opportunities for participation internationally: how does it affect the distribution of opportunities to take political influence? Nevertheless, throughout the chapters, there exists consensus that a new tripartism seems to be desirable.

⁹ See on this point in particular the chapter by Mohan Rao who argues that equity is a "lubricant of international cooperation" and hence a global public good itself.

¹⁰ For a more detailed discussion on all these points, please turn to the index of the book and check the relevant passages in the various chapters.

¹¹ See the concluding policy chapter on this point. It should be noted that this proposal has surfaced before. Among others, Jeffrey Sachs suggested such an expansion of the G7/8 in a recent article in *The Economist* (12 September 1998).

12. How feasible are these policy recommendations?

Just consider the type of crises the world at present finds itself in: the threat of global warming; billions, even trillions of US dollars lost as a result of financial crises disturbing international financial markets; the increasingly explosive inequity between rich and poor (which has nearly tripled since 1960!); drug-trafficking; HIV/AIDS; and the growing concerns about globalization's effects on employment, cultural identity, and the sovereignty of states.

These are valid concerns. But the trends to which they refer must not become reality. There are many ways and opportunities for the international community and for each one of us to help shape the future. One way forward is enhanced international cooperation --but international cooperation not just for any purpose (e.g. not just to make capital even more 'foot-loose'), but *international cooperation for global public goods*.

The current problems of instability and insecurity are so large and pervasive, that most would probably agree that some re-balancing – a better mix between private and public goods, including the global public goods we are discussing here, is indispensable. Even market actors, private business, would probably agree with that, because they know best that markets need security, predictability and the rule of law. And civil society would likely agree. After all, feminists, environmentalists, and human rights advocates have "gone global" for a long time. They realize that together, working across borders they are better able to achieve their goals than only working nationally.

And governments??? Well, governments face a special challenge of re-positioning themselves in order to foster the provision of global public goods. In the past, governments have often acted internationally as self-interested nation-states, in the interest of their constituencies. Their interest was in many instances to "protect" and "defend" their country's interests. This was a correct position to take, as long as borders were relatively closed. Now we are living in a more open world; global public bads travel; and the existence of public goods at the local level often depends on events "far away". Therefore, to secure their national interests, it is now important to place international cooperation at the core of national public policy. Working together with other states and encouraging cooperation and fairness at the global level will increasingly be seen as vital elements of 'self-interested' national strategies.

It is primarily this change in public policy on which the realization of the proposals suggested here depends. But that change, too, should be do-able and feasible --- if we, the public, give our political leaders the mandate to change and to make international cooperation a key priority.

Annex 1: Contents of the book

Global Public Goods: International Cooperation in the 21st Century

Prologue

Tommy Koh

Foreword

James Gustave Speth

Introduction

Inge Kaul, Isabelle Grunberg and Marc A. Stern

I. CONCEPTS

1. Defining Global Public Goods
Inge Kaul, Isabelle Grunberg and Marc A. Stern
2. Intergenerational Public Goods: Strategies, Efficiency and Institutions
Todd Sandler
3. The Political Economy of International Cooperation
Lisa L. Martin

II. CASE STUDIES

• ***Equity and Justice***

4. Equity in a Global Public Goods Framework
J. Mohan Rao
5. Distributive Justice as an International Public Good: A Historical Perspective
Ethan B. Kapstein
6. Global Justice: Beyond International Equity
Amartya Sen

• ***Market Efficiency***

7. Deep Integration and Trade Agreements: Good for Developing Countries?
Nancy Birdsall and Robert Z. Lawrence
8. International Financial Instability
Charles Wyplosz

• ***Environment and Cultural Heritage***

9. Montreal v. Kyoto: International Cooperation and the Global Environment
Scott Barrett
10. New Strategies for the Provision of Global Public Goods: Learning from International Environmental Challenges
Geoffrey Heal
11. Cultural Heritage as Public Good: Economic Analysis Applied to Historic Cities
Ismail Serageldin

• ***Health***

12. Global Epidemiological Surveillance: International Cooperation to Monitor Infectious Diseases
Mark W. Zacher
13. Health as a Global Public Good
Lincoln C. Chen, Tim G. Evans and Richard A. Cash

- ***Knowledge and Information***

14. Knowledge as a Global Public Good
Joseph E. Stiglitz
15. Global Communications for a More Equitable World
J. Habib Sy
16. The Public Face of Cyberspace
Debora L. Spar

- ***Peace and Security***

17. Preventing Deadly Conflict: From Global Housekeeping to Neighbourhood Watch
David A. Hamburg and Jane E. Holl
18. Peace as a Global Public Good
Ruben P. Mendez

III. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

19. International Public Goods and the Case for Foreign Aid
Rajshri Jayaraman and Ravi Kanbur
20. Regional Public Goods in International Assistance
Lisa D. Cook and Jeffrey Sachs

Conclusion

21. Global Public Goods: Concepts, Policies and Strategies
Inge Kaul, Isabelle Grunberg and Marc A. Stern

Further Reading

Glossary

About the Contributors

Index

Annex 2: Contributors to the book

Global Public Goods: International Cooperation in the 21st Century

Scott Barrett
London Business School

Nancy Birdsall
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Richard A. Cash
Harvard Institute for International Development

Lincoln C. Chen
Rockefeller Foundation

Lisa D. Cook
Harvard University

Tim G. Evans
Rockefeller Foundation

Priya Gajraj
United Nations Development Programme

Isabelle Grunberg
United Nations Development Programme

David A. Hamburg
Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict

Geoffrey Heal
Columbia University

Jane E. Holl
Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict

Rajshri Jayaraman
Cornell University

Ravi Kanbur
Cornell University

Ethan B. Kapstein
University of Minnesota

Inge Kaul
United Nations Development Programme

Robert Z. Lawrence
Harvard University

Lisa L. Martin
Harvard University

Ruben P. Mendez
Yale Center for International and Area Studies

J. Mohan Rao
University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Jeffrey Sachs
Harvard Institute for International Development

Todd Sandler
Iowa State University

Amartya Sen
Cambridge University

Ismail Serageldin
World Bank

Debra L. Spar
Harvard Business School

Marc A. Stern
United Nations Development Programme

Joseph E. Stiglitz
World Bank

J. Habib Sy
Partners for African Development

Charles Wyplosz
*Graduate Institute of International Studies,
Geneva*

Mark W. Zacher
University of British Columbia