

# Putting the World Back Together

For the international community—and the United Nations system—2002 was a time of enormous challenges. A year that began hopefully with the establishment of a new government in war-torn Afghanistan, supported with unprecedented speed and scale by the UN and its partners, ended on a much gloomier note. The build-up to a new conflict in Iraq both deeply divided global public opinion and posed real threats to a broader vision of multilateral responses to global crises. On the larger development front, we witnessed the relentless spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases worldwide, the appearance of new conflicts and famine in Africa, renewed instability in some democracies in Latin America, and economic setbacks across many of the Arab States and parts of Central Europe.

But despite these trends, and outside the spotlight on the Middle East, the longer term global agenda for broader prosperity and security moved forward. At two historic United Nations conferences—in Monterrey, Mexico and Johannesburg, South Africa—rich and poor countries together not only reaffirmed their commitment to the eight Millennium Development Goals, but also mapped out a way to accelerate sustainable development across the globe based on a partnership of mutual accountability. In an early tangible sign of that commitment, donors announced the first significant increase in official development assistance in 30 years, a turnaround that has already resulted in total aid climbing by almost five percent in 2002. The bulk of the new money will support those developing countries undertaking good

faith political, social and economic reforms aimed at consolidating democracy and spurring economic growth.

Of course much more is needed—not just in terms of aid, but through broader actions in trade; in technology transfers, including essential medicines; and in debt relief. Yet it is a promising start, as long as the funds flow mainly toward the poorest people, rather than being siphoned off to emerging crises such as Iraq. And the MDGs will prove to be the critical building blocks, unlocking enormous political energy across the developing world and helping focus domestic debate on issues like how to raise—and strategically reallocate—more domestic resources for development priorities. Unlike previous development visions that were mainly accessible to technocrats, the MDGs encapsulate the most basic aspirations of people everywhere, from health to education to prosperity. Time-bound and measurable, they track progress in real time and provide data that drives actions and results.

Over the last three years, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has integrated the goals across our work, and, through our leadership of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), coordinated the research, measurement and campaign efforts of the UN system. This has helped create a harmonized approach to UN development activities, and offered a new framework for stronger partnerships with governments, the Bretton Woods Institutions, bilateral organizations, civil society and the private sector.

Just as important, it has provided added impetus to UNDP's ongoing internal reform efforts. Today's UNDP is a more streamlined, results-oriented and connected organization. We are better attuned to the needs of our partners—as this report testifies and independent surveys confirm. And through the power of our stronger, more efficient networks, we can tap the full range of UNDP's global resources in addressing development challenges anywhere in the world.

In the months and years to come, the real task for UNDP—as for the entire UN system—is to build on these successes and help our partners implement the Monterrey and Johannesburg agendas. By doing so, we can demonstrate how global challenges—whether related to security or poverty, disease or environmental degradation—can only be successfully addressed in a multilateral framework, one that fosters common action to meet our shared goal of a better, safer, more prosperous world.

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*Malloch Brown (right) visits the UNDP-supported Kigali Institute of Science and Technology in Rwanda.*