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# Foreword

History is likely to judge the progress in the 21st century by one major yardstick: is there a growing equality of opportunity between people and among nations? This is the issue that has begun to dominate the development debate in the final decade of the 20th century. That is entirely appropriate, since the pace of development—robust as it was in the past five decades—has been accompanied by rising disparities *within* nations and *between* nations.

The most persistent of these has been gender disparity, despite a relentless struggle to equalize opportunities between women and men. The unfinished agenda for change is still considerable. Women still constitute 70% of the world's poor and two-thirds of the world's illiterates. They occupy only 14% of managerial and administrative jobs, 10% of parliamentary seats and 6% of cabinet positions. In many legal systems, they are still unequal. They often work longer hours than men, but much of their work remains unvalued, unrecognized and unappreciated. And the threat of violence stalks their lives from cradle to grave.

*Human Development Report 1995* documents many of these gender disparities. Its detailed tables and analysis are a major indictment of the continuing discrimination against women in most societies.

The central message of the Report is clear: human development must be engendered. If development is meant to widen opportunities for all people, then continuing exclusion of women from many opportunities of life totally warps the process of development.

There is no rationale for such continuing exclusion. Women are essential agents of political and economic change. As the Report points out: "Investing in women's

capabilities and empowering them to exercise their choices is not only valuable in itself but is also the surest way to contribute to economic growth and overall development."

It appears that the human race is poised for a quantum leap in the next few decades. There has been considerable investment in the education and health of women in the past two decades. But the doors to economic and political opportunities have been opening more slowly and reluctantly. It is this next step that must receive greater attention now.

The international conferences on women and development have contributed greatly to raising the awareness of the global community about issues of gender disparity. The Fourth World Conference on Women, scheduled to be held in Beijing in September 1995, must be another milestone in this continuing struggle for equality. The member governments of the United Nations will get together to chart out a concrete plan of action for the future. It is our hope that they will find the analysis and information provided in *Human Development Report 1995* of some assistance in their worthy endeavour.

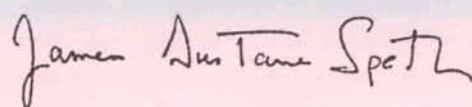
We in UNDP fully recognize that the empowerment of women must be an integral part of the sustainable human development paradigm. For this reason, the advancement of women has recently been adopted as one of our four thematic goals.

The views expressed in the 1995 Report have emerged, as always, from the professional analysis of an independent team of eminent consultants working under the guidance of my Special Adviser and the Report's chief architect, Mahbub ul Haq. These views do not necessarily reflect the

views of UNDP, its Executive Board or member governments of UNDP. The real contribution of this and future *Human Development Reports* lies in their intellectual independence and professional integrity. I am confident that the analysis in this Report will make a valuable contribution to the global dialogue on the issue of gender equality.

For six years, the annual *Human Development Report* has informed, energized and influenced international discussions of development policy. Few publications have done as much. Mr. Haq

and Inge Kaul, who served as Director of the Human Development Report Office during this period, deserve our most profound admiration and appreciation. They certainly have mine. As they are both moving now to new responsibilities, this foreword is an appropriate moment to pause and say, simply, thank you. Our commitment to them and to all those who have helped to produce the first six *Human Development Reports* must be to ensure that future reports are equally insightful and independent.



New York  
May 22, 1995

James Gustave Speth

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Thankful for all the support that they have received, the authors assume full responsibility for the opinions expressed in the Report.

## ABBREVIATIONS

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INSTRAW	United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women
ODA	Official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SNA	System of National Accounts
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
WHO	World Health Organization

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