



United Nations Development Programme

Communications Office

PRESS RELEASE

UNDP HONOURS LATVIA FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT

*Award for “Excellence in Human Development Innovations” to be Presented
at New York Ceremony; Concept of “Securitability” is Introduced*

NEW YORK – 15 December, 2004 -- Latvia will be honoured by the United Nations Development Programme for its Report on Human Security at a special ceremony in New York City on 15 December, 2004. Latvia was one of seven winners of the 2004 Awards for Human Development, as selected by a panel of distinguished judges. **Latvia Report 2002-2003 “Human Security,”** will be awarded for **“Excellence in Human Development Innovations–Concepts or Measurement.”**

In the ten years since gaining independence from Soviet rule, Latvia has endured fundamental changes that threaten many people’s sense of security. Transition from a collective to an individual-based society has left millions in this small nation feeling insecure. The Latvia Report concludes that the country must be ready for the challenges posed by globalisation and membership in the European Union.

In the first-ever systematic analysis of human security in Latvia, the Report identifies health care, economics, and personal security as the main challenges facing the population, compounded by fears of drug trafficking, HIV/AIDs and ecological degradation. Judges commended it for challenging the traditional focus on military and police security, and concentrating on the personal sense of security among Latvians.

The Latvia Report coined a new term: **“Securitability.”** Lead author Mara Simane described it as “the ability to avoid insecure situations or to retain a sense of security when such situations do occur and to return to a sense of security when these have been compromised. It is a precondition for human development, since living free from fear and want allows people to expand their choices on how to live.”

As part of the Report, psychologists conducted a specially designed survey of perceptions of human security concerning 64 issues, as measured by intensity and percentages. The survey included an anxiety scale that reflects events and conditions in the individual’s life. This was instrumental in developing a profile of those Latvians who are closest to the “securitability threshold” – that is, those whose sense of security demands immediate attention.

The Report has had a **significant impact** on Latvian society. It was launched with a major press conference, followed by nationwide radio interviews with the authors and several TV programmes on the topic. Members of the Latvian *Saeima* (Parliament) requested a presentation on the Report, where they avidly discussed human security. In February 2004, the newly formed government included many recommendations from the Report in its “Government Declaration of Intended Initiatives,” four months after the Report was published. Meanwhile, the liberal party

“Latvia’s Way” will include policy recommendations from the Report in its next election programme.

Also at the 15 December ceremony, the **Mahbub ul Haq Award for Outstanding Contribution to Human Development** will be presented to **Mr. Fazle Hasan Abed**, founder of the BRAC organisation in Bangladesh. BRAC has continued its success in advancing food security, health, education and micro-finance, disbursing some \$2 billion to the landless, the rural poor and others with no collateral, with a 98% repayment rate.

The other awardees this year are: **Colombia Report 2003**–“The Conflict, A Way Out;” **Argentina Report 2002** – “Contributions to Human Development;” **West Bengal Sub-National Report 2004** – “Land Reform and Decentralisation;” **Zambia 2003**: “Eradication of Extreme Poverty and Hunger;” and **Roma in Central and Eastern Europe 2002**: “Avoiding the Dependency Trap.”

“The goal of human development is to put people back at the centre of the development process,” said **UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown**, who will host the proceedings on 15 December, along with **Mistress of Ceremonies Juju Chang**, the Emmy Award-winning correspondent for ABC News programme “20/20.” “It is about expanding choices for people, to enable them to enjoy long and healthy lives, knowledge, fair access to the resources and the ability to participate in the life of the community.”

The UNDP has helped more than 135 developing countries and five regions to produce their own national and regional Human Development Reports. These reports, written by local experts, spur public debate and bring political attention to pressing development needs. They propose concrete solutions to mobilise the resources, policies and political will to overcome poverty and bring about growth, equality, investment in people’s basic needs, and freedom. They also help donor governments measure the impact of aid dollars.

Lead Author Mara Simane will accept the award at the **New York Historical Society on Wednesday, 15 December, 2004, from 6:30-800 PM**. The audience will include important figures from the business, diplomatic, media, philanthropic, United Nations and university communities, and from Latvian residents of the northeastern United States.

The UNDP is the global development network of the United Nations. UNDP advocates for change and connects countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. It is on the ground in 166 countries, working with people on their own solutions to global and national development challenges.

Additional information on the UNDP Awards for Human Development is available at <http://hdr.undp.org/aboutus/nhdr/awards/>. **For interview requests with Ms. Simane or UNDP officials, please contact David Kirby at 212-906-3693 or david.kirby@undp.org.**