

ISSUES IN GLOBAL EDUCATION

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A MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

It gives me great pleasure to convey my best wishes to the American Forum for Global Education and to express my gratitude for the Forum's support of the United Nations.

We have reached the end of a tumultuous century that has witnessed the best and worst of human endeavour. Despite the terrible toll that violence and poverty have taken on our world, it is also possible to see signs of progress in the human condition: life expectancy is increasing; literacy is spreading; more and more people are living under relatively pluralist and democratic regimes; global awareness of human rights is on the rise. Year by year, generation by generation, we do move forward.

But our work is far from over. The promise of a world at peace, its people free from fear and free from want, remains to be fulfilled. On the eve of the millennium, the needs and aspirations of the great majority of human beings can still be expressed simply and starkly: safe water; shelter from violence — that of nature and of one's fellow men; enough food for the family; a job; schooling for the children; and a state which does not oppress its citizens but rules with their consent.

We are living through a vast transformation, and wrestling with new political uncertainties and new forces of economic, social and technological change. Building lives of security and dignity — and combatting threats to peace — in an interdependent world requires the full participation of every citizen and every nation. The arrival of a new millennium offers us an opportunity to reflect upon our past and to envision our future. We are not going to tear up the Charter of the United Nations and write a new one. Nor will we produce a blueprint for Utopia. What we must do is identify a select few of the world's most pressing problems, and set ourselves a precise, achievable program for dealing with them. At the United Nations, all people of good will can come together in common cause. Guided by universal values such as equality, tolerance and justice, I have faith that we can build a better world for ourselves and for succeeding generations.



Kofi A. Annan

