

# Foreword

For more than 35 years, the United Nations Population Fund has played a key role in helping the world to address population challenges. Its provision of reproductive health information and services has been a lifeline for millions of women, girls and families throughout the world. UNFPA has demonstrated that improving the lives of women and families helps to reduce poverty and slow population growth. It has helped countries integrate population considerations into their national strategies for development. It has forged strong partnerships with governments, non-governmental organizations and other members of the UN system. And it continues to implement a wide range of programmes, encompassing family planning, safe motherhood and the empowerment of young people to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS.



This annual report shows the wide scope of action undertaken by UNFPA in 2003. We can see how lives are saved by emergency obstetric care; how girls stay in school longer when encouraged to delay marriage and pregnancy; how violence against women declines when laws are made stronger; and how human rights are advanced when discrimination is addressed in culturally sensitive ways. These and other programmes are part of the world's wide-ranging efforts to implement the Programme of Action adopted at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development. Indeed, without sustained follow-up to the landmark Cairo conference, our wider campaign to achieve the Millennium Development Goals will be much more difficult.

Population issues are closely tied to our common hopes for a better future. Everyone benefits when people, no matter where they are born, have opportunities and choices, and enjoy respect for their human rights. This annual report shows UNFPA's enduring commitment to that mission of human dignity and well-being. I commend this volume's information and analysis to the widest possible global readership.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'K. Annan'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'K' and a long, sweeping tail.

Kofi A. Annan

*Secretary-General of the United Nations*