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**PERSPECTIVES**

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**ASIA-PACIFIC ECONOMIES: COPING WITH NEW  
UNCERTAINTIES**

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## FOREWORD

This is the inaugural issue of the *Bulletin on Asia-Pacific Perspectives*. Its objectives are twofold. One is to provide an assessment of the most recent developments in the global economy and their impact and implications for various economies or groups of economies within the ESCAP region. A more detailed review is undertaken in the annual publication *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific*, published in April. The assessment benefited greatly from the collective wisdom of eminent persons from 14 member countries of ESCAP as well as other international organizations.

The mid-term review comes at an opportune time. The economic mood at this time last year was certainly upbeat – with growth rates being revised upwards in many economies and regions, including Asia. However, it has become much more sombre since the first quarter of 2001 – along with a sharp deterioration in the economic performance of the United States of America, for several years the pillar of the global economy. In addition, there has been a slowdown in the economies of the European Union zone, while the modest economic recovery in Japan has become feeble of late. Moreover, a heightened sense of uncertainty now prevails in many parts of the world, in the aftermath as well as in consequence of recent events in the United States.

The second objective of the *Bulletin* is to shed some light on the pressing issues and feasible options in the management of constant change – a process that government, the private sector, civil society organizations and communities at large are still grappling with. The dynamics of global and regional interdependence is transforming the world and regional economies in ways that are not yet fully understood, or predictable. For developing countries – particularly smaller developing countries, least developed countries and Pacific island countries – rapid globalization, while providing new opportunities, also poses formidable challenges.

All of these factors highlight the need for countries to strengthen their economic fundamentals and adopt poverty reduction policies. These are critical parameters in the promotion of sustained economic growth and social development. The shorter articles in the *Bulletin* provide some perspectives on some of the challenges of change and their management in an increasingly integrated world.

This inaugural issue of the *Bulletin* is a concrete manifestation of the concerted efforts that are being made to enhance the role and relevance of the secretariat in the ESCAP region. In this context, I wish to put on record my deep appreciation to the eminent persons who so generously gave of their time in support of our work in the secretariat and to the high-level experts for their written thoughts and perspectives on major issues of concern to us all.



Kim Hak-Su  
Executive Secretary

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Experts from outside the ESCAP secretariat have contributed to the *Bulletin* in signed articles and in comments and suggestions at various stages of preparation. Chapter I, as the anchor article on international developments and regional implications, and chapter VI, on the “new” poor, were discussed at a Meeting of Eminent Persons on Current and Prospective Economic Performance in the ESCAP Region held at ESCAP, Bangkok, on 18 and 19 October 2001. The Eminent Persons, who attended the Meeting in their personal capacities, and other participants were: Peter G. Warr (Australia), Rehman Sobhan (Bangladesh), Lu Aiguo (China), Suman K. Bery (India), Djisman Simanjuntak (Indonesia), Shinichi Ichimura (Japan), Jomo K. Sundaram (Malaysia), Tilak Bahadur Rawal (Nepal), Bernardo M. Villegas (Philippines), Suk Bum Yoon (Republic of Korea), Victor Y. Rosin (Russian Federation), Linda Low (Singapore), Amarakoon Bandara (Sri Lanka), Thirachai Phuvanat-Naranubala (Thailand) and Pisit Leeahtam (Thailand). J.K. Robert England (UNDP, Bangkok), Ejaz Ghani (World Bank, Bangkok), Lorenzo Giorgianni (IMF, Bangkok) and C. Houser (ADB, Manila) also participated in the Meeting.

ESCAP staff members also contributed signed articles to the *Bulletin*. Development Research and Policy Analysis Division staff – Shahid Ahmed, Eugene Gherman, Aynul Hasan, Fareeda Maroof Hla, Nobuko Kajiura, Muhammad Hussain Malik, Hiren Sarkar, Hirohito Toda, Seok-Dong Wang and Marin Yari – contributed comments and suggestions during the preparation of the papers. Research assistance was provided by Somchai Congtavinsutti and Amornrut Supornsinchai. All graphics work and the cover design were done by Somchai Congtavinsutti. The logistics of processing and production, and the organization of the Meeting, were handled by Dusdeemala Kanittanon and Woranut Sompitayanurak.