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### State of the World's Cities 2004/05: Foreword by The Secretary-General of The United Nations

This issue of *The State of the World's Cities* report examines the cultural impact of globalization on cities – on how they are governed and planned, on the make-up and density of their population, and on their cultures and economies.

Advances in communications technology and the increasing movement of people across national borders have given many greater freedom and opportunity. But, as this report shows, it has also contributed to a bleak situation in many cities. Many cities face pervasive and persistent problems, including growing poverty, deepening inequality and polarization, widespread corruption at the local level, high rates of urban crime and violence, and deteriorating living conditions.

The lives of international immigrants in many of the world's cities are physically, culturally and economically separated from the lives of other city-dwellers. Many live in overcrowded slums and cannot afford adequate housing. They have to face discrimination, insecure tenure and the exploitation of their labour. Their daily lives are all too often plagued by violence, poverty, and poor health. Yet their economic contribution to the cities in which they live is profound. So too is their contribution, through remittances, to their countries of origin. In short, urban culture today is marked by intensified cultural differentiation. This can enrich and strengthen cities; but it can also be a source of division and a basis for exclusion.

This report not only documents the problems in the world's cities; it directs our attention to policies, programmes and projects that can help to create multicultural and inclusive cities. As the report emphasizes, if we are to create cities that are open to all and exclude none, we need to plan for *cities of difference*, and capitalize on the benefits of multicultural existence. This requires the engagement of all non-governmental and community stakeholders, on the basis of legislation that guarantees citizens' rights to the city, and judicial systems that enforce those rights.

By addressing the relationship between globalization, culture and poverty within cities, this report will help the assessment of progress towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and Targets, particularly those relating to slums, water and sanitation. Its conclusions stand as a clear challenge to city planners and managers to nurture an urban culture of peace – one that supports the eradication of poverty and ensures that all urban dwellers, regardless of their race, sex, language or religion, are full citizens of the cities in which they live.

Kofi A Annan  
Secretary-General, United Nations

