

## PREFACE

In his address to the United Nations General Assembly on 23 September 2003, the United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, succinctly warned the world body that it had “come to a fork in the road.” We, the Co-Chairs of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, believe the world stands at a historic moment of decision.

The Commission was established to address some of the challenges facing the world as it stands at this fork. As human beings, it is in our power to take a correct turn, which would make the world safer, fair, ethical, inclusive and prosperous for the majority, not just for a few, within countries and between countries. It is also in our power to prevaricate, to ignore the road signs, and let the world we all share slide into further spirals of political turbulence, conflicts and wars.

We believe we have in these following pages enough of the case for political leaders, nationally and internationally, to be persuaded to take the correct turn.

Currently, globalization is a divisive subject. It verges on a dialogue of the deaf, both nationally and internationally. Yet the future of our countries, and the destiny of our globe, demands that we all rethink globalization. This report is timely. The debate is changing. Old convictions and ideologies have been tested by experience, and changed by example. People are open to a fresh start. Now is the time for leadership, to move from sterile debate to positive action.

We believe that, in this report, we have looked at globalization through the eyes of the people, rising above our constituencies and capturing faithfully the hopes and fears of our shared humanity. Many recognize the opportunities for a better life that globalization presents. We believe their hopes are realizable, but only if globalization is subjected to better governance at all levels. More people than ever before do not want to be left behind by the globalization train; but they want to be sure where it is heading, and that it is travelling at survivable speed.

Our driving spirit has been to make globalization a positive force for all people and countries. We propose no panaceas or simple solutions; instead we suggest a new perspective.

We believe the dominant perspective on globalization must shift more from a narrow preoccupation with markets to a broader preoccupation with people. Globalization must be brought from the high pedestal of corporate board rooms and cabinet meetings to meet the needs of people in the communities in which they live. The social dimension of globalization is about jobs, health and education – but it goes far beyond these. It is the dimension of globalization which people experience in their daily life and work: the totality of their aspirations for democratic participation and material prosperity. A better globalization is the key to a better and secure life for people everywhere in the 21st century.

We also propose a process by which such a perspective can be realized at all levels, beginning with empowered local communities and improved and more accountable national governance; fair global rules applied fairly; and global institutions that are more pro-people.

We propose a series of actions – each small in themselves. Yet taken together they will set in train a process to achieve this goal by stimulating and energizing the networks of people and ideas and the economic and social interactions of globalization itself.

Our experience working in the Commission makes us confident of the future. The Commission is a microcosm of the very wide diversity of opinion, concerns and perspectives of the real world. We come from some of the wealthiest and poorest countries. We comprise trade unionists and corporate leaders, parliamentarians and presidents, leaders of indigenous peoples and women’s activists, scholars and government advisors. We have seen, in the course of our work, how divergent positions can be spanned and how common interests can lead to common action through dialogue.

The Commission was established by the ILO. It had full and independent responsibility for its Report, and members of the Commission served in their individual capacity. The members of the Commission do not each subscribe to every statement in the text, but they endorse the Report as a whole to stimulate a wider process of public dialogue and common endeavour which will promote a fair and inclusive globalization.

It was a great pleasure and a uniquely enriching experience for us, the Co-Chairs, to work with a Commission composed of such a distinguished, thoroughly committed and energetic group of global citizens. We thank them wholeheartedly for their dedication, contribution and cooperation. We thank the very capable Secretariat that served us so well. And we are grateful to the ILO for the decision to constitute such a Commission and to honour us with the historic responsibility to chair it.

To the world, and especially to political and corporate leaders everywhere, we present these pointers to a better globalization, a better future for people – all people.

**Tarja Halonen**  
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Co-Chair

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