

P R E F A C E

The genesis of the *Human Security Report* dates back to the end of the 1990s when I was working as Director of the Strategic Planning Unit in UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Executive Office.

Shortly after arriving in New York I was surprised to find that the UN had no way of determining whether wars, mass slaughters of civilians or core human rights abuses were increasing or decreasing around the world.

The fact that there has been a dramatic global decline in political violence since the end of the Cold War was, even then, evident to many conflict researchers. But it had gone largely unnoticed by officials and the public alike—and even some scholars working in the field.

In a sense this wasn't surprising. The global media gave front-page coverage to new wars, but mostly ignored the larger number of existing conflicts that quietly ended. And neither the UN nor any other international organisation collected data on wars, genocides, terrorism and violent abuses of human rights. This is still the case more than five years later.

Without access to reliable data on global and regional trends in political violence, the UN, regional organisations and donor governments had no way of determining whether *in general* their conflict prevention, peacebuilding or human rights promotion policies were effective.

Security issues are extremely sensitive for member states of the UN and all attempts to create a substantial

in-house research capacity in the Secretariat that could collate data and examine sensitive security issues have been frustrated.

Fortunately, the scholarly community has produced a wealth of relevant data that to a degree make up for the absence of official statistics. Although much of this material is highly technical and inaccessible to non-specialists, it has provided a solid base for the *Human Security Report 2005*.

The challenge has been to make sense of the mass of often contested data and analysis available in the research community around the world and to commission new material where necessary. Last but not least, the findings had to be integrated into a comprehensive package that was accessible to policymakers and other non-specialists.

This task has proven far more time-consuming than any of us could have imagined.

We owe our funders—the governments of Canada, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom—a deep debt of gratitude for their patience.

Finally, we have almost certainly missed some critical new findings that would throw further light on the changes that this report chronicles. We hope that where this is the case readers will let us know so new findings can be included in future volumes.

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