

# FOREWORD

The purpose of futures research is to systematically explore, create, and test both possible and desirable futures to improve decisions. Decisionmaking is affected by globalization; hence, global futures research will be needed to inform decisions made by individuals, groups, and institutions.

Just as the person on top of the mast on old sailing ships used to point out the rocks and safe channels to the captain below for the smooth running of the ship through uncharted waters, so too futurists with foresight systems for the world can point out problems and opportunities to leaders around the world. The Millennium Project is one such system.

Because the issues and solutions of our time are increasingly transnational, transinstitutional, and transdisciplinary, the Millennium Project was created as a global participatory think tank of futurists, scholars, scientists, business planners, and policymakers who work for international organizations, governments, corporations, NGOs, and universities.

Futures research has had an uncomfortable relationship with most academic research. As the latter advances, it tends to narrow its scope of study. In contrast, futures research tends to broaden its scope of study as it advances, to take into account future possibilities. It is not a science; the outcome of futures studies depends on the methods used and the skills of the practitioners. Its methods can be highly quantitative (such as the State of the Future Index in Chapter 2) or qualitative (such as the Delphi studies that produced the Education and Learning 2030 study in Chapter 3). It helps to provide a framework to better understand the present and to expand mental horizons (such as the Global Challenges described in Chapter 1).

The *2007 State of the Future* provides an additional eye on global change. This is the eleventh *State of the Future* report. It contains the 11-year cumulative research and judgments of approximately 2,400 thoughtful and creative people. About 350 people participated in last year's studies. The institutional and geographic demographics of the participants can be found in the Appendix, and full lists of participants are available in Appendix A on the CD.

The annual *State of the Future* is a utility from which people can draw information and ideas to be adapted to their unique needs. It provides a global strategic landscape that public and private policymakers may use to improve their own strategic decisionmaking and global understanding. Business executives can use the research as input to their planning. University professors, futurists, and other consultants may find this information useful in teaching and research. Sections of previous reports have been used as university and high school texts.

The *2007 State of the Future* comes in two parts: a CD with complete details of the Millennium Project's research this year and over the past several years, and this print edition of a series of distilled versions of the 2006–07 research. Consider each chapter of the print part as the executive summary of the respective chapter in the CD. For example, the print Chapter 1 on the 15 Global Challenges allocates two pages to each Challenge, while the CD devotes over 1,000 pages to them.

The CD can also be used to search for the particular items needed in customized work. Regional views on each of the 15 Challenges are also presented in Chapter 1. For example, all the African sections on each of the 15 Challenges could be assembled into one paper by cutting and pasting (and possibly adding to the content by searching for results on Africa in other chapters), providing one report on Global Challenges and Issues for Africa.

The CD version of the report, which contains about 5,500 pages, is designed to serve as a reference document. Users can search the document using key words and print specific sections of interest. In the CD, for example, each Challenge has a comprehensive overview, alternative perceptions about the challenges and additions to the overview, regional views, relevant information from recent literature, and a set of actions from previous Global Lookout Panels. Some of the information is derived from previous interviews with decisionmakers. The descriptions of the challenges also contain ideas contributed in the past years, additional actions and views about those actions, and suggested indicators to measure progress or lack thereof on addressing the challenge.

The statements in the Global Challenges chapter do not represent a consensus because they are a distillation of a range of views from hundreds of participants rather than an essay by a single author. We sought and welcomed a diversity of opinions. Hence, some of the issues raised and recommended actions seem contradictory. In addition, there does not appear to be a cause-and-effect relationship in some of the statements, and some sound like political clichés, but these are the views of the participants that may be useful to consider in the policy process. Nevertheless, it does present a more coherent overview of the global situation and prognosis than we have found elsewhere.

The Millennium Project's Nodes are groups of individuals and organizations that interconnect global and local perspectives. They identify participants, conduct interviews, translate and distribute questionnaires, and conduct research and conferences. It is through their contributions that the world picture of this report and indeed all of the Millennium Project's work emerges.

Through its research, publications, conferences, and Nodes, the Millennium Project helps to nurture an international collaborative spirit of free inquiry and feedback for increasing collective intelligence to improve social, technical, and environmental viability for human development. Feedback on any sections of the book is most welcome at <jglenn@igc.org> and may help shape the next *State of the Future*.

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