

Foreword

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Our world is getting smaller. Over the past two decades, growing political, economic, social and ecological interdependence have fundamentally transformed the environment for effective and accountable public policymaking. Political decision-makers around the world – in developing and developed countries alike – struggle with the challenges that globalization puts before them.

The Global Public Policy Project, initiated in 1999 at the request of the Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, has highlighted the critical role of non-state actors – business as well as civil society – in the emerging system of global governance. In our final report “Critical Choices,” parts of which found their way into the Secretary-General’s Millennium Report, we emphasized the significance of global public policy networks – collaborative alliances that bring together governments, international organizations, NGOs and business in the pursuit of common goals – for addressing today’s complex governance challenges. Building on more than fifteen in-depth case studies, the project’s report demonstrated that global public policy networks do present a promising alternative to oftentimes inflexible and slow intergovernmental cooperation. At the same time, the report also emphasized the fact that networks are not the magic bullet. One of the key insights of “Critical Choices” is the recognition of networks as political animals, complex political structures that require skilled political leadership, investment of real resources and a commitment to transparency and accountability. In addition, the report also highlighted the fact that networks are not replacing governments. To the contrary, networks depend on extensive governmental involvement, and help them to be more effective in fulfilling their tasks.

Over the past few years, networks and partnerships have attracted considerable attention by policymakers and academics alike. Under Kofi Annan’s leadership, the United Nations has placed cross-sectoral networks and partnerships at the center of its strategic orientation. The World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg is only the latest in a string of events and activities of the United Nations where this new spirit of cooperation and partnership is taking hold. At

the same time, the Johannesburg Summit has also made very clear that new forms of networked governance are not unproblematic. Opposition by NGOs as well as many developing countries highlights the fact that networks and partnerships oftentimes suffer from critical deficiencies. Most importantly, the question of accountability and legitimacy has not been answered satisfactorily. We are only beginning to comprehend the full implications of this drive for networking and partnership, and much more research and training needs to be done to make sure we can make best use of these new forms of governance, while minimizing their detrimental effects.

This book seeks to make a further contribution to that debate, bringing together both researchers and practitioners to explore the potential as well as limits of partnerships for the advancement of sustainability development. It builds on the results of a workshop on the promise of partnerships at the WSSD jointly organized by the Global Public Policy Institute and the World Conservation Union (IUCN). The generous support of the Hans Böckler Foundation and the Heinrich Böll Foundation made this volume possible.

I am particularly proud and pleased to introduce this collection of analyses to you as the first major publication of the Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi). The Global Public Policy Institute is an independent, non-profit think tank based in Berlin, Germany. GPPi builds on the work of the Global Public Policy Project, a network of researchers that has developed and flourished over the past three years. Our institute explores and supports innovative answers to complex governance challenges bringing together all key players of the globalization process: governments, international organizations, civil society organizations as well as businesses. GPPi is committed to advancing policy research by building bridges between academia and practitioners; encouraging policy entrepreneurship through its consulting and training services; and, most importantly, revitalizing the public space by enriching public debates on pressing public policy challenges.

In the spirit of GPPi's mission I sincerely hope that this book will make an important contribution to the debate on advancing global environmental governance.

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