

Foreword

Sustainable development, climate change and poverty are urgent tasks requiring efforts that span countries, regions and communities. In this interdependent world, a shared vision and common effort are vital to sustaining the life support system that humanity relies on for its water, clean air, energy, food and raw materials.

Since creating a sustainable world begins at home, the Dutch Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM), which I am honoured to lead, works to balance the needs of society with preserving the environment for present and future generations. In The Netherlands, we work closely with many partners as we pursue the holy grail of sustainability: other ministries, local and regional authorities, civil society, businesses and interest groups, as well as other national governments. Dutch environmental policy and practice are integral parts of the global sustainability effort. We do not merely pay lip service to international treaties, conventions and laws; we *implement* them. Our vision and our promise to work for a liveable environment underpins our belief in diversity and social justice; in freedom with responsibility: giving citizens the freedom to make decisions in a socially responsible way; and in managing the living environment in a manner that guarantees its preservation for future generations.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to formulate and implement sustainability policy without first understanding the dynamic relationships between nature, society, economics and technology; research also plays a pivotal role in this regard. In my capacity as educator, researcher and policy advisor, I have come to know Professor Hans Opschoor as a man of true dedication and great personal integrity. He shares our common vision of improving and sustaining the environment and quality of life not only for the people of The Netherlands but also for the whole world.

In both academia and policymaking, Professor Opschoor has long been a world class contributor to sustainable development and environmental economics. In fact, I would go so far as to call him an academic environmental activist, fully committed to the ethos and values of sustainability. The contributors to this volume have collaborated or copublished with Professor Opschoor on sustainable development and environmental and resource economics, or served with him in advisory committees and research boards or on the editorial staff of globally renowned journals.

Although not all the contributors directly reference Professor Opschoor's work, this volume contains pieces by academics at the cutting edge of sustainability and sustainable development research and addresses five major themes:

1. principles and practice of resource/environmental economics and sustainable development;
2. globalization, liberalization, policy and politics of sustainable development in developing countries;
3. structural socioeconomic change, growth and dematerialization;
4. national and international economic instruments for climate change policy;
5. market forces, institutions and environmental degradation.

The majority of subthemes and chapters articulate the dynamic relationship between two central global concerns: poverty and climate change. If ignored, the relationship between the two will have unprecedented impact, undermining the welfare of both present and future generations of the world's most vulnerable citizens. This is one of the reasons I am pleased to have been able to contribute to this endeavour, both in a personal capacity and as someone who understands the extent of Professor Hans Opschoor's contribution to the science of sustainability. The dedication of this book to his work is a fitting and respectful tribute.

Jacqueline Cramer
Minister for Spatial Planning and the Environment
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