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Geneva
This year's Gunnar Myrdal Lecture will be delivered by Alberto Alesina of Harvard University. The topic will be "Welfare policies in the UNECE region: Why so different?" The lecture will take place on Friday, 12 May 2006 at the Palais des Nations (Salle XVIII) at 3:00 p.m.

Alberto Alesina will discuss why the UNECE countries* have chosen rather different models of welfare state and, more generally, alternative policies to fight poverty. In particular, the lecture will focus upon why the American welfare system is less generous than the typical European one, emphasizing the causes and implications of these differences. It will also explore variations in welfare policies within western European countries by comparing their effectiveness, successes and failures. Prof. Alesina will discuss this analysis, and comparison could serve as a guidance for Central and Eastern European countries in selecting a strategy for the reform of their welfare system.

Professor Alberto Alesina, born in Italy in 1957, is the Nathaniel Ropes Professor of Political Economy at Harvard University. Currently he is Chairman of the Department of Economics. He obtained his PhD from Harvard in 1986. He is also a member of the National Bureau of Economic Research and the Centre for Economic Policy Research.

Professor Alesina is a leader in the field of Political Economy and has published extensively in all major academic journals in economics. He has published several books and edited many more. His two most recent books are The Size of Nations, published by MIT Press, and Fighting Poverty in the US and Europe: A World of Difference, published by Oxford University Press. The MIT Press will publish his book, The Future of Europe: Reform or Decline later this year. He has been a Co-editor of the Quarterly Journal of Economics for eight years and Associate Editor of many academic journals. He has published columns in many leading newspapers around the world. In 1990 The Economist magazine named him one of the eight best economists under the age of forty in the world and most likely to win a Nobel Prize in the future.

Professor Alesina's work has covered a variety of topics: political business cycles, the political economy of fiscal policy and budget deficits, the process of European integration, stabilization policies in high inflation countries, the determination of the size of countries, currency unions, the political economic determinants of redistributive policies, differences in the welfare state in the US and Europe and, more generally, differences in the economic system in the US and Europe, the effect of alternative electoral systems on economic policies, and the determination of the choice of different electoral systems. His scholarly work has been widely cited and influential.

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The Lectures are named in honour of Gunnar Myrdal, first Executive Secretary of the UNECE (1947-1957), who received the Nobel Prize in economics in 1974. The topic that Mr. Alesina has chosen for his lecture, "Welfare policies in the UNECE region: Why so different?", would surely have been of interest to Gunnar Myrdal since much of his academic work was concerned with poverty and anti-poverty programmes.

This is the fourth in a new series devoted to major international economic problems. The UNECE 2003 Myrdal Lecture was given by Nobel prize winner Professor Douglass C. North, the 2004 Lecture was given by Joseph E. Stiglitz, 2001 Nobel Laureate in Economics and the 2005 Lecture was given by Pascal Lamy, Director-General of the World Trade Organization and former Trade Commissioner of the European Commission.

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* Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal,

Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States, Uzbekistan.

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