I am writing these words just hours after the conclusion of the sixth annual Milken Institute Global Conference, so my thoughts are naturally focused on what turned out to be a remarkable event. This was my second Global Conference as head of the Institute, and I’m still amazed at not only what goes into putting on the event, but also what comes out of it.

This was our biggest conference yet, with some 180 panelists and more than 1,600 in attendance. Our purpose in organizing the Global Conference is to bring together a distinguished and diverse audience of decision-makers from around the world to debate current events and – we hope – generate ideas for speeding economic growth. This year, with the world grappling with both the war in Iraq and a stagnant global economy, we focused on diverse subjects ranging from geopolitical security to ways to meet looming pension liabilities in rapidly aging societies. And we seasoned the brew with sessions on everything from the protection of intellectual property to the changing role of big-city mayors.

Here are just a few facts, opinions and ideas that caught my ear:

• Biotech investments, which totaled $37.2 billion in 2000, are expected to be a mere $6.8 billion in 2003. Yet, experts are generally optimistic that a turnaround is just over the horizon.
• Obesity has risen to epidemic proportions in America; the plague affects some 60 percent of adults and 13 percent of children.
• China’s western regions are poised to become an Asian version of the American Midwest within 35 years.
• Carbon dioxide in the earth’s atmosphere increased by 18 percent in a little more than four decades – a spike of a magnitude never before recorded.
• Our experts projected that, within a decade, spending on health care will equal 17.2 percent of GDP, up from the current level of 14.3 percent.
• Russia was the second-best performing stock market last year, after Pakistan.
• Eighty percent of information throughout the globe is now stored in a digital form, but 10 percent of the potential revenue from licensing its use is pirated each year.
• Half of the new teachers in the Los Angeles school district were hired with emergency credentials.
• Seventy percent of the nation’s capital stock is in human form – in skills gained from schooling and on-the-job training.

If you were unable to join us this year for the Global Conference, I invite you to check out the session summaries on our Web site – www.milkeninstitute.org. And I hope you can join us next year.

Michael L. Klowden
President and CEO

FROM THE PRESIDENT