

Launch of *World Urbanization Prospects 2025: Summary of Results*

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Statement by Ms. Bjørg Sandkjær, Assistant Secretary-General for
Policy Coordination, Department of Economic and Social Affairs

(3-4 mins)

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, colleagues and members of the media.

It is a privilege to address you today. UN DESA is pleased to release a new report entitled *World Urbanization Prospects 2025: Summary of Results*. This report draws on a new dataset also being released today, offering updated estimates and projections of population and land use across cities, towns and rural areas at global, regional and national levels.

Let me recall that, as we are meeting here, Governments have gathered at COP30 to accelerate global climate action. At this pivotal moment, the United Nations reaffirms the central role of urbanization in advancing sustainable development and building resilience across all settlement types—from megacities to rural communities.

This launch also coincides with the recent observance of World Cities Day on the 31st of October. The 2025 theme, “People-Centred Smart Cities,” underscored the transformative potential of digital technologies in shaping urban life and called for smart city solutions that are inclusive and accessible, and responsive to human needs.

Thirdly, we are approaching the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the New Urban Agenda, a bold agreement on the ways that cities and human settlements are planned, designed, financed, developed, governed and managed.

We are also entering the final countdown of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Goal 11 on making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. A truly global assessment of this goal requires internationally

comparable data on the size and distribution of human populations across different settlement types.

Since 1963, the Population Division of UN DESA has tracked global urbanization trends using national definitions, and today's report includes the twenty-second update of those estimates. But the report also includes a major innovation: thanks to a partnership with the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, the report provides estimates and projections according to a new measure known as the Degree of Urbanization.

This new measure classifies settlements along a continuum of cities, towns and rural areas, and it is derived using a standard methodology that is applied uniformly across all countries and regions of the world. As an alternative to the traditional urban/rural dichotomy, the new measure enhances international comparability and enables a more nuanced understanding of urbanization dynamics, including the intermediate role of towns and peri-urban areas.

John Wilmoth, Director of the Population Division, will give more details on this new approach and the important insights it can provide. But first, allow me to conclude with two larger points:

First, sustainable development requires integrated planning that treats cities, towns and rural areas as interconnected and interdependent. We must recognize the unique roles of all settlement types, and our policies should be tailored accordingly.

Second, timely and reliable data are key to effective planning. Conducting censuses at regular intervals and integrating geospatial and other statistical information can enable better monitoring of settlement patterns and access to services. Indicators that track both people and land, such as population density and built-up land per capita, provide useful information about human interactions with the environment.

Let me express my sincere appreciation to John and his dedicated team in the Population Division for their commitment to producing high-quality and policy-relevant data. Such data continue to inform global efforts to build sustainable, inclusive and resilient human settlements.

Thank you.