



PRESS RELEASE

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UN REPORT SAYS WORLD URBAN POPULATION OF 3 BILLION TODAY

EXPECTED TO REACH 5 BILLION BY 2030

NEW YORK, 24 March (Department of Economic and Social Affairs) -- The Population Division released today its new estimates and projections of urban and rural populations for major areas, regions and countries of the world, large urban agglomerations and capital cities. The results have been issued as two wall charts, Urban and Rural Areas 2003, and Urban Agglomerations 2003, and as a highlights report containing first analyses and detailed tables on the Population Division's Web site (<http://www.unpopulation.org>). The full report containing a detailed analysis of the results will be issued by the United Nations later this year.

Over the last 50 years, the world has witnessed a dramatic growth of its urban population. The speed and the scale of this growth, especially concentrated in the less developed regions, continue to pose formidable challenges to individual countries as well as to the world community. Monitoring these developments and creating sustainable urban environments remain crucial issues on the international development agenda.

Major findings from the wall chart and the report are:

-- The world's urban population is estimated at 3 billion in 2003 and is expected to rise to 5 billion by 2030. The rural population is anticipated to decline slightly from 3.3 billion in 2003 to 3.2 billion in 2030.

-- Forty-eight per cent of the world's population lived in urban areas in 2003. It is projected to exceed the 50 per cent mark by 2007, thus marking the first time in history that the world will have more urban residents than rural residents. The proportion of the world population that is urban is expected to rise to 61 per cent by 2030.

-- During 2000-2030, the world's urban population is projected to grow at an average annual rate of 1.8 per cent, nearly double the rate expected for the total population of the world (almost 1 per cent per year). At this rate of growth, the world's urban population will double in 38 years.

-- Population growth will be particularly rapid in the urban areas of less developed regions, averaging 2.3 per cent per year during 2000-2030. Almost all the growth of the world's total population between 2000 and 2030 is expected to be absorbed by the urban areas of the less developed regions. By 2017, the number of urban dwellers will equal the number of rural dwellers in the less developed regions.

-- In contrast, the urban population of the more developed regions is expected to increase very slowly, from 0.9 billion in 2003 to 1 billion in 2030. The average annual growth rate of this population is expected to be 0.5 per cent between 2000 and 2030, compared to 1.5 per cent recorded during the previous half-century.

-- The process of urbanization is already advanced in the more developed regions, where 74 per cent of the population lived in 2003. The proportion of the population living in urban areas is expected to increase to 82 per cent by 2030. The share of the population that is urban is lower in the less developed regions: 42 per cent in urban areas in 2003, and expected to rise to 57 per cent by 2030.

-- The proportion of people living in mega-cities (urban agglomerations of 10 million persons or more) is small. In 2003, 4 per cent of the world population resided in mega-cities. About 25 per cent of the world population and one half of the urban population lived in urban settlements with fewer than 500,000 inhabitants.

-- With 35 million inhabitants in 2003, Tokyo is by far the most populous urban agglomeration. After Tokyo, the next largest urban agglomerations in the world are Mexico City (18.7), New York-Newark (18.3), São Paulo (17.9) and Mumbai (Bombay) (17.4). In 2015, Tokyo will still be the largest urban agglomeration with 36 million inhabitants, followed by Mumbai (Bombay) (22.6), Delhi (20.9), Mexico City (20.6) and São Paulo (20).

-- Large urban agglomerations are not necessarily experiencing fast population growth. Of the 20 mega-cities identified in 2003, almost half experienced population growth below 1.5 per cent between 1975 and 2000 and just six grew at rates above 3 per cent. Between 2000-2015, 11 mega-cities are projected to experience population growth below 1.5 per cent and five will remain with population growth rates above 3 per cent.

-- Related to the trends described above, three-fourths of all governments report that they are dissatisfied with the spatial distribution of their populations. Developing countries (79 per cent) are more likely than developed countries (65 per cent) to report dissatisfaction. Developing countries are also more likely to have adopted policies to ameliorate spatial distribution.

The two wall charts, Urban and Rural Areas 2003 (Sales No. E.04.XIII.4, ISBN: 92-1-151394-4) and Urban Agglomerations 2003 (Sales No. E.04.XIII.5, ISBN: 92-1-151395-2), are available from United Nations Publications, Two UN Plaza, Room DC2-853, Dept. PRES, New York, NY 10017 USA; tel. 800-253-9646 or 212-963-8302, fax. 212-963-3489, e-mail: publications@un.org; or Section des Ventes et Commercialisation, Bureau E-4, CH-1211, Geneva 10, Switzerland, tel. 41-22-917-2614, fax. 41-22-917-0027, e-mail; unpubli@unog.ch; Internet: <http://www.un.org/publications>.

Highlights of the final report, World Urbanization Prospects, The 2003 Revision: Data Tables and Highlights may be accessed on the Department of Economic and Social Affairs's (DESA) Population Division Web site at <http://www.unpopulation.org>. Comprehensive and consistent sets of urban and rural population data for the world's countries and areas, as well as for urban agglomerations with more than 750,000 inhabitants in 2000 are available in Excel on diskettes or CD-ROM. An order form for the diskettes or the CD-ROM can also be found on DESA's Population Division Web site. For further information about the report, the diskettes or the CD-ROM, please contact the Office of Joseph Chamie, Director, Population Division, DESA, United Nations, New York, NY, 10017, USA; tel: (212) 963-3179, fax: (212) 963-2147 or visit: www.unpopulation.org.