



Introduction by the Executive Director of Habitat
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I take great pleasure in introducing the first edition of the UNCHS (Habitat) flagship report series, *The State of the World's Cities, 2001*. The reader will immediately notice that it is not a conventional United Nations document. In more than just subject matter it is an “urbanized” report, complex and vivid, global and local, like cities themselves. And, as with any city, beneath its exterior appearance lies much serious business as it explores the components that make up our cities, constructing a current picture of urban issues and policies around the world.

This is the Centre’s first attempt to monitor, analyze and report on major areas of the *Habitat Agenda* in terms of the realities faced by urban populations and urban policy-makers. Starting with a literal overview, *The State of the World's Cities 2001* suggests which regions and cities are strongly linked to the global economy and which may be less connected. The report touches on urban poverty and how liberalized trade and finance, without proper safeguards, make urban populations everywhere more vulnerable to external shocks. It then takes a look, region-by-region at urbanization trends and issues.

Zooming in, the report explores briefly a range of urban issues and policy responses in five all-encompassing subject areas: shelter, society, environment, economy and governance. The first and last of these are about communities and the mechanisms that people adopt to govern their daily activities and longer-term transactions. The remaining three chapter subjects will be recognized as the prime components of sustainable development as expressed in *Agenda 21*. In practical politics, decision makers often find themselves having to make difficult trade-offs among these three components at both the national and local levels.

In *The Global Report on Human Settlements*, sister series to this one, UNCHS (Habitat) explores many of these same urban issues in greater depth, offering the student of cities, the urban researcher and policy analyst an array of concepts, narratives and data sets that may be useful in pursuing specific interests in more detail. *The State of the World's Cities*, in contrast, is aimed at the reader who would like an accessible, yet evidence-based, report on current urban issues and trends around the world.

Employing, among other resources, Habitat’s Urban Indicators and Best Practices databases, this report lays in front of the reader regional comparisons of city-level analyses, a precedent in the United Nations system. This first edition of *The State of the World's Cities* series introduces the reader to the City Development Index (CDI), which should, over time, become a standard monitoring tool, used to track regional, national and city-level progress in implementing the *Habitat Agenda*.

In one other way, *The State of the World's Cities 2001* is thoroughly globalized. Its production process involved writers, graphics and layout specialists in Nairobi, technical analysts in Melbourne and Ankara, an editor in London and a printer in Montreal. This team was managed over the Internet from Habitat, in Nairobi. It will be a future goal of the Centre to expand this networked team to include more experts, analysts and other partners from all over the world in carrying out Habitat’s mission to provide timely, policy-oriented information on the state of the world’s cities.