



## Sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration

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Cities are centres of social, economic and political activity that concentrate an increasing share of the world's population and attract internal and international migrants alike. Both urbanization and international migration are linked closely to the process of sustainable development. A report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, prepared for the 51<sup>st</sup> session of the Commission on Population and Development in April 2018, highlights the following key findings and recommendations.

### Ten key findings and recommendations

**1. Human mobility will continue to affect the spatial distribution of the global population both within and across national boundaries.**

Urbanization promotes development through economies of agglomeration and specialization, efficient service delivery and greater productivity of labour. Migration is often a key driver of economic development in areas of origin and destination.

**2. Countries tend to experience high levels of urbanization and migration during periods of economic transformation.**

A growing proportion of humanity is concentrated in urban settlements. The share of the world's population living in urban areas is expected to increase from 55 per cent in 2018 to 60 per cent in 2030 and may approach two thirds by 2050.

**3. The urbanization of human settlement coincides with the emergence of very large cities.**

Urban population growth has been characterized by growth among cities of all sizes. Most prominent has been the rise of “megacities” (with 10 million or more inhabitants). From just 10 in 1990, the number of megacities is expected to increase to 41 in 2030.

**4. Cities are the main destinations and “gateways” of international migrants.**

Many immigrants settle in large metropolitan areas or “global cities”, which serve as “immigrant gateways”. At the same time, international migration is often a key driver of population growth in such locations. International migrants make important contributions to work, entrepreneurship and cultural diversity in their host communities. However, migration also poses challenges for cities, especially if accompanied by high levels of spatial segregation and a lack of integration.

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- 5. International migration contributes to population growth in many developed countries.**  
The number of international migrants continues to increase and reached 258 million in 2017. Migration typically slows the pace of population ageing in destination countries and postpones the start of population decline for those with very low birth rates.
- 6. Well-managed urbanization promotes sustainable development.**  
To improve access to education, health care and housing, increase productivity and expand opportunities while minimizing the environmental and other adverse impacts of urbanization, Governments should plan strategically for future urban growth.
- 7. Urbanization policies should reflect the linkages between migration and urbanization.**  
Policies aimed at integrating foreign residents should reflect the fact that most migrants tend to settle in “gateway cities” and metropolitan areas. Given that the drivers and impacts of migration are felt most strongly at the local level, city and local governments have important roles to play in managing migration.
- 8. International migration is a powerful driver of global economic and social development.**  
Maximizing and sharing the benefits of international migration require a regulatory framework and policies to address the attendant challenges. With appropriate measures in place, safe, orderly, and regular migration can contribute to global prosperity.
- 9. Migrant integration is essential to achieve inclusive and sustainable economic growth.**  
Access to education, health care, justice and language training are essential for the integration of migrants. Migrants in an irregular situation are especially vulnerable to discrimination, exploitation and abuse, and often lack access to essential services. Protecting the human rights of all refugees and migrants is a shared global responsibility.
- 10. Evidence-based decision-making is a foundation of good governance and can be used to promote the efficient management of urbanization and migration.**  
Accurate and timely population data, disaggregated by age, sex, geographical location and migratory status, are needed for planning and decision-making about cities, mobility and migration. Such data enable Governments to anticipate needs, determine the impact of public policies and confirm the pace of progress toward agreed goals.



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