

## **UNITED NATIONS EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON POPULATION DISTRIBUTION, URBANIZATION, INTERNAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

Population Division  
Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
United Nations Secretariat  
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### **BACKGROUND**

The world population is in the midst of a historical transition from being mostly rural to predominantly urban. The urbanization of the population has historically been accompanied by long-term economic development, and constitutes one of the two major demographic trends, together with the world transition toward low mortality and fertility and the ensuing changes in the population age structures. Indeed, urbanization has been both an important determinant factor of the reduction of mortality and fertility rates, as well as a prominent feature of the spatial distribution of human settlements within national territories. Internal migration, especially that from rural to urban areas plays a central role in this process.

The level and speed of urbanization, however, varies significantly across areas, regions and countries, depending on a number of factors associated with the level and style of development in the geographical areas considered. The size distribution, the morphology of cities, the dynamics of urban growth, and the living conditions of the population living in urban and rural areas also vary quite substantially across countries and over time. While urbanization represents in general a positive and welcome development, the challenges facing urbanization in developed countries are of different kind and scale than those in the developing areas. There is a renewed worldwide interest in these matters in the research community as well as recent major publications by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities and UN-HABITAT.

This Expert Group Meeting on Population Distribution, Urbanization, Internal Migration and Development will bring together specialists in various aspects of the urbanization process to present and discuss recent research in the aforementioned topics in different regions and countries of the world. The meeting is organized by the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and is carried out as part of the programme of work of the organization.