

# **UNLEASHING THE POTENTIAL OF URBAN GROWTH**

## **Part I: URBANIZATION TRENDS: DATA AND MISCONCEPTIONS**

**José Miguel Guzmán**

Chief, Population and Development Branch  
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)  
New York

The world population will increase from the present 6.5 billion to about 8.2 billion by the year 2030. In the mean time, urban population will increase from 3.3 billion to about 5 billion in the same period. That means that 1.7 billion increase from present day to the year 2030 will concentrate in urban areas. But, most importantly, we have to see where these demographic increases and these urban population increases will happen. That will be mainly in Africa and in Asia. For Africa and Asia, the population in urban areas will double from 1.7 billion in 2000 to 3.4 billion in 2030. This will represent momentous change with huge impact.

This presentation will focus on the world urbanizations trends, showing the growth of the cities, the linkages between urbanization and demographic transition and the main characteristics of this process, with the objective to dispel some of the misconceptions around this topic.

“Urbanization is inherently bad”, “most urban growth occurs in mega-cities”, “urban growth comes mainly from migration to cities”, “rural migration can and should be stopped”, “the poor are a marginal minority in cities”, “cities occupy a huge amount of land area” and “city growth inevitably hurts the environment”. These are seven of the most common misperceptions and the State of the World Population Report goes a long way to address these misperceptions. We are convinced that the better we understand the nature of urban growth and of what would be the most realistic policy options, the better we will be able to deal with the inevitable massive urban increases.