



General Assembly Second Committee
Topic 1: Human Settlements¹

5 October 2012

Human settlements are the places people live. They may be urban or rural. Until 2007, most people lived in rural areas. In 2007, the balance tipped. Since then, more than 50 percent of the world's inhabitants have lived in cities. By 2029, the percentage of urban residents will reach 60 percent.² By 2050, the figure will be 66 percent.³

Human settlements have physical, environmental, political, social, and cultural elements. According to the UN, these can be divided into “(a) physical components of shelter and infrastructure; and (b) services to which the physical elements provide support, that is to say, community services such as education, health, culture, welfare, recreation and nutrition.”⁴ In addition, each human settlement exists in a unique environment that affects life in the community and is affected by that community.”⁵

The fundamental goal of sustainable development is to improve conditions in human settlements while preserving or improving the environment. Achieving improvements in human settlements would enable individuals to more fully enjoy the political, civil, economic, cultural, and social rights proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.⁶ In addition, it would create more national, regional, and international stability and security.

Increasing urbanization poses both opportunities and challenges. In terms of opportunities, cities are sites of concentrated economic activity, which is necessary for economic development.⁷ They are also places where services such as education and health care can be delivered efficiently, when funds and personnel are available.

When urban populations grow faster than economic opportunities and services, increasing urbanism can complicate development and compromise human rights. Today, this is the situation in many countries. Less-developed countries (LDCs) have been particularly affected, for two reasons. First, people in LDCs are moving from rural areas to cities in large numbers. The highest rates of growth (more than percent per year) are anticipated in Lagos, Nigeria; Dhaka, Bangladesh; Mumbai, India; and Manila, the Philippines. These cities are growing at rates higher than 2% per year,⁸ which means they will double in size in less than 35 years. Second, cities in less developed countries have fewer organizations and resources to address the needs of urban residents.

¹ This background guide was written by Karen Ruth Adams, MMUN Faculty Advisor, Ashley Zuelke (2009), and Jessica McCutcheon (2012). Copyright 2012 by Karen Ruth Adams.

² UN News Centre, “Top UN official highlights impact of financial crisis on world’s urban poor,” 23 October 2008, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28683&Cr=housing&Cr1>.

³ UN-Habitat, “About Us: Our Mission: The Challenge,” <http://www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?typeid=19&catid=10&cid=928>; accessed 22 October 2009.

⁴ UN Statistics Division, *Glossary of Environment Statistics*, Series F, No. 67 (1997), quoted in OECD, “Glossary of Statistical Terms: Human Settlements,” <http://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=1266>

⁵ UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, “What is Human Settlements,” <http://www.unescap.org/huset/whatis.htm>; accessed 15 February 2009.

⁶ “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” 1948, <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

⁷ David E. Bloom, et al, “Urbanization and the Wealth of Nations,” *Science* 319: 5864 (8 February 2008), 772-775.

⁸ United Nations, “World Urbanization Prospects: The 2011 Revision,” http://esa.un.org/unup/pdf/FINAL-FINAL_REPORT%20WUP2011_Annextables_01Aug2012_Final.pdf

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As a result of the gap between urban immigration and economic opportunities, urban slums are found throughout the world and are growing quickly. According to UN-Habitat (the UN organization charged with improving conditions in human settlements), a slum household lacks any one of the following:

1. Access to improved water (access to sufficient amount of water for family use, at an affordable price, available to household members without being subject to extreme effort);
2. Access to improved sanitation (access to an excreta disposal system, either in the form of a private toilet or a public toilet shared with a reasonable number of people);
3. Security of tenure (evidence of documentation to prove secure tenure status or *de facto* or perceived protection from evictions)
4. Durability of housing (permanent and adequate structure in non-hazardous location)
5. Sufficient living area (not more than two people sharing the same room).⁹

The number of people living in slums has increased from 777 million in 2000 to 828 million in 2012.¹⁰ This is approximately one-third of urban residents and one-seventh of the world's population.¹¹ Without drastic action, UN-Habitat predicts that the world slum population will continue to grow by six million per year.¹²

Slums not only pose challenges to their inhabitants. They also impose environmental, social, and political costs on other people, as well as on the states and regions in which they are found. Many slum dwellers reside on steep slopes and in flood plains, which contributes to environmental degradation and vulnerability to environmental disaster.¹³ In addition, slum residents live in close proximity to one another and have access to few services, such as trash collection, clean water, sanitation, and health care. This increases pollution and facilitates the spread of disease. Finally, slums offer few employment and educational opportunities. Thus they are often marked by crime and political unrest.¹⁴

UN member states must find ways to improve life in human settlements. As they do so, they must cope with increasing urbanization, economic crisis, and climate change. Today, most of the world's cities are in coastal areas. According to scientists, climate change makes it more likely that coastal cities will experience natural disasters, such as hurricanes and tsunamis, which may force their populations to move. For other cities, the two main effects of climate change will be increased migration from coastal cities and rural areas, and increased demand for energy to keep homes, office buildings, industrial plants, and transportation networks cool as temperatures rise.¹⁵ This means that major electrical black-outs like those experienced this summer in India are likely to become more frequent.¹⁶

⁹ UN-Habitat, "UN-Habitat's Slum Indicators" (box), on "The UN Millennium Declaration and its Goals," <http://ww2.unhabitat.org/mdg/>; accessed 21 October, 2009.

¹⁰ UN-Habitat, "Urban Trends: 227 Million Escape Slums," <http://www.unhabitat.org/documents/SOWC10/R1.pdf>

¹¹ UN News Centre, "Top UN official highlights impact of financial crisis on world's urban poor."

¹² UN-Habitat, "Urban Trends: 227 Million Escape Slums."

¹³ UN Commission on Sustainable Development, "Sustainable Human Settlements Development: Implementing Agenda 21," March 1994; http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/susdevtopics/sdt_humasett.shtml

¹⁴ UN News Centre, "Top UN official highlights impact of financial crisis on world's urban poor."

¹⁵ UN-Habitat, "Cities and Climate Change: Global Report on Human Settlements 2011," <http://www.unhabitat.org/pmss/listItemDetails.aspx?publicationID=3086>

¹⁶ Andrew C. Revkin "The Power Gap Behind India's Mass Blackouts," *New York Times*, Dot Earth blog, 31 July 2012, <http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/31/the-power-gap-behind-indias-mass-blackouts/>

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History and Current Events

After World War II, improvements in agricultural technology and medical care allowed the world population to grow rapidly. Population growth was especially strong in developing countries, which had not previously benefited from increasing food supplies, declining infant mortality, and longer life expectancies.

According to the UN Population Division, in 1950, the world population was 2.5 billion. By 2011, it had grown to 7.0 billion. Between 1965 and 1970, the annual rate of world population growth rate peaked at 2 percent per year then began to decline. From 1980-2011, the world population grew at a rate of 1.45 percent per year. Due to declining birth rates, this rate is projected to fall. Nevertheless, by 2050, the world population is expected to reach 9.3 billion.¹⁷

As shown in Table 1, from 1950 to 2005, the percentage of the world's population living in less developed regions rose from 68 to 82 percent. Due to low fertility rates, the population of more-developed regions will remain largely unchanged between 2001 and 2050, growing from 1.2 billion in 2011 to 1.3 billion in 2100. By contrast, the population of less-developed regions is projected to grow 147 percent, from 5.3 billion in 2005 to 7.8 billion in 2050. According to the UN, less developed regions include "Africa, Asia (excluding Japan), Latin America and the Caribbean plus Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia."¹⁸

Table 1¹⁹
World Population and Population Density in More- and Less-Developed Regions

Year	Population in More Developed Regions			Population in Less Developed Regions		
	#	%	density	#	%	density
1950	0.8	32%	15	1.7	68%	21
2005	1.2	18	23	5.3	82	64
2050 (est)	1.3	14	24	7.8	86	95

Numbers are in billions
Percentage is of total world population
Population density refers to persons per sq. km

Table 1 also shows that population density is currently three-times higher in less developed regions (95 persons per sq. km) than in more developed regions (24 persons per sq. km). Population density is a marker of urbanization. In less developed regions, population density increased 204 percent from 1950 to 2005, compared to just 35 percent in more developed regions.

Together, these data show that levels and rates of urbanization are highest in less-developed countries. According to the UN Population Division, in 2007, the five largest cities were Tokyo, New York, Mexico City, Mumbai, and Sao Paolo. In 2025, the five largest cities will be Tokyo, Mumbai, Delhi, Dhaka, and Sao Paolo.²⁰

¹⁷ UN Population Division, "World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision," pp. 1-5, http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Documentation/pdf/WPP2010_Highlights.pdf

¹⁸ UN Population Division, "Definition of Major Areas and Regions," in "World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision," <http://esa.un.org/unpp/index.asp?panel=5>; accessed 21 October 2009.

¹⁹ Derived from UN Population Division, "World Population Prospects: The 2008 Revision," Panel 1, Basic Data, <http://esa.un.org/unpp/index.asp>; accessed 21 October 2009.

²⁰ UN Population Division, "Urban Agglomerations 2007: Wall Chart," http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wup2007/2007urban_agglo.htm

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According to the UN, from 2011 to 2050, the proportion of people in less-developed regions who live in cities is likely to increase from 47 to 64 percent.²¹

Although the rate of urbanization has increased, 60 percent of urban dwellers currently live in small cities of less than one million. By 2025, the UN predicts that just half of urban dwellers will live in cities less than one million. This growth in large urban centers will contribute to the growth of megacities. In 1970, the world had only two megacities: Tokyo and New York. Since then their number has increased, and most new megacities are in developing countries. "Today, Asia has 13 megacities, Latin America has four, and Africa, Europe and Northern America have two each... By 2025, when the number of megacities is expected to reach 37, Asia would have gained another nine, Latin America two, and Africa, Europe and Northern America one each."²²

Because economic growth rates have generally exceeded urbanization rates, urbanization has offered opportunities to individuals and governments. But the benefits of economic growth have not been spread equally. According to the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), from 1970 to 2007, gross domestic product (GDP, or national income) per capita (per person) in Africa grew by a factor of 4.5, compared to 10.5 in Latin America and 17.3 in Asia.²³

There are also important differences among countries. According to UNCTAD, from 1990 to 1998, twenty-two LDCs were "stagnant or in economic regress. In 11 of these, all of which experienced serious armed conflicts and internal instability during the 1990s, the real GDP per capita ... [declined] by more than 3% annually."²⁴ By contrast, from 2002 to 2007, even the poorest or "least developed" LDCs experienced some economic growth.²⁵

The financial crisis that began in 2008 slowed the growth of most countries in the world. In October 2008, as the crisis was breaking, UN-Habitat Executive Director Anna Tibaijuka addressed the GA-2, arguing that "rapid, uncontrolled urbanization and a dearth of affordable housing were the underlying causes of the current financial crisis." When low-income Americans were given "access to housing through risky lending and borrowing practices, the results [were] devastating, prompting ... government intervention and ... [a] resurgence of homelessness."²⁶

According to Tibaijuka, the economic crisis in developed countries that spread to LDCs through a downturn in trade, investment, and aid meant that the number of people living in slums (which was already 1 billion) would rise even faster than before. Unless governments addressed the "urban poverty crisis," she argued that civil rest would occur.²⁷

²¹ UN Population Division, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2011 Revision*, p. 4, http://esa.un.org/unup/pdf/FINAL-FINAL_REPORT%20WUP2011_Annextables_01Aug2012_Final.pdf

²² UN Population Division, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2011 Revision*, pp. 5-6.

²³ Prices are in current dollars. UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), *Handbook of Statistics 2008*, Table 8.1, <http://stats.unctad.org/Handbook/TableViewer/tableView.aspx>; accessed 21 October 2009.

²⁴ UNCTAD, "World's Poorest Countries Losing Ground," Press release, December 2000, <http://www.unctad.org/Templates/webflyer.asp?docid=2706&intItemID=1528&lang=1&print=1>.

²⁵ UNCTAD, *LDC Report 2009*, pp. 1-7, http://www.unctad.org/en/docs/ldc2009_en.pdf

²⁶ UN General Assembly, "UN-Habitat Chief, in Second Committee, Cites 'Rapid and Chaotic Urbanization,' Shortage of Affordable Housing as Causes of Global Financial Crisis," Press Release GA/EF/3224, 28 October 2008; <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/gaef3224.doc.htm>

²⁷ UN News Centre, "Top UN official highlights impact of financial crisis on world's urban poor."

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Fortunately, after several years of recovery, as of 2011 “developing countries at large have not only regained and exceeded pre-crisis GDP levels, but also returned to their pre-crisis growth path.”²⁸ Yet the majority (64 percent) of wealth remains in developed countries, and the very least developed countries have seen their gross domestic product per capita (per person) fall to the lowest levels since 1971.²⁹

In 2006, before the economic crisis began, one-third of urban residents worldwide lived in slums. According to UN-Habitat Executive Director Tibaijuka, rates of slum living ranged from 6 percent of urban populations in the developed world to 72 percent in sub-Saharan Africa as a whole and nearly 100 percent in some sub-Saharan African states. In between were Latin American countries, at 31 percent, and Asian countries, at 57 percent.³⁰

Although 27 million individuals moved out of slums each year between 2000 and 2010, the overall number of slum dwellers has increased. In 2010, sub-Saharan Africa had the largest slum population with 199.5 million or 61.7% of its urban population lives in such conditions. According to UN-Habitat, “Every year 14 million more people join the urban population in sub-Saharan Africa. Approximately 30% of these go on to live in ‘formal’ urban areas. The remaining 70% live in informal settlements or slum conditions. Of these just 2% can expect to escape these conditions.”³¹

Countries in Asia have had greater success in eliminating slums, largely due to China and India which together lifted 125 million people out of slum conditions between 1990 and 2010. China has made the most progress with a 25 percent decrease in slum conditions between 2000 and 2010. Latin American has also achieved a 13 percent reduction since 2000.³²

Causes of Urbanization

According to *Science* magazine, urbanization occurs in three ways. First, people move from rural areas to cities (rural-urban migration). Second, although birth rates are usually lower in urban areas, death rates are too, which yields a larger population. Third, as rural towns grow, they are reclassified as urban areas. Of these, rural-urban migration is the most significant. It is responsible for 40 to 50 percent of urban population growth.³³

Rural-urban migration occurs for several reasons. Perhaps most important is the search for jobs. When there is a demand for unskilled labor, rural to urban migrants can gain employment and avoid slum living. However, with continuing global economic difficulties, and cycles in the market, migrants often do not find adequate employment to ensure access to affordable housing outside of slums.³⁴ Rural-urban migration is also encouraged by government policies favoring city dwellers, who are more politically active than their rural counterparts.

In addition, wars and natural disasters create refugees, who generally settle in urban areas. In recent years, people fleeing wars have fled to many cities, including Karachi, Pakistan and Kinshasha, Democratic Republic of

²⁸ UNCTAD, “Development and Globalization: Facts and Figures 2012,” <http://dgff.unctad.org/chapter2/2.1.html>

²⁹ UNCTAD, “Development and Globalization: Facts and Figures 2012.”

³⁰ BBC News, “Report reveals global slum crisis,” 16 June 2006; http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/in_depth/5078654.stm

³¹ UN-Habitat, “Urban Trends: 227 Million Escape Slums,” <http://www.unhabitat.org/documents/SOWC10/R1.pdf>

³² UN-Habitat, “Urban Trends: 227 Million Escape Slums.”

³³ Bloom et al., “Urbanization and the Wealth of Nations,” p. 774.

³⁴ UN-Habitat, “Slum Dwellers to double by 2030: Millennium Development Goal Could Fall Short,” 2007, http://www.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/4631_46759_GC%2021%20Slum%20dwellers%20to%20double.pdf

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Congo. In addition, droughts and floods have destroyed rural economic infrastructure in Angola, Ethiopia, and Mauritania, leading to mass migration to cities in those states and in neighboring countries.

Historically, Asian urbanization has been largely the result of industrialization and employment opportunities. By contrast, African urbanization has been strongly affected by political instability, civil conflict and ethnic tension.³⁵

Climate Change Challenges

Currently, about 200 million people per year are affected by natural disasters.³⁶ Climate change is expected to increase this number. Thus it is likely to contribute to further rural-urban migration. Increasing urbanization will, in turn, increase vulnerability to natural disasters. Urbanization concentrates people in coastal areas, along rivers, and in areas marked by environmental degradation, all of which are especially vulnerable to disaster.³⁷ In addition, urban residents use more resources and emit more greenhouse gases than their rural counterparts, which contributes to climate change.³⁸ Recent natural disasters -- such as the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, Hurricane Katrina, the 2005 Pakistani Earthquake, and the Australian bushfires -- show the effects of climate change on human settlements.³⁹

Climate change is also expected to raise sea levels. Because two-thirds of the world's largest cities are located in coastal areas, this will have profound effects on the quality of life for urban residents and will create pressures to resettle them elsewhere. According to the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC),

Many millions more people are projected to be flooded every year due to sea-level rise by the 2080s. Those densely-populated and low-lying areas where adaptive capacity is relatively low, and which already face other challenges such as tropical storms or local coastal subsidence, are especially at risk. The numbers affected will be largest in the mega-deltas of Asia and Africa while small islands are especially vulnerable. Adaptation for coasts will be more challenging in developing countries than in developed countries, due to constraints on adaptive capacity.⁴⁰

More than 634 million people are in coastal regions that could be inundated. Among the cities threatened are Tokyo, New York, Mumbai, Shanghai, Jakarta, and Dhaka.⁴¹ If and when it becomes necessary to evacuate these cities, inland cities will be stretched further. All cities are likely to face increased demand for energy for cooling, which could lead to electrical black-outs, loss of vital service such as water, loss of economic productivity, and civil

³⁵ Bloom et al., "Urbanization and the Wealth of Nations."

³⁶ UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, "Deaths and economic losses jump in 2008," 22 January 2009; <http://www.unisdr.org/eng/media-room/press-release/2009/pr-2009-01-disaster-figures-2008.pdf>

³⁷ William Donner and Havidan Roderiguez, "Population Composition, Migration and Inequality," *Social Forces* 87:2 (December 2008), pp. 1090-1093.

³⁸ UN General Assembly, "UN-Habitat Chief, in Second Committee."

³⁹ "Natural disasters and extreme weather," *The Guardian*, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/natural-disasters>; accessed 3 March 2009.

⁴⁰ IPCC, "IPCC Fourth Assessment Report: Working Group II, Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability," 2007, p. 12, <http://www.ipcc.ch/>

⁴¹ Thomas Wagner, "Cities at Risk of Rising Sea Levels," Associated Press, March 28, 2007, http://www.livescience.com/environment/070328_ap_sea_rise.html

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uncertainty, as well as even faster climate change, since today's carbon-based energy sources such as oil and coal contribute to the greenhouse effect.⁴²

Previous Committee Work on This Topic

UN member states first addressed human settlements in 1976, at the UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat I), which was called by the General Assembly. Because they are closely related and must be addressed simultaneously to achieve sustainable progress, states decided to address housing, building, transportation, water, sewage, the environment, and development together in the concept of human settlements.

The result of HABITAT I was the Vancouver Declaration on Human Settlements (1976), in which UN member states noted that “the condition of human settlements largely determines the quality of life, the improvement of which is a prerequisite for the full satisfaction of basic needs, such as employment, housing, health services, education and recreation.” The Vancouver Declaration articulated objectives, principles, and guidelines for both rural and urban settlements.⁴³ According to the Declaration, it is each government's responsibility to create sustainable human settlements.

In 1978, the GA launched UN-Habitat to assist in the creation of socially and environmentally sustainable development. The full name of UN-Habitat is the UN Human Settlements Programme.⁴⁴ UN-Habitat reports to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which in turn reports to the GA. Most substantive debate on human settlements occurs in the GA-2, due to its concern with economic development.

In 1992, at the UN Conference on Environment and Development, member states created the Commission on Sustainable Development and called on it to use effective human settlements as an indicator and goal of sustainable development. In addition, Agenda 21 called on developed countries to increase their foreign aid to developing countries to 0.7 percent of their GDP.⁴⁵

In 1996, the GA called a second Habitat conference in Istanbul. At Habitat II, 171 UN member states approved the Habitat Agenda, which establishes a global plan of action for “adequate shelter for all” and “sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world.” In 2001, the GA adopted the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium. This declaration noted failures in implementing the Habitat Agenda and urged further action to eradicate poverty.⁴⁶ In 2011 UN-Habitat produced an extensive report on cities and climate change.⁴⁷

⁴² Elisabeth Rosenthal, “The Cost of Cool,” *New York Times*, 18 August 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/19/sunday-review/air-conditioning-is-an-environmental-quandary.html?pagewanted=all>

⁴³ Vancouver Declaration On Human Settlements (1976), <http://www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?cid=924&catid=1&typeid=25&subMenuId=0>

⁴⁴ UN-Habitat, “About Us: Our Mission,” <http://www.unhabitat.org/categories.asp?catid=10>; accessed 21 October 2009. See also UN General Assembly, Resolution A/56/206 (1 January 2002), <http://www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?ID=2070&catid=10&typeid=23&subMenuId=0>

⁴⁵ UN-HABITAT, “Habitat Debate: 30+ dreams and reality.”

⁴⁶ General Assembly Resolution A/S-25/2, “Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium,” 16 August 2001, \ <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N01/470/18/PDF/N0147018.pdf?OpenElement>

⁴⁷ “The Habitat Agenda Goals and Principles, Commitments and the Global Plan of Action,” (1996), <http://www.unhabitat.org/content.asp?ID=1176&catid=10&typeid=24&subMenuId=0>

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From 2002 to 2010, UN-Habitat hosted five sessions of the World Urban Form to support governments in implementing the Habitat Agenda. The most recent forum was held September 1-7 in Naples, Italy. Issues on the provisional agenda for the Sixth Forum include urban planning regulations, distribution of wealth and opportunities, urban job creation, energy, and the environment.⁴⁸

In 2000, in the Millennium Declaration, UN member states affirmed the goal of 0.7 percent of GDP in aid from developed countries. According to the UN Development Programme (UNDP), if all developed countries met this goal, there would be sufficient funds to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). As of 2009, only five developed countries met or surpassed this target.⁴⁹

The 2012 Millennium Development Goals Report notes a number of gains. Extreme poverty has fallen in every region. Specifically, the target of halving the number of people living on less than \$1.25 per day has been achieved well before the target date of 2015. In addition, the target of halving the proportion of people without access to safe water was met in 2010. The target of improving the lives of 100 million slum dwellers has also been met twice over, with conditions improving for 200 million. But the overall number of slum dwellers continues to grow.⁵⁰ According to the UN, “Slum improvements, though considerable, are failing to keep pace with the growing ranks of the urban poor [and slum] prevalence remains high in sub-Saharan Africa and increases in countries affected by conflict.”⁵¹

With regard to sanitation, the MDG Report states that, “With half the population of developing regions without sanitation, the 2015 target appears to be out of reach. Disparities in urban and rural sanitation coverage remain daunting, [and i]mprovements in sanitation are bypassing the poor.”⁵²

Conclusion

Although less-developed countries have seen some resurgence in their economies and have made important improvements in poverty, access to water, and conditions for 200 million of today’s 828 million slum dwellers, there is much still to do with regard to human settlements. How can the GA-2 help UN member states improve conditions for today’s slum dwellers and prepare for the long-term growth of cities and the challenges that cities will face as climate change continues? In developing your country’s position on this issue, consider the following questions:

- What is the level and rate of urbanization in your country? If people are moving to cities, why are they doing so? What are your country’s cities like? What percentage of your country’s urban population lives in slums?
- How economically developed is your country? Are economic growth rates keeping up with the rate of urbanization? Why or why not?
- If your country is a less-developed country, what progress has it made on the MDGs, especially the goals noted above? What challenges does it face?
- If your country is a more-developed country, is it meeting the target of giving 0.7 percent of GDP in foreign aid? Why or why not?

⁴⁸ World Urban Forum, “Provisional Agenda” HSP/WUF/6/1 (2012)
http://www.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/11444_1_594552.pdf

⁴⁹ UN Development Programme (UNDP), “Tracking the MDGs: Global Partnership Progress,”
http://www.undp.org/mdg/tracking_donorcountryreports2.shtml; accessed 21 October 2009.

⁵⁰ United Nations, “The Millennium Development Goals Report 2012,”
<http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/Progress2012/English2012.pdf>

⁵¹ United Nations, “Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability,”
<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/environ.shtml>, accessed 5 October 2012.

⁵² United Nations, “Goal 7: Ensure Environmental Sustainability.”

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- Has your country experienced natural disasters? Has it received large numbers of refugees? How vulnerable is it to climate change? Has your country received or given international assistance to address these problems?
- Are your country's policies consistent with the Habitat Agenda and other UN declarations about human settlements?
- Given the continuing international economic crisis and projections about the effects of climate change, how can and should the UN address human settlements? For example, should the GA endorse restrictions on rural-urban migration to prevent slum development or on energy use to prevent electrical black-outs and over-reliance on carbon-based fuels?

Recommended Reading

BBC News. "Urban Planet." 15 August 2007. Available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/world/2006/urbanisation/

This BBC website features in-depth reports on slum dwellers, modern cities, urban migration, and the environmental impact of human settlements.

UN-Habitat. "About US: Our Mission." Available at <http://www.unhabitat.org/categories.asp?catid=10>

This site provides access to the text of all of the UN declarations and resolutions related to human settlements.

UN-Habitat. "Cities and Climate Change: Global Report on Human Settlements 2011." Available at <http://www.unhabitat.org/pmss/listItemDetails.aspx?publicationID=3086>

This report emphasizes issues facing the topic of human settlements with a particular emphasis on climate change. See also the sources in footnotes 17 and 37-43 (above).

UN-Habitat. "Information by Country." Available at <http://www.unhabitat.org/categories.asp?catid=2>

This site provides access to data on each country's level of urbanization and percentage of slum populations, as well as information on UN-Habitat activities in each country.

UN-Habitat. "World Urban Forum 2012." Available at <http://www.unhabitat.org/categories.asp?catid=672>

The most recent World Urban Forum was held last month (September 2012). On this site, you can read about your country's positions on the major debates.

United Nations. "World Urbanization Prospects: The 2011 Revision." Available at http://esa.un.org/unup/pdf/FINAL-FINAL_REPORT%20WUP2011_Annextables_01Aug2012_Final.pdf

This report addresses a number of issues related to urbanization and human settlements. The key findings and the section on urbanization and natural hazards are especially helpful. The report also contains statistics such as population densities and earthquake risks for major cities.

United Nations. "The Millennium Development Goals Report 2012," Available at <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/Progress2012/English2012.pdf>

This report provides in depth analysis of the progress made on the MGDs as of 2012. Another interesting document related to the MDGs is "The MDG Acceleration Framework Toolkit" available at http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/mdg/mdg_accelerationframework0/ For country reports, see United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), "Tracking the MDGs: Country progress," http://www.undp.org/mdg/tracking_countryreports2.shtml, as well as UNDP, *Human Development Report 2011*, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2011/>