

# 2008 MARKS A NEW URBAN AGE

World population is urbanizing at an alarming rate. The new edition of *The Times Comprehensive Atlas of the World*, published on 3 September, reveals that in less than a year, and for the first time, urban dwellers will outnumber those living in rural areas, and we shall enter the 'Urban Age'...

According to UN estimates, August 2008 is likely to mark this momentous point in world history.

- In the 100 years up to 1950, the greatest shifts took place in Europe and North America, but in the last 50 years, there has been massive growth in the numbers of urban dwellers in the less developed countries.
- By 2030, 3 in 5 people (59.9%) will be urbanites, and the global urban population is expected to grow to 4.9 billion (from 1.33 billion in 1970).
- Between 2010 and 2030, Africa and Asia are expected to account for 5 out of every 6 of the world's new urbanites.

Along with the rise in the world's urban population, there has been a massive increase in the number and size of cities – especially very large urban areas or 'megacities'. In 1950, only New York had over 10 million inhabitants; by 2000 there were 18 cities of this size, and by 2015 there are expected to be 22 – including Africa's first megacities, Lagos and Cairo. The marked growth in megacities is due to a combination of in-migration and natural increase, together with the physical outward expansion of their built-up areas and the incorporation of nearby settlements. In comparison, city growth in Europe and North America is relatively modest.

As Mick Ashworth, Editor-in-Chief of *The Times Comprehensive Atlas of the World*, says:

"The explosion of very large cities or 'megacities' is principally an Asian phenomenon, but if this process continues elsewhere, and equally rapidly, it could pose a major logistical challenge. Such growth places enormous pressure on sometimes scarce water resources and increases environmental threats through a growing 'urban footprint'."

Four years in the making, *The Times Comprehensive Atlas of the World* is the world's most prestigious and authoritative atlas – painstakingly researched by a dedicated team of over 50 cartographers, with changes to the database made every 3.5 minutes using a 24-hour-a-day news feed.



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