State of the World's Cities 2004/05:
Introduction by Executive Director of UN-HABITAT

The aim of *The State of the World's Cities* report series is to provide information on urban conditions and trends around the world and, in doing so, on progress in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and towards the realizations of the Millennium Development Goals and Targets on slums, water and sanitation. The first issue of the report, released in 2001, comprehensively reviewed urban conditions, emerging policies and best practices covering five main topics: urban shelter; urban society; urban environment; urban economy; and urban governance.

The present issue, the second in the series, adopts a thematic approach and focuses on globalization and urban culture. It discusses the socio-economic impacts of globalization on cities that are relevant to urban development, including cultural impacts, as well as metropolitanization, international migration, urban poverty, urban governance (focusing on safety and transparency) and urban planning. In particular, the report highlights the challenges of multicultural existence within cities, in the context of globalization, and the need for an urban culture of inclusion. I am therefore delighted to introduce this report as part of UN-Habitat's contribution to the Universal Forum of Cultures (Barcelona, 9 May–26 September 2004).

Throughout history, urbanization, economic growth and civilization have been mutually reinforcing, and cities have always been the loci for national as well as global cultural fusion and innovation. This report shows how cultural differentiation is becoming an important characteristic of globalizing cities and how this is largely attributable to international migration. But the report also looks at culture from another angle, that is the ways in which culture-driven strategies are being used by many cities to market themselves globally as 'cities of culture'.

Under globalization, the spatial structure of cities is changing as new economic production patterns require more horizontal integration between functions in different sites, and as cities shift their attention to external locations and activities, resulting in new geographies and a 'splintering' of earlier urban spatial patterns. The associated decentralization has major implications for the spatial configuration of cities, intensifying the process of metropolitanization and the related management problems.

The report shows how poverty is increasing in many cities and how this is partly an outcome of the uneven costs and benefits of economic globalization. In addition, the report shows how urban poverty has been increasingly concentrated in particular neighbourhoods that have, generally, become the habitats of the urban poor and minority groups: racial minorities in some societies, international immigrant groups in others.

The report also shows how urban governance is increasingly influenced by globalization, focusing on two specific issues: safety and transparency. On the one hand, urban safety is frequently compromised by transnational crime, such as smuggling and trafficking of drugs, firearms and human beings, all of which have been facilitated by opportunities arising from the globalization process and have had devastating impacts on many urban poor communities. On the other hand, transparency at the city level has been compromised by corruption, while the current solutions to this challenge are emerging from a context that may be described as the 'globalization of norms of good urban governance'.

Finally, the report examines the ways in which urban planning is responding to the impacts of globalization on cities, including the cultural impacts. It identifies the main characteristics of what may be described as a new urban planning culture, including the ways in which planning is becoming an innovative, learning process that addresses – in addition to its traditional land use concerns – environmental, social and economic concerns, as well as the challenges of urban multicultural existence and social inclusion.

While the primary purpose of *The State of the World's Cities* series is to describe urban conditions and trends, many of the experiences and best practices cited in this issue offer possible directions for planning and managing socially inclusive multicultural cities, within the context of increasing globalization.

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