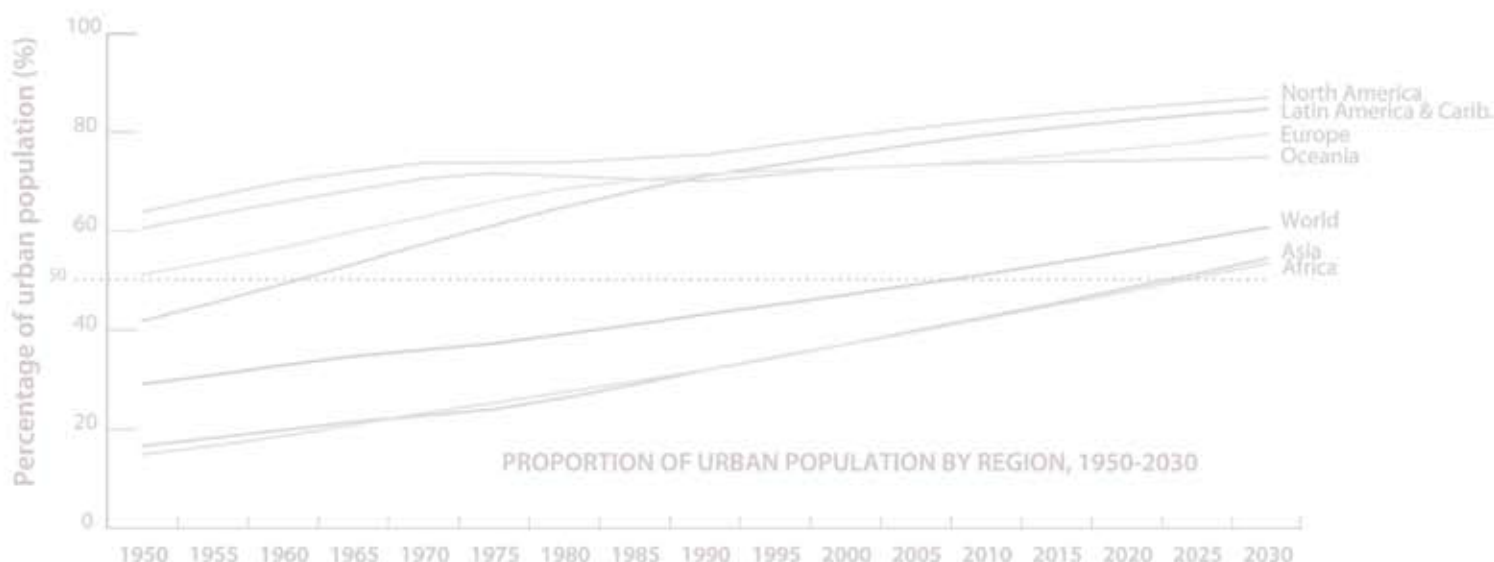


## Invitation from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan

Cities are home to half of humanity. While they offer tremendous opportunities, they can also be places of grinding misery. And with slums and poor neighbourhoods coexisting with great swathes of comfort and opulence, cities often show us the enormous gap between rich and poor and between those who benefit from urbanization and those who are marginalized from it. In endorsing the Millennium Development Goals, world leaders committed themselves to improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. Reaching this goal will mean tackling some of the world's most critical social, economic and environmental challenges. The World Urban Forum -- to be held this year as UN-HABITAT marks its 30th anniversary -- is well placed to galvanize progress. Our goals may be global, but they can be achieved most effectively through local action. I urge all participants to work together and do their utmost to usher in a new era of truly sustainable urban development.





**Invitation from the Under-Secretary-General of the  
United Nations and Executive Director of UN-HABITAT,  
Anna Tibaijuka**

This session is of special significance because it coincides with the 30th anniversary of the first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in Vancouver in 1976, which led to the founding of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme. Much has been done since to place sustainable human settlements and the plight of the urban poor on the international agenda. The ideals that emerged in Vancouver were reconfirmed by world leaders in the Habitat Agenda – the global plan of action for adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world – at the Habitat II Conference in Istanbul, in 1996.

Over the course of the next 30 years, people living in cities around the world will largely outnumber those living in rural areas. If current trends continue, extreme urban poverty is also set to double in that period to two billion people. The world thus urgently needs actions leading to innovative urban economic development, better urban governance, safer and cleaner cities – and cities without slums in which all have access to shelter, water, sanitation and other basic needs. This also entails alternative energy sources, better nature conservation for a cleaner urban environment and above all, action to make cities of the future more sustainable and less reliant on the world's dwindling natural resources. Here, the Millennium Development Goals provide us with a roadmap into a better future.

Canada and the city of Vancouver have a consistent record as a wellspring of novel ideas for sustainable urbanization. They are therefore a most appropriate choice for the Third Session of the World Urban Forum to generate new ideas and actions in support of our common quest for more just, inclusive and environmentally sound cities.