

## Regional up-dates: Latin American & Caribbean and at a glance

### Growth and more urban growth

- Globally, urbanization levels will rise dramatically in the next 40 years to 70 per cent by 2050. More than 70 per cent of the populations of Europe, North America and Latin America are already urban; Asia and Africa remain predominately rural, with 39 per cent and 41 per cent of their populations living in urban areas, respectively.
- Latin America and the Caribbean is the most urbanized region in the developing world, with 77 percent of its population living in cities. The region will continue urbanizing over the next two decades, when the proportion of the urban population will reach 85 per cent. However, urban growth began to slow down in the 1980s due to declining population growth rates, which have fallen consistently over the last three decades.

### Growing cities

- In many countries, the largest movements of population are taking place between cities and not from rural to urban areas. In Latin America and the Caribbean, half of all migrations originate and end in cities.
- A common historic pattern observed in virtually all developing countries is urban primacy: the concentration of a significant proportion of the national urban population, and the control of flows of capital, financial transactions, industrial production, national revenue, and other similar indicators in one city. Urban primacy is the norm in most developing countries that are in the early stages of the urban transition. But urban primacy is also bad for business – it distorts the economy, creates imbalances in the distribution of populations and resources and gives rise to different forms of socio-economic disarticulation.
- In Latin America and the Caribbean, only two primate cities grew at a rate higher than 4 percent: Port-au-Prince in Haiti and Asuncion in Paraguay.
- Proximity to a large urban agglomeration is an important determinant of growth in many small and intermediate Latin American cities. Alajuela city in the vicinity of San Jose, the capital of Costa Rica, experienced rapid urban growth, at a rate of 4 per cent per year, by hosting the main airport serving the country.
- The location of an international airport in the small city of São José dos Pinhais in Curitiba, Brazil, combined with good road infrastructure and industrial development, propelled the growth of the city at an annual rate of more than 9 per cent. San Bernardo in the Santiago Metropolitan Region in Chile saw growth of approximately 3 per cent per year as a result of the construction of a new highway that attracted industrial development.

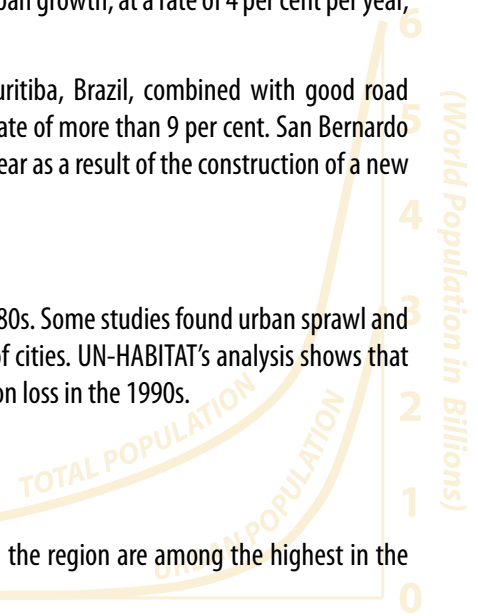
### Shrinking Cities

- In the cities of Latin America and the Caribbean, growth slowed considerably in the late 1980s. Some studies found urban sprawl and increasing suburbanization as factors responsible for population decline in specific parts of cities. UN-HABITAT's analysis shows that some 46 cities in the region, mainly in Brazil, Mexico and Venezuela, experienced population loss in the 1990s.

### For richer or poorer: Urban Inequalities

- In Latin America and the Caribbean, Gini coefficients in urban areas and selected cities in the region are among the highest in the world.
- A mere 5 per cent of the population receives a quarter of all national income, compared to South-Eastern Asian countries, where the wealthiest 5 per cent receive 16 per cent of all national income, and developed countries, where the richest 5 per cent receive 13 per cent.

1200



- The poorest 30 per cent of the population in Latin America and the Caribbean receives only 7.5 per cent of the national income, a figure that is not comparable to any other part of the world; in even the most unequal societies, the poorest groups typically receive at least 10 per cent of the national income.
- In Brazil, unemployment rose from 4.3 per cent in 1990 to 12.3 per cent in 2003, and average wages of employees in the formal industrial sector fell by 4.3 per cent in 2003. Unemployment and declining wages in urban areas have polarized income distribution in urban areas. For this and other historical reasons, Brazilian cities today have the greatest disparities in income distribution in the world.

### **Inequalities in Access to Education and Employment**

- In some countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, a higher proportion of children in small cities than in large cities receive a basic education. This gap is particularly evident in Bolivia, where 93 per cent of children in small cities and towns are enrolled in primary education, compared with 68 per cent in the capital and other large cities, and 72 per cent in rural areas.

### **Slums**

- In most Latin American countries, access to improved water and improved sanitation is quasi-universal. Lack of improved sanitation constitutes a concern only in Guatemala, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Bolivia, each of which have significant concentrations of slum households with multiple shelter deprivations.

### **Urban Environmental Risks and Burdens**

- The earth's surface temperature has increased by approximately 0.74 degrees Centigrade since 1906 as a result of human activity.
- The global atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide has risen by 35 per cent since the year 1750 which can be attributed to the burning and consumption of fossil fuels – oil, gas and coal.
- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) estimates that the earth's temperature will rise between 1.8 and 4 degrees Centigrade over the course of the 21st century, if current levels of greenhouse gas emissions are not curbed.

### **Emissions at the global and regional level**

- While Latin American cities generally produce low CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, individual countries in the region, such as Brazil, are among the top 20 emitters of CO<sub>2</sub> globally.
- The level of greenhouse gas emissions in Brazil is relatively high (337 million metric tonnes in 2004), largely resulting from deforestation in the Amazon basin.
- Brazil, Mexico, Venezuela, Argentina, Colombia, and Peru are responsible for more than 80 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- On a global scale, a relationship is evident among emissions, population and GDP rankings, reflecting the importance of population and economic growth as emission drivers.
- In the year 2000, 8.7 per cent of the world's population was located in Latin American and Caribbean countries, which emitted 5.8 per cent of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and had the following average GDP per capita: US \$637 (low-income nations), US \$1,799 (lower middle-income nations) and US \$4,795 (upper middle-income nations). In contrast, North America had a GDP per capita of US \$28,910 and 5.2 per cent of the global population, but contributed 13.7 per cent of the global emissions in 2000, more than twice that of Latin America and the Caribbean.

### **Drowned and dangerous: Cities and climate change**

- There are 3,351 cities in the low elevation coastal zones around the world. Of these cities, 64 per cent are in developing regions; Asia alone accounts for more than half of the most vulnerable cities, followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (27 per cent) and Africa (15 per cent).
- In Latin America and the Caribbean, nearly three-quarters of the population in coastal zones are urban inhabitants.

<sup>1</sup> The Gini coefficient is the most widely used measure to determine the extent to which the distribution of income or consumption among individuals or households deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. A Gini coefficient of 0 indicates perfect equality; Whereas a Gini coefficient of 1 indicates perfect inequality.