

With this in mind, and as minister responsible for the Canadian International Development Agency, I would like to explain briefly why we Canadians are particularly interested in your work.

There are four main reasons. The first is that, in the relatively near future, most of this planet's inhabitants will live in cities. The urban population explosion is creating enormous tensions and extremely complex problems in our rapidly changing societies. We must, therefore, find solutions today to the challenges that will confront the city dwellers of tomorrow.

Second, the majority of these urban dwellers live in the Third World. Of all the world's cities, those in the developing nations are now growing the most rapidly. In forty years, if current trends continue, the urban population of Africa will be three times greater than that of North America. By the end of the century, the population of Mexico City will have risen from 18 million to 26 million. Sao Paulo's population increases by 500,000 every year, and that of New Delhi has doubled in the last thirty years.

Third, the proportion of urban dwellers living in large cities is constantly on the increase. This urbanization process is most rapid in Africa. At the end of this century, the world will have five megalopolises with over 15 million inhabitants each. Three of these will be Third World cities. Moreover, sixteen of the world's twenty largest cities will be located in the Third World.

We do not yet know all the possible repercussions of this phenomenal rate of growth. But one thing we can do right now is begin sharing what we know about urban management.

The fourth reason for our interest is the fact that urban growth in the developing nations is not likely to stop in the near future. It will continue until the twenty-first century before reaching a plateau, and by then will have doubled in twenty years.

According to the latest report by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, the urban populations of developing countries are increasing several times faster than their rural populations, largely because of the migration of rural populations toward urban centres.

Certain consequences of this phenomenon have already been identified. It is calculated, for example, that 300 million new housing units will have to be built in the next fifteen years.

In many of the world's cities, squatters make up fifty per cent of the population, living in crude quarters in slums that go by different names in different countries.