



PRESS RELEASE



UN OFFICE OF THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES,
LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

WORLD POPULATION TO INCREASE BY 2.6 BILLION OVER NEXT 45 YEARS

POPULATION OF LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES WILL MORE THAN DOUBLE

NEW YORK, 24 February 2005: World population is expected to increase by 2.6 billion over the next 45 years, from 6.5 billion today to 9.1 billion in 2050. **Almost all growth will take place in the least developed countries, where today's 5.3 billion population is expected to swell to 7.8 billion in 2050.** By contrast, the population of the more developed regions will remain mostly unchanged, at 1.2 billion.

These figures are from the *2004 Revision* of the official United Nations population estimates and projections, released today by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The report provides crucial demographic information and population figures for the coming assessment of progress made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Other key findings of the 2004 Revision, which is based on the most recent national censuses, numerous specialized population surveys, and comprehensive review of past worldwide population trends and future prospects, include:

* By July 2005, the world will have 6.5 billion inhabitants, 380 million more than in 2000 or a gain of 76 million annually. Despite the lower fertility levels projected, by 2050 the world population is expected to reach 9.1 billion according to the medium variant and would still be adding 34 million persons annually by mid-century.

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* Due to the declining rate of population growth, the population of developed countries as a whole is expected to remain virtually unchanged between 2005 and 2050, at about 1.2 billion. **In contrast, the population of the 50 least developed countries is projected to more than double, passing from 0.8 billion in 2005 to 1.7 billion in 2050.** Growth in the rest of the developing world is also projected to be robust, though less rapid, with its population rising from 4.5 billion to 6.1 billion between 2005 and 2050.

* Very rapid population growth is expected to prevail in a number of developing countries, the majority of which are least developed. **Between 2005 and 2050, the population is projected to at least triple in Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Timor-Leste, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger and Uganda.**

* During 2005-2050, eight countries are expected to account for half of the world's projected population increase: India, Pakistan, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Bangladesh, Uganda, United States of America, Ethiopia, and China, listed according to the size of their contribution to population growth.

* Average world levels result from different trends by major development groups. In developed countries as a whole, fertility is currently 1.56 children per woman and is projected to increase slowly to 1.84 children per woman in 2045-2050. **In the least developed countries, fertility is 5 children per woman and is expected to drop by about half, to 2.57 children per woman by 2045-2050.**

* **In 2000-2005, fertility remains above 5 children per woman in 35 of the 148 developing countries, 30 of which are least developed countries, and the pace of decline in several countries of sub-Saharan Africa and South-Central Asia has been slower than anticipated.** Overall, the countries with high fertility account for 10 per cent of the world population. In contrast, fertility has reached below-replacement levels in 23 developing countries accounting for 25 per cent of the world population. This group includes China, whose fertility during 2000-2005 is estimated at 1.7 children per woman.

* Global life expectancy at birth, which is estimated to have risen from 46 years in 1950-1955 to 65 years in 2000-2005, is expected to keep on rising to reach 75 years in 2045-2050. In the more developed regions, the projected increase is from 75 years today to 82 years by mid-century. **Among the least developed countries, where life expectancy today is just under 50 years, it is expected to be 66 years in**

2045-2050. Because many of these countries are highly affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the projected increase in life expectancy is dependent on the implementation of effective programmes to prevent and treat HIV infection.

* **Twenty-five years into the HIV/AIDS epidemic, 60 countries are highly affected by the epidemic and the impact of the disease is evident in terms of increased morbidity and mortality and slower population growth. In Southern Africa, the region with the highest prevalence of the disease, life expectancy has fallen from 62 years in 1990-1995 to 48 years in 2000-2005, and is projected to decrease further to 43 years over the next decade before a slow recovery starts. As a consequence, population growth in the region is expected to stall between 2005 and 2020. In Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, the population is projected to decrease as deaths outnumber births.** In most of the other developing countries affected by the epidemic, population growth will continue to be positive, as their moderate or high fertility more than counterbalances the rise in mortality.

* Countries where fertility remains high and has declined only moderately will experience the slowest population ageing. By 2050, about 1 in 5 countries is still projected to have a median age under 30 years. **The youngest population will be found in least developed countries, 11 of which are projected to have median ages at or below 23 years in 2050, including Angola, Burundi, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Niger and Uganda.**

A more extensive discussion of the key findings of the 2004 Revision is available in *World Population Prospects: The 2004 Revision, Highlights* (United Nations, February 2005), which can be found on the web site of the Population Division/DESA at www.unpopulation.org.

For further information, please contact: **Nosh Nalavala**, Media Officer, United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (917) 367-2471, e-mail: nalavala@un.org. Website: <http://www.un.org/ohrlls/>