# WORLD URBANIZATION PROSPECTS: THE 1999 REVISION

## **KEY FINDINGS**

World Urbanization Prospects: the 1999 Revision, prepared by the United Nations Population Division, presents estimates and projections of the number of people living in the urban and rural areas of the countries of the world for the period 1950-2030. It also provides estimates and projections for the period 1950-2015 of the population living in urban agglomerations. The 1999 Revision updates the estimates and projections issued in the 1996 Revision.

The key findings yielded by the 1999 Revision are the following:

1. Virtually all the population growth expected during 2000-2030 will be concentrated in the urban areas of the world (figure 1). During that period the urban population is expected to increase by 2 billion persons, the same number that will be added to the whole population of the world. In terms of population size, there are 2.9 billion inhabitants in urban areas today and 4.9 billion are expected in 2030, whereas the world has 6.1 billion inhabitants and is expected to have 8.1 billion by 2030 (table 1).

Figure 1. Annual increments of the world population and of the world urban population, 1950-2030

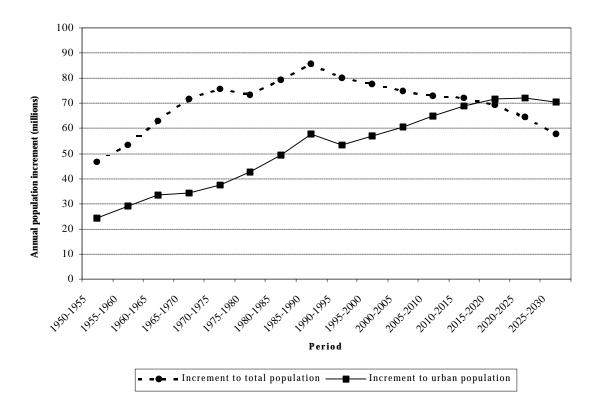


Table 1. Distribution of the world population by urban or rural place of residence, 1950-2030

	P	opulation	(in billions	s)		th rate ntage)		ing time ars)
Major area	1950	1975	2000	2030	1950-2000	2000-2030	1950-2000	2000-2030
		A. F	Population	size and o	rowth			
Total population			opinanon	5120 0110 8				
World	2.52	4.07	6.06	8.11	1.75	0.97	40	71
More developed regions	0.81	1.05	1.19	1.21	0.76	0.06	91	1,158
Less developed regions	1.71	3.03	4.87	6.90	2.09	1.16	33	60
Urban population								
World	0.75	1.54	2.85	4.89	2.67	1.80	26	38
More developed regions	0.45	0.73	0.90	1.01	1.41	0.37	49	186
Less developed regions	0.30	0.81	1.94	3.88	3.71	2.31	19	30
Rural population								
World	1.77	2.53	3.21	3.22	1.19	0.01	58	5,313
More developed regions	0.37	0.31	0.28	0.20	-0.50	-1.19	-	-
Less developed regions	1.41	2.22	2.93	3.02	1.47	0.11	47	632
			B. Urban	indicator	s			
		Percenta	oe urhan			ution rate ntage)		ing time ars)
	1950	1975	2000	2030	1950-2000	2000-2030	1950-2000	2000-2030
World	29.7	37.9	47.0	60.3	0.91	0.83	76	83
More developed regions	54.9	70.0	76.0	83.5	0.65	0.31	_	_
Less developed regions	17.8	26.8	39.9	56.2	1.62	1.14	43	61

- 2. Most of the population increase expected during 2000-2030 will be absorbed by the urban areas of the less developed regions whose population will likely rise from 1.9 billion in 2000 to 3.9 billion in 2030. The urban population of the more developed regions is expected to increase very slowly, passing from 0.9 billion in 2000 to 1 billion in 2030.
- 3. During 2000-2030, the world's urban population will grow at an average annual rate of 1.8 per cent, nearly double the rate expected for the total population of the world (1 per cent per year). At that rate of growth, the world's urban population will double in 38 years.
- 4. Growth will be particularly rapid in the urban areas of less developed regions, averaging 2.3 per cent per year during 2000-2030, consistent with a doubling time of 30 years. In contrast, the rural population of the less developed regions is expected to grow very slowly, at just 0.1 per cent per year during 2000-2030 (table 1).
- 5. Rural-urban migration and the transformation of rural settlements into cities are important determinants of the high population growth expected in urban areas of the less developed regions over the next thirty years. In combination with the universal reduction of fertility levels that is expected to occur in the future, these changes will lead to the eventual reduction of the rural

population of the less developed regions whose growth rate will first become negative in 2020-2025. That is, as of 2020 the rural population of less developed regions will begin to experience a steady decline similar to that characterizing the rural population of more developed regions since 1950 (figure 2).

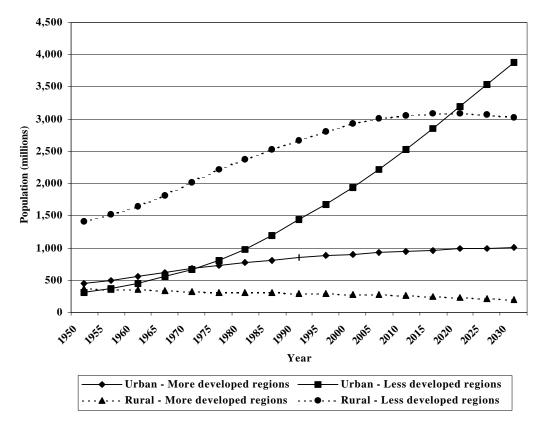


Figure 2. Estimated and projected urban and rural population of the more and less developed regions, 1950-2030

- 6. The rapid increase of the world's urban population coupled with the slowing growth of the rural population has led to a major redistribution of the population. Thus, whereas in 1950, 30 per cent of the world population lived in urban areas, by 2000 the proportion of urban dwellers had risen to 47 per cent and it is expected to reach 60 per cent by 2030. At current rates of change, the number of urban dwellers will equal the number of rural dwellers in the world in 2007.
- 7. The process of urbanization is already very advanced in the more developed regions, where 76 per cent of the population lives in urban areas. Nevertheless, the concentration of population in cities is expected to continue so that, by 2030, 84 per cent of the inhabitants of more developed countries will be urban dwellers.
- 8. The level of urbanization is considerably lower in the less developed regions, where just 40 per cent of the population lives today in urban areas. This proportion is expected to rise to 56 per cent by 2030, implying that only by that date will the less developed regions reach a level of urbanization similar to that exhibited by the more developed regions in 1950 (see table 1).

9. There are marked differences in the level and pace of urbanization among the major areas constituting the less developed regions. Latin America and the Caribbean is highly urbanized, with 75 per cent of its population living in cities in 2000. Asia and Africa are considerably less urbanized, with 37 per cent and 38 per cent, respectively, of their populations living in urban areas. Being less urbanized, Africa and Asia are expected to experience rapid rates of urbanization during 2000-2030. Consequently, by 2030, 55 per cent and 53 per cent, respectively, of their inhabitants will live in urban areas. At that time, 83 per cent of the population of Latin America and the Caribbean will be urban (table 2).

TABLE 2. DISTRIBUTION OF THE POPULATION OF MAJOR AREAS BY URBAN OR RURAL PLACE OF RESIDENCE, 1950-2030

Maining	Pop	ulation (i	n millior	is)	Growth rate (p	percentage)	Doubling time (in years)	
Major area	1950	1975	2000	2030	1950-2000	2000-2030	1950-2000	2000-2030
				A	. Population size a	nd growth		
Total population					. I opinemon size n	8.0		
Northern America	172	243	310	372	1.2	0.6	59	114
Latin America and the	167	322	519	726	2.3	1.1	31	62
Caribbean								
Europe	547	676	729	691	0.6	-0.2	121	-
Oceania	13	21	30	41	1.8	1.0	39	68
Africa	221	406	784	1,406	2.5	1.9	27	36
Asia	1,402	2,406	3,683	4,877	1.9	0.9	36	74
Urban population								
Northern America	110	180	239	314	1.6	0.9	44	. 77
Latin America and the	69	197	391	604	3.5	1.5	20	48
Caribbean								
Europe	287	455	545	571	1.3	0.2	54	450
Oceania	8	15	21	31	2.0	1.2	34	
Africa	32	102	297	766	4.4	3.2	16	22
Asia	244	594	1,352	2,605	3.4	2.2	20	32
Rural population								
Northern America	62	64	71	58	0.3	-0.6	266	
Latin America and the Caribbean	98	125	128	122	0.5	-0.2	128	-
Europe	260	221	184	120	-0.7	-1.4	-	_
Oceania	5	6	9	11	1.2	0.5	55	137
Africa	188	304	487	640	1.9	0.9	36	76
Asia	1,158	1,812	2,331	2,272	1.4	-0.1	50	-
					B. Urban indica	ators		
		entage ur			Urbanization ra		Doubling tim	
	1950	1975	2000	2030	1950-2000	2000-2030	1950-2000	2000-2030
Northern America	64	74	77	84	0.4	0.3	-	-
Latin America and the	41	61	75	83	1.2	0.3	-	-
Caribbean								
Europe	52	67	75	83	0.7	0.3	-	-
Oceania	62	72	70	74	0.3	0.2	-	
Africa	15	25	38	55	1.9	1.2	37	
Asia	17	25	37	53	1.5	1.3	46	55

Note: Major areas are ordered according to the percentage urban in 2000.

- 10. In Europe and Northern America, the percentage of the population living in urban areas is expected to rise from 75 per cent and 77 per cent, respectively, in 2000 to 83 per cent and 84 per cent in 2030. The increase in Oceania is likely to be smaller, from 70 per cent in 2000 to 74 per cent in 2030.
- 11. Despite their high levels of urbanization, the combined number of urban dwellers in Europe, Northern America, Latin America and the Caribbean (1.2 billion) is not as high as that in Asia (1.4 billion), the least urbanized major area of the world today (table 2). Furthermore, by 2030, Asia and Africa will both have higher numbers of urban dwellers than any other major area of the world.
- 12. Asia also has and is expected to have the largest rural population of the world during 2000-2030, amounting to 2.3 billion persons today. Africa, with 487 million rural inhabitants in 2000, is expected to see its rural population rise to 640 million by 2030, remaining the second largest during the period. Except for Africa and Oceania, all major areas are expected to experience a reduction of the rural population between 2000 and 2030 (table 2).
- 13. As a consequence of regional trends, the world rural population will remain nearly stable during 2000-2030, varying between 3.2 billion and 3.3 billion.
- 14. Although urban areas will encompass an increasing share of the world population, the proportion of people living in very large urban agglomerations is still small. In 2000, 4.3 per cent of the world population lived in cities of 10 million inhabitants or more and by 2015 that proportion will rise to 5.2 per cent. In addition, 2.6 per cent of the world population lives today in cities with populations ranging from 5 to 10 million inhabitants, and the projected figure for 2015 is 3.5 per cent. That is, by 2015, just 8.7 per cent of the world population is expected to live in large urban agglomerations (table 3).

Table 3. Distribution of the world population and that of more and less developed regions by size of urban settlement, 1975, 2000 and 2015

Major area	Range of population size	Рори	Population (millions)			Percentage		
-		1975	2000	2015	1975	2000	2015	
World	5 million or more	195	418	623	4.8	6.9	8.7	
	1 to 5 million	327	704	1,006	8.0	11.6	14.1	
	Less than 1 million	1,022	1,723	2,189	25.1	28.5	30.6	
	Rural areas	2,531	3,210	3,337	62.1	53.0	46.6	
	Total population	4,075	6,055	7,154	100.0	100.0	100.0	
More developed regions	5 million or more	98	112	120	9.3	9.5	9.9	
	1 to 5 million	145	219	250	13.9	18.5	20.6	
	Less than 1 million	491	571	598	46.8	48.1	49.3	
	Rural areas	315	285	246	30.0	24.0	20.3	
	Total population	1,048	1,188	1,214	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Less developed regions	5 million or more	97	305	503	3.2	6.3	8.5	
	1 to 5 million	182	485	756	6.0	10.0	12.7	
	Less than 1 million	531	1,152	1,591	17.6	23.7	26.8	
	Rural areas	2,217	2,925	3,091	73.2	60.1	52.0	
	Total population	3,026	4,867	5,940	100.0	100.0	100.0	

- 15. The proportion of the world population living in small cities is considerably larger, though it is increasing at a slower pace. In 2000, 28.5 per cent of the world population is estimated to live in cities of less than a million inhabitants and by 2015 that proportion will likely rise to 30.6 per cent. Consequently, the trend towards concentration of the population in larger urban settlements has not yet resulted in a marked decline of either the proportion or the number of persons living in small urban settlements.
- 16. In more developed regions, the concentration of population in small urban settlements is even more marked than at the world level. Thus, in 2000, 48 per cent of the population in developed countries lived in cities of less than one million inhabitants and by 2015 that proportion is expected to rise to 49 per cent. In less developed regions, where most of the population still lives in rural areas, the proportion of people living in small cities is 24 per cent currently and will rise to 27 per cent by 2015 (table 3).
- 17. In both the more and the less developed regions, the proportion of people living in large urban agglomerations (of 5 million inhabitants or more) is low, amounting to 6.3 per cent in the less developed regions and to 9.5 per cent in the more developed regions today. By 2015, the relative increase in that proportion will be greater for less developed regions, where it will rise to 8.5 per cent, a level closer to the 9.9 per cent that more developed regions will have at that time.
- 18. Not only do the largest cities account for relatively low proportions of the world population but in addition their share of the annual growth of the urban population is expected to be moderate. During 2000-2015 cities of 5 million inhabitants or more are expected to absorb 21 per cent of the annual increment in the urban population, whereas cities with less than a million inhabitants will absorb 48 per cent (table 4). In both cases, cities in the less developed regions will absorb most of that increase. Thus the large cities of developing countries are projected to account for 20 per cent of the

Table 4. Distribution of the annual increment of the population among urban settlements of different population sizes, 1975 to 2015

Major area	Range of population size	1 1	ition increment Ilions)	Percentage of overall urban increment	
	3777	1975-2000	2000-2015	1975-2000	2000-2015
World	Total population	79.2	73.3		
	Urban population	52.1	64.8	100.0	100.0
	Cities of 10 million or more	7.8	7.5	14.9	11.5
	Cities of 5 to 10 million	1.1	6.2	2.2	9.5
	Cities of 1 to 5 million	15.1	20.1	29.0	31.0
	Cities of less than a 1 million	28.1	31.1	53.9	47.9
More developed regions	Total population	5.6	1.8		
	Urban population	6.8	4.3	13.0	6.7
	Cities of 10 million or more	1.3	0.1	2.4	0.2
	Cities of 5 to 10 million	-0.7	0.4	-1.3	0.6
	Cities of 1 to 5 million	3.0	2.0	5.7	3.1
	Cities of less than a 1 million	3.2	1.8	6.2	2.8
Less developed regions	Total population	73.6	71.5		
	Urban population	45.3	60.5	87.0	93.3
	Cities of 10 million or more	6.5	7.4	12.5	11.4
	Cities of 5 to 10 million	1.8	5.8	3.5	8.9
	Cities of 1 to 5 million	12.1	18.1	23.3	27.9
	Cities of less than a 1 million	24.8	29.2	47.7	45.1

increase in the world's urban population and small cities in those countries will account for 45 per cent of that increase. In fact, the largest shares of the increase in the world urban population will go to cities with less than half a million inhabitants, cities with between 1 and 5 million inhabitants, and cities with more than 10 million inhabitants, in order of importance (table 4), but only in the case of cities with 1 to 5 million inhabitants will that share rise from 1975-2000 to 2000-2015.

- 19. The increase in the proportion of the population living in large urban agglomerations is mostly the result of a rise in the number of such agglomerations rather than of the rapid growth of the population of most of them. Thus, the number of cities with 5 million inhabitants or more will pass from 41 in 2000 to 59 in 2015. Among those cities, the number of "mega-cities" (those with 10 million inhabitants or more) will increase from 19 in 2000 to 23 in 2015 (table 5). As is well known, most of the large cities are located in developing countries. In 2000, just 10 of the 41 large cities belong to developed countries and only one more, for a total of 11, will be located in developed countries by 2015.
- 20. Large urban agglomerations do not necessarily experience fast population growth. In fact, some of the fastest growing cities have small populations and, as population size increases, the growth rate of a city's population tends to decline. However, some of today's mega-cities have experienced rather high rates of population growth over the past 25 years. Thus, Dhaka in Bangladesh grew at an average annual rate of 6.9 per cent during 1975-2000 and Lagos, Nigeria, increased at a rate of 5.6 per cent annually over the same period. But they are exceptional cases. Among the 19 mega-cities of today, just 7 grew at rates above 3 per cent per year and 9 experienced moderate or low growth (below 2 per cent per year). In the future, just 4 of today's mega-cities will exhibit growth rates above 3 per cent and 10 will be experiencing very low growth, at below 1 per cent per year (table 6).
- 21. In terms of population size, Tokyo is the largest urban agglomeration in the world, with 26.4 million residents, and is expected to remain the largest although its population will not grow. It is followed today by Mexico City, Bombay, São Paulo and New York. Of these cities, Bombay is expected to become the second largest mega-city in 2015, followed by Lagos, Dhaka and São Paulo, each of which is expected to have more than 20 million inhabitants by 2015 (table 5).

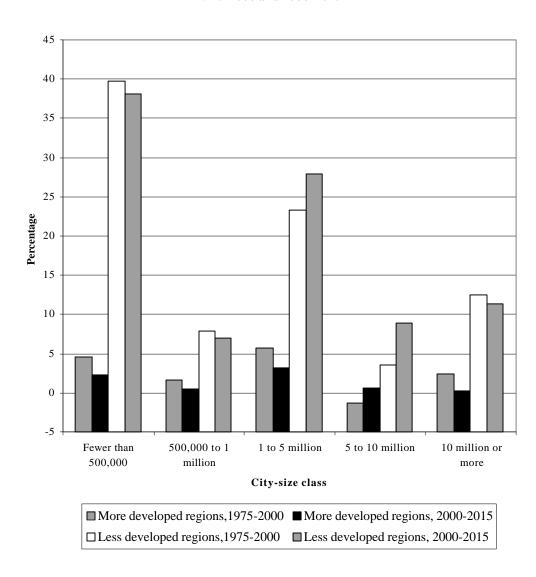
Table 5. Population of cities with 10 million inhabitants or more, 1950, 1975, 2000 and 2015  $(in\ millions)$ 

19	50	197	75	2000	0	201	5
City	Population	City	Population	City	Population	City	Population
1 New York	12.3	1 Tokyo	19.8	1 Tokyo	26.4	1 Tokyo	26.4
		2 New York	15.9	2 Mexico City	18.1	2 Bombay	26.1
		3 Shanghai	11.4	3 Bombay	18.1	3 Lagos	23.2
		4 Mexico City	11.2	4 São Paulo	17.8	4 Dhaka	21.1
		5 São Paulo	10.0	5 New York	16.6	5 São Paulo	20.4
			6 Lagos	13.4	6 Karachi	19.2	
			7 Los Angeles	13.1	7 Mexico City	19.2	
			8 Calcutta	12.9	8 New York	17.4	
			9 Shanghai	12.9	9 Jakarta	17.3	
			10 Buenos Aires	12.6	10 Calcutta	17.3	
				11 Dhaka	12.3	11 Delhi	16.8
				12 Karachi	11.8	12 Metro Manila	14.8
				13 Delhi	11.7	13 Shanghai	14.6
				14 Jakarta	11.0	14 Los Angeles	14.1
				15 Osaka	11.0	15 Buenos Aires	14.1
				16 Metro Manila	10.9	16 Cairo	13.8
				17 Beijing	10.8	17 Istanbul	12.5
				18 Rio de Janeiro	10.6	18 Beijing	12.3
			19 Cairo	10.6	19 Rio de Janeiro	11.9	
						20 Osaka	11.0
						21 Tianjin	10.7
						22 Hyderabad	10.5
						23 Bangkok	10.1

Table 6. Population and growth rate of the urban agglomerations with more than  $10\ \text{million}$  inhabitants,  $\ 1975\text{-}2015$ 

		Population (	in millions)	Growth rate (	Growth rate (percentage)	
Urban agglomeration —	1975	1999	2000	2015	1975-2000	2000-2015
1 Tokyo	19.8	26.4	26.4	26.4	1.2	0.0
2 Mexico City	11.2	17.9	18.1	19.2	1.9	0.4
3 Bombay	6.9	17.5	18.1	26.1	3.9	2.4
4 São Paulo	10.0	17.5	17.8	20.4	2.3	0.9
5 New York	15.9	16.6	16.6	17.4	0.2	0.3
6 Los Angeles	8.9	13.0	13.1	14.1	1.5	0.5
7 Shanghai	11.4	12.9	12.9	14.6	0.5	0.8
8 Lagos	3.3	12.8	13.4	23.2	5.6	3.7
9 Calcutta	7.9	12.7	12.9	17.3	2.0	1.9
10 Buenos Aires	9.1	12.4	12.6	14.1	1.3	0.7
11 Dhaka	2.2	11.7	12.3	21.1	6.9	3.6
12 Karachi	4.0	11.4	11.8	19.2	4.3	3.2
13 Delhi	4.4	11.3	11.7	16.8	3.9	2.4
14 Osaka	9.8	11.0	11.0	11.0	0.4	0.0
15 Beijing	8.5	10.8	10.8	12.3	0.9	0.9
16 Jakarta	4.8	10.6	11.0	17.3	3.3	3.0
17 Metro Manila	5.0	10.5	10.9	14.8	3.1	2.1
18 Rio de Janeiro	7.9	10.5	10.6	11.9	1.2	0.8
19 Cairo	6.1	10.3	10.6	13.8	2.2	1.7

Figure 3: Share of the average annual increment of the world urban population for more developed and less developed regions by city-size class, 1975-2000 and 2000-2015



# Africa

Eastern Africa	Middle Africa	Northern Africa	Western Africa
Burundi	Angola	Algeria	Benin
Comoros	Cameroon	Egypt	Burkina Faso
Djibouti	Central African Republic	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Cape Verde
Eritrea	Chad	Morocco	Côte d'Ivoire
Ethiopia	Congo	Sudan	Gambia
Kenya	Democratic Republic of the	Tunisia	Ghana
Madagascar	Congo	Western Sahara	Guinea
Malawi	Equatorial Guinea		Guinea-Bissau
Mauritius	Gabon	Southern Africa	Liberia
Mozambique	Sao Tome and Principe	, and the second	Mali
Réunion	-	Botswana	Mauritania
Rwanda		Lesotho	Niger
Seychelles		Namibia	Nigeria
Somalia		South Africa	St. Helena
Uganda		Swaziland	Senegal
United Republic of Tanzania			Sierra Leone
Zambia			Togo
Zimbabwe			-

# Asia

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Eastern Asia	South-central Asia	South-eastern Asia	Western Asia			
China	Afghanistan	Brunei Darussalam	Armenia			
China, Hong Kong SAR	Bangladesh	Cambodia	Azerbaijan			
Democratic People's	Bhutan	East Timor	Bahrain			
Republic of Korea	India	Indonesia	Cyprus			
Japan	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	Lao People's Democratic	Gaza Strip			
Macau	Kazakhstan	Republic	Georgia			
Mongolia	Kyrgyzstan	Malaysia	Iraq			
Republic of Korea	Maldives	Myanmar	Israel			
-	Nepal	Philippines	Jordan			
	Pakistan	Singapore	Kuwait			
	Sri Lanka	Thailand	Lebanon			
	Tajikistan	Viet Nam	Oman			
	Turkmenistan		Qatar			
	Uzbekistan		Saudi Arabia			
			Syrian Arab Republic			
			Turkey			
			United Arab Emirates			
			Yemen			

#### Europe

Eastern Europe	Northern Europe	Southern Europe	Western Europe	
Belarus	Channel Islands	Albania	Austria	
Bulgaria	Denmark	Andorra	Belgium	
Czech Republic	Estonia	Bosnia and Herzegovina	France	
Hungary	Faeroe Islands	Croatia	Gerrmany	
Poland	Finland	Gibraltar	Liechtenstein	
Republic of Moldova	Iceland	Greece	Luxembourg	
Romania	Ireland	Holy See	Monaco	

Romania Ireland Holy See Russian Federation Isle of Man Italy Slovakia Latvia Malta Ukraine Lithuania Portugal Norway San Marino Sweden Slovenia

United Kingdom of Great

Britain and Northern Ireland The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Yugoslavia

Spain

Netherlands

Switzerland

#### Latin America and the Caribbean

### Caribbean Central America South America

Anguilla Belize Argentina Antigua and Barbuda Costa Rica Bolivia Aruba El Salvador Brazil Bahamas Guatemala Chile Barbados Honduras Colombia Mexico Ecuador

British Virgin Islands Mexico Ecuador
Cayman Islands Nicaragua Falkland Islands (Malvinas)

CubaPanamaFrench GuianaDominicaGuyanaDominican RepublicParaguayGrenadaPeruGuadeloupeSurinameHaitiUruguay

Haiti Uruguay Jamaica Venezuela Martinique

Montserrat Netherlands Antilles

Puerto Rico Saint Kitts and Nevis

Saint Lucia
Saint Vincent and the
Grenadines

Trinidad and Tobago Turks and Caicos Islands

United States Virgin

Islands

# Northern America

Bermuda Canada Greenland St. Pierre and Miquelon United States of America

# Oceania

Australia/New Zealand	Melanesia	Micronesia	Polynesia
Australia New Zealand	Fiji New Caledonia Papua New Guinea Solomon Islands Vanuatu	Guam Kiribati Marshall Islands Micronesia (Federated States of) Nauru Northern Mariana Islands Palau	American Samoa Cook Islands French Polynesia Niue Pitcairn Samoa Tokelau Tonga Tuvalu Wallis and Futuna Islands

## TABLE 8. LIST OF LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Afghanistan Guinea Niger Guinea-Bissau Rwanda Angola Bangladesh Haiti Samoa

Benin Sao Tome and Principe Kiribati Bhutan Sierra Leone

Lao People's Democratic Republic Solomon Islands Burkina Faso Lesotho Burundi Somalia Cambodia Liberia Sudan Cape Verde Madagascar Togo Tuvalu Central African Republic Malawi

Chad Maldives Uganda Comoros Mali United Republic of Tanzania

Democratic Republic of the Congo Mauritania Vanuatu Djibouti Mozambique Yemen

Equatorial Guinea Myanmar Zambia Eritrea Nepal Ethiopia

Gambia