



Media Release

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Cities can lift people out of poverty

Next year will be the first in history when half the world's people will be living in cities, many in developing countries. While cities concentrate poverty, urban life also offers the best hope for poor people to escape it, according to the United Nations Population Fund's *State of the World's Population Report 2007* to be launched in Parliament House, Canberra, tomorrow. The report's title is *Unleashing the Potential of Urban Growth*.

UNFPA's representative to Vietnam, Ian Howie, is in Canberra to launch the Report. He says that if urbanisation is to succeed in lifting people out of poverty then forward thinking and pre-emptive international efforts are required to tackle the challenges that inevitably accompany urban growth.

Mr Howie says that the battle to reach the Millennium Development Goals and halve extreme poverty in the next seven and a half years will be waged in the world's slums.

"So what do we need to do? We must recognise poor people's rights to the city, we must adopt a broad and long-range vision of urban space, and we must help governments improve the nature and form of urban expansion."

Mr Howie says one way to reduce the main factor in urban growth – natural increase – is to provide poor women with information, services and contraceptives to enable them to plan their families and avoid unintended pregnancies.

"In doing so, you may also provide them with a path out of poverty and desperation."

The Report says that while many of the world's major environmental problems such as pollution and waste generation, characterise many cities, there are major environmental benefits of concentrating human activity – of planning for compact cities.

"Australia is one of the most urbanised countries on earth," says Mr Howie. "The many lessons learnt in managing its urban growth can be shared with the global community."

The State of the World's Population report 2007 "Unleashing the Potential of Urban Growth" will be launched in Parliament House Theatre at 9.30am Wednesday 27 June. Members of the press are welcome. The Hon. Bob McMullan MP will host the event on behalf of the Parliamentary Group on Population and Development.

Further information: Ian Howie 02 6282 8922 (Tues) Tom Gosling 0418 294 342