

# Sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration

Report of the Secretary-General for the 5<sup>th</sup> session of the  
Commission on Population and Development (E/CN.9/2018/2)

Briefing for Member States, New York, 28 February 2018

# Introduction

- Cities are centres of social, economic and political activity, and human mobility, that attract internal and international migrants
- The ICPD (1994) recognized urbanization as integral to development, and possible negative consequences of unbridled urban growth or excessive concentration of population in large cities
- The New Urban Agenda (2016) set out a new road map to make urbanization an engine of sustained and inclusive economic growth, social and cultural development and environmental protection
- International migration was featured in the ICPDA, and has gained more prominence since

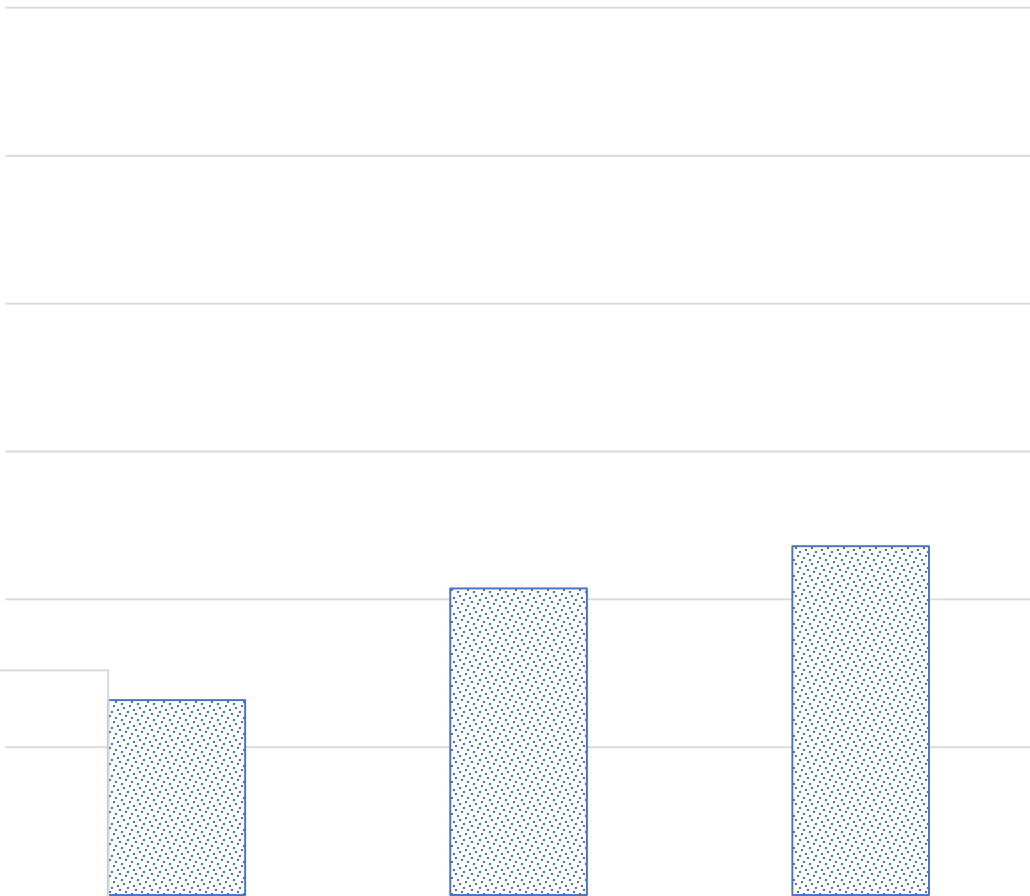
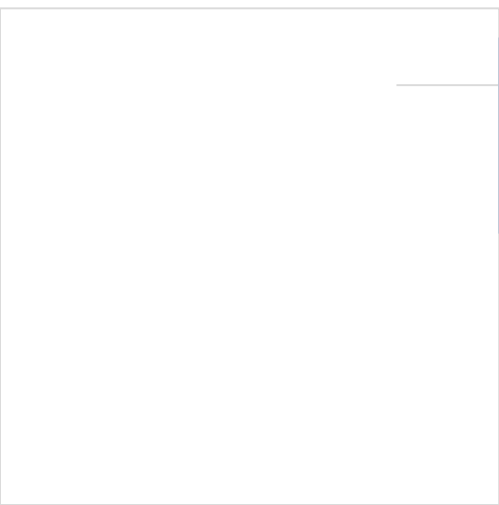
# Introduction

- In 2018, a majority (4.2 billion of a total of 7.6 billion) of the world's population lived in cities and other urban settlements
- Almost all of the future increase in population, to 8.6 billion in



# Cities by size categories

- The number, and in many cases also the size of cities has increased considerably in the last decades.
- Cities of all sizes have contributed to urban growth since 1990 (figure II). Future growth is anticipated to be faster among cities with 1 million inhabitants or more.
- Megacities (with 10 million or more inhabitants), of which there were only 10 in 1990, number 33 in 2018. Projections suggest that there will be 41 megacities in 2030.



# Sources of city growth

- Urban growth in developing countries has resulted primarily from natural increase (excess of births over deaths), with the exception of some countries in Asia, where rural-urban migration has played

# Cities and international migration

- A large number and proportion of international migrants arrive and settle in cities, mainly in large metropolitan areas or “global cities”, which also serve as “immigrant gateways”, with at least 20% of their total population foreign-born.
- In 2015, 22 “global cities” hosted 44 million international migrants in 2015 (18% of world total). Together with 180 additional cities, 202 cities hosted around 1/3 of the total foreign-born population. Around 60% of refugees live in urban areas.



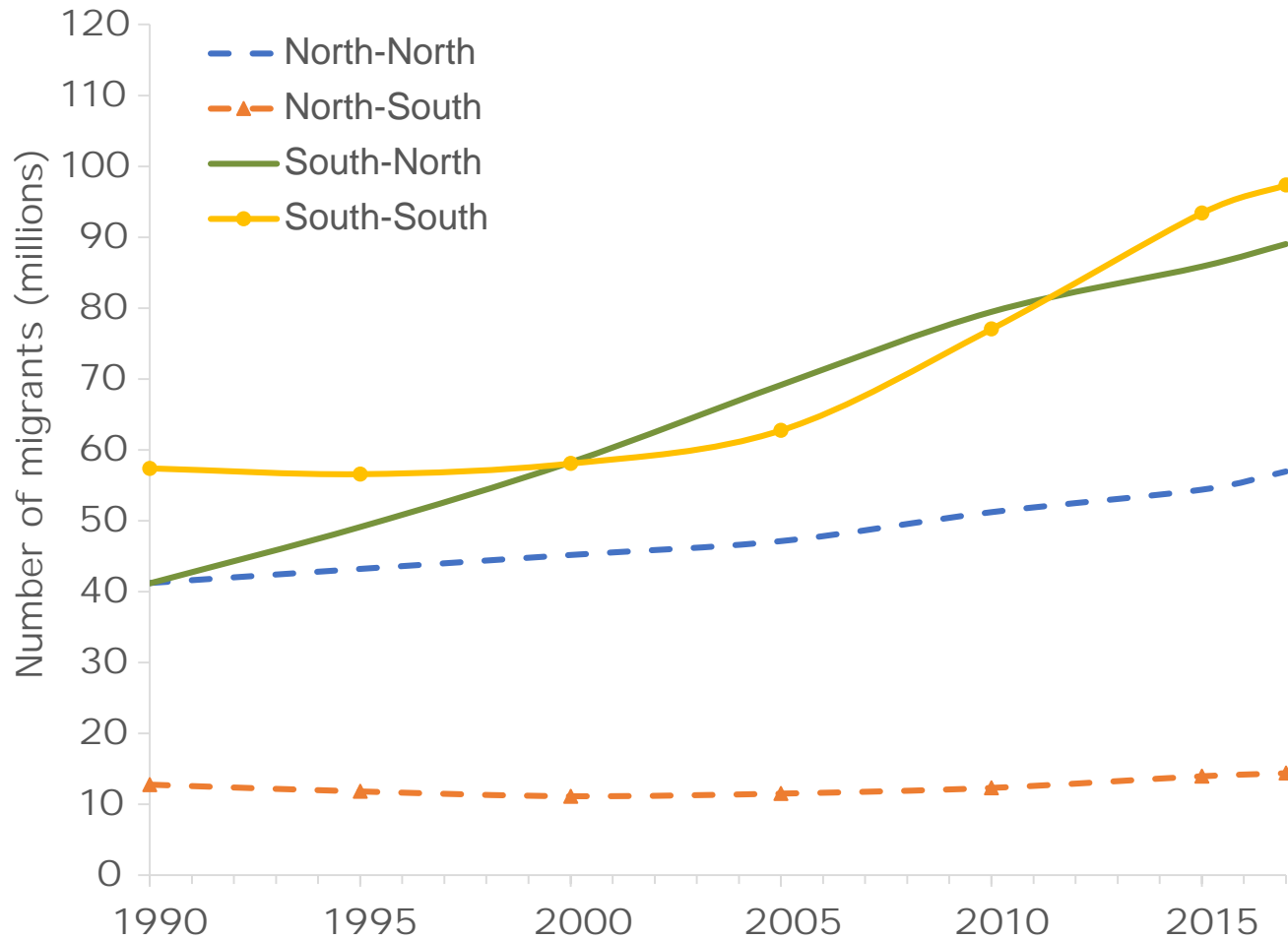
# Other forms of human mobility

- A significant number of migrants return

# International migration and development

- As countries develop, rates of emigration tend to rise. Emigration rates in middle-income countries can triple those of low-income countries.
- Global migration is a consequence and a driver of economic development, but the benefits do not accrue evenly for individuals or across countries.
- Maximizing and sharing the benefits of international migration requires regulation and policies to address: informality in labour markets, upholding labour standards, avoiding strain on social services, and address concerns about national security. With appropriate measures in place, however, safe, orderly and regular migration can indeed support global prosperity.

**Figure III** Origin and destination of international migrants by development group, 1990-2017 (millions)



: United Nations (2017).  
POP/DB/MIG/Stock/Rev.2017)

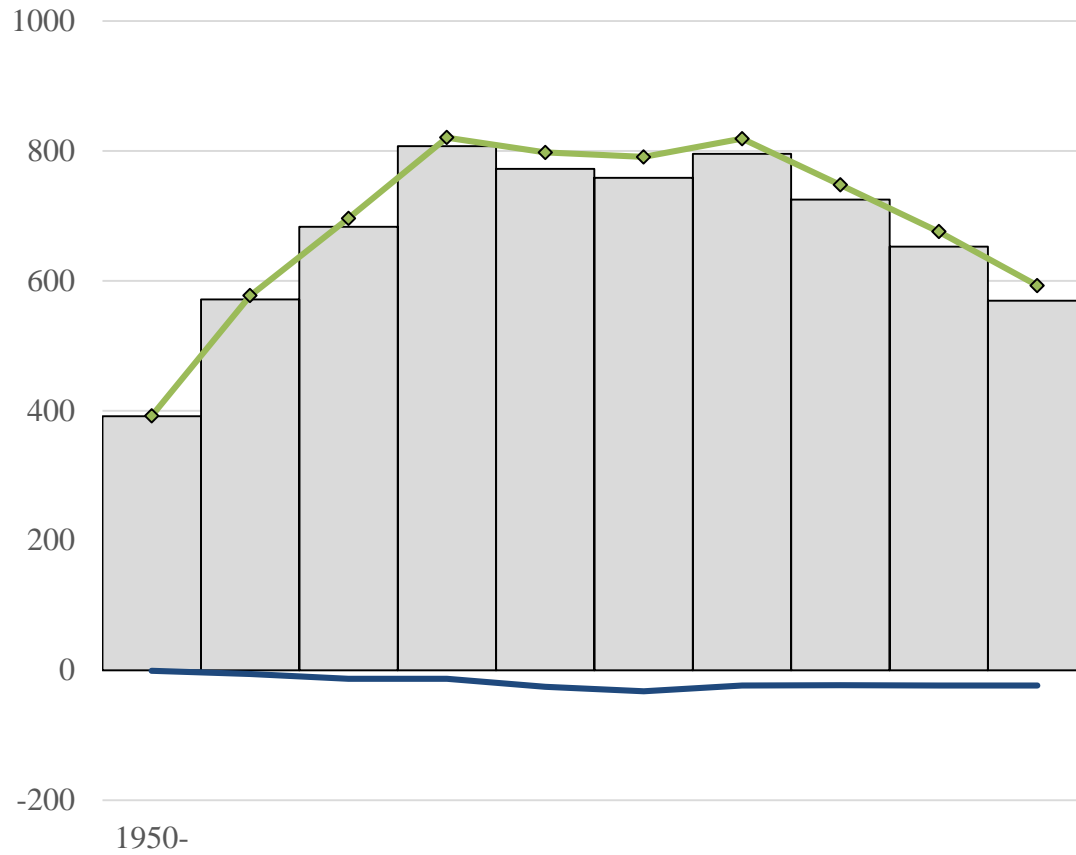
(United Nations database,

# Age and sex composition of international migrants

- A large majority (70%) of all international migrants are in the main working ages, 20-59 years, in the North and in the South. Older migrants, aged 60 years or over, vastly outnumber those under the age of 20 years in the North, while the opposite is true in the South
- Forty-eight per cent of all international migrants are women. The share of women among international migrants is higher in Europe and Northern America



Figure IV Contributions of natural increase and net migration to population change for developing regions from 1950-1960 to 2040-2050



# Policies on sustainable cities, human mobility and international migration (circa 2015)

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# Data Gaps

- Significant data gaps remain in regard to cities, internal and international migration, and other forms of mobility. Specifically:
- Internationally comparable data, including definitions and measures of cities and urban agglomerations, are needed for an integrated monitoring of the SDGs related to sustainable urbanization;
- Internationally comparable definitions and measures of migration, including multiple moves, return and circular migration, based on censuses, surveys, administrative records, and new sources of “big data”, requiring national and international coordination and cooperation



# Data Gaps

Steps to improve migration data could comprise:

- The inclusion of migration-relevant questions in the 2020 census round
- Use of administrative records to produce and disseminate migration-related statistics
- Inclusion of a question on the country of birth and of citizenship in household surveys
- Creating partnerships with the private sector to leverage big data in measuring migration
- Enhancing national capacities for the collection and use of migration-related data and indicators to support policymaking



# Recommendations

- Migration policies should minimize the negative impacts of migration on countries of origin, including loss of human capital and separation of families, and maximize the potential benefits of reducing the transfer costs of remittances, promoting the recognition of skills and credentials, ensuring the portability of earned benefits and supporting the engagement of diaspora groups and communities
- The collection of data on urban and rural populations, on internal and international migration in censuses, including the 2020 round, should be supported. Data collection on internal and international migrants through household surveys and the use of data from administrative records should be expanded
- International and regional organizations should coordinate efforts in developing programmes and methodologies, and providing technical assistance to improve data collection in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development