

**Green cities:
Plan for the planet!**

Planning for an urban planet



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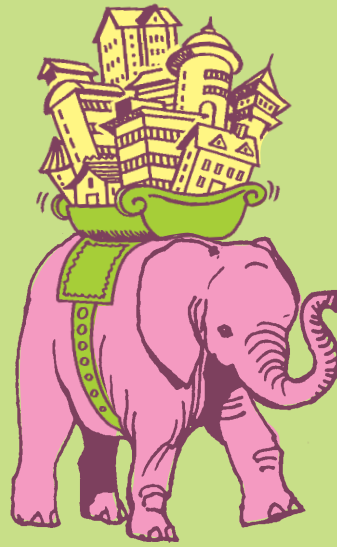
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Editorial

Our generation is about to notch up an extraordinary record: we will be the first in the entire history of humankind to live mainly in towns and cities. Soon, more than half the people on earth will live in urban rather than rural areas – after millions of years, humanity will have become a predominantly urban species.

And the trend will not stop there. By 2030 – when our children will probably be much the same age as we are now – two thirds of the world's people will be in the ever-expanding towns and cities. Already more of us – 3 billion – live in them than inhabited the entire globe just 50 years ago, and their numbers are swelling by more than a million every week.

Cities present great economic, cultural and social opportunities. But many of the world's environment and development crises are concentrated in them. They suck in resources from all over their countries and the rest of the world, creating enormous 'environmental footprints' that can be bigger than entire nations. The wastes they emit are responsible for most of the worst pollution of land, air and water. And, though poverty is often worse in rural areas, it is more concentrated – and therefore more politically explosive – in urban ones.

It's quite an inheritance. Fortunately something is being done to get to grips with it. This year's World Environment Day, on 5 June, is focusing on Green Cities. Mayors from all over the world will converge on San Francisco for the day's main celebrations.

The mayors will share ideas and experiences of tackling problems – and work out solutions. The day's theme is, after all, 'Plan for the Planet!' They plan to adopt the world's first ever set of environmental agreements to be made between municipal governments. These San Francisco Urban Environmental Accords – which will be signed on the 60th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations in the city – will lay down measures to reduce climate change, waste and pollution, and increase wildlife and public transport.

It is good that the mayors will be setting goals for our new urban planet. But it will be up to us to see that they are met, for cities have a vital part to play in delivering a more environmentally sustainable world.

We want to hear from you – your views, your news and your ideas. E-mail us at: tunza@ourplanet.com.