

# URBANIZATION

## glossary

**aquifer:** an underground source of water; a permeable layer of sand, gravel, or rock where water collects.

**climate refugees:** people forced to leave their homes or communities because of the effects of climate change, including sea level rise, drought and desertification.

**developed countries:** countries that have a generally more industrialized economy that is strong and diverse, and higher standards of living relative to developing countries.

**developing countries:** countries at a relatively early stage in the process of economic development classified using a range of economic and social criteria such as per capita income and life expectancy.

**gross domestic product (GDP):** an economic indicator which measures the total market value of all goods and services produced by a nation's economy over a given period of time (usually a year).

**impervious surfaces:** land that does not permit water and precipitation to infiltrate to ground water, such as roads, buildings, and parking lots. As impervious surfaces replace natural landscapes, more runoff occurs which, in turn, affects water quality, streamflow and flooding.

**informal settlements:** residential areas where inhabitants live in unauthorized, unplanned or illegal housing that is often cut off from basic services and infrastructure.

**land subsidence:** the gradual settling or sudden sinking of the Earth's surface because of the movement of underground material. Subsidence is often caused by removing water, oil, natural gas, or mineral resources out of the ground.

**megalopolis:** a clustered network of heavily populated cities or urban areas.

**megacity:** cities or urban areas with a population of 10 million residents or more.

**slum:** an informal settlement in an urban area that is densely populated and may be characterized by poor housing and a lack of reliable services such as sanitation, electricity, clean water and law enforcement.

**smart growth:** an alternate form of development that combats urban sprawl by revitalizing city centers and existing suburbs, planning for pedestrians, building mixed-use residential and commercial spaces, and taking into account environmental considerations.

**suburb:** an area characterized by low density housing spread over a city's surrounding countryside.

**sustainability:** the ability to satisfy the needs of the world's present population without compromising the Earth's ability to meet the needs of future generations.

**urban agglomerations:** an integrated urban area that encompasses a core city and its contiguous suburbs.

**urban heat islands:** a metropolitan area that experiences significantly higher temperatures than the surrounding rural areas due to the high densities of people, buildings, and activity.

**urban runoff:** water polluted by traffic exhaust, residue, gasoline, garbage, and/or other contaminants that washes into rivers, streams, and oceans.

**urban sprawl:** also called suburban sprawl, the outward development of cities from the city center, that varies in levels of organization, planning, and structure.

**urbanization:** the process in which an increasing proportion of a population inhabits cities and their suburbs.

**zoning laws:** rules or laws within an urban area that dictate what sort of activities, behaviors, or construction are acceptable and which are not.

**United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):** 17 interconnected goals that provide individualized guidelines and targets to help every nation develop sustainably, protecting the planet and ensuring all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The SDGs are meant to build on the Millennium Development Goals (2000 - 2015) and also focus attention on addressing new problems such as climate change, economic inequality, and sustainable consumption among other priorities.