

More Than 50 Mayors From Around the Globe Weigh Effects of Mass Urbanization at UIC's 4th Annual Richard J. Daley Urban Forum

International municipal leaders to exchange ideas on social and economic challenges, creative opportunities of urbanization

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CHICAGO – This year, for the first time in human history, more than half of the people on earth will live in cities, according to “*Unleashing the Potential of Urban Growth*,” the landmark 2007 report of the United Nations Population Fund. Mayors from more than 50 cities spanning the globe will weigh the social and economic effects of this mass urbanization at the Fourth Annual Richard J. Daley Urban Forum at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), at 725 W. Roosevelt Road on April 29.

The Forum will feature a special contingent of municipal leaders from around the world including Pakistan, Jordan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United States. Also participating are leading scholars and experts in the field of urbanization and population growth.

Mayor Richard M. Daley will serve as co-host with Dr. Eric A. Gislason, interim chancellor of UIC.

“These mayors understand, as I do, that urban centers are where the greatest concentrations of people will be living during the twenty first Century,” said Mayor Daley. “The 2008 Forum offers an unprecedented opportunity to hear from mayors from around the world about the challenges large urban cities face and how mass urbanization impacts areas like education and health care.”

This year's Forum draws its substance in part from the UN Population Fund's report, which states that due to this urban influx, the world is hovering on the threshold of an “urban millennium,” and it is in these city centers that the solutions to all the challenges that come with this new urbanization will be found. The Forum's critical mass of global mayors, along with leading scholars and other experts, will offer unique perspectives on the different ways in which cities experience the shifting population trend, and the challenges as well as creative opportunities that will emerge.

UIC's Richard J. Daley Urban Forum, p. 2

The report argues, “the future of cities in developing countries, the future of humanity itself, all depend very much on decisions made now in preparation for this growth.” The author of the report, renowned sociologist and demographer George Martine, will participate in the Forum as a panelist.

Specific topics to be covered at the Forum include:

- The New Urban Dwellers: Addressing the Challenge and Opportunity of Urbanization
- Innovation in Access to Health Care and Education
- The City as Catalyst: The Creative Potential in Urbanization
- Global Citizenship: The Emergence of New Communities

Participating mayors include:

- The Honorable Mayor Mian Amer Mahmood of Lahore, Pakistan
- His Excellency Mayor Omar Maani of Amman, Jordan
- The Honorable Mayor Juozas Imbrasas of Vilnius, Lithuania
- The Honorable Mayor Mohamed Sajid of Casablanca, Morocco
- The Honorable Mayor Samuel L. Jones of Mobile, Alabama

In addition, the Forum will draw on the knowledge of experts such as John Friedmann, professor emeritus of Urban Planning at UCLA; Bruce Katz, vice president of the Brookings Institution and founder of its Metropolitan Policy Program; and Marshall Bouton, president of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs.

“UIC is very pleased to bring together this first-ever Chicago gathering of international mayors, academics and experts to analyze today’s unique position of the world’s cities,” said Dr. Gislason. “I believe the topic of this year’s Forum will be of great interest to anyone involved in urban planning and development, industry, arts and culture, science and health care.”

Founded in 2005 as a joint initiative of the Daley Family and the University of Illinois at Chicago, the Forum is an annual symposium designed to provide mayors, business leaders, policymakers, scholars, students and commentators to discuss critical issues facing urban areas around the world.

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