

A Century of 10 Billion: Contrasts between the North and the South and Implications for a Future Transition

Patience W. STEPHENS

The world is at an important demographic crossroads. Despite major global achievements in improving health and reducing mortality and fertility during the 20th century, the future demographic path of the world is more uncertain and, perhaps, more ominous than ever. The challenges at the dawn of the 21st century come from both longstanding population issues such as high fertility and mortality, as well as newer ones, such as HIV/AIDS, global warming, and the negative population growth rates into which a number of developed countries have sunk. Among other concerns, there is uncertainty about whether high fertility countries will complete their fertility transition in the next 50 years or so. There is as much uncertainty about whether developed countries that are currently below replacement fertility will recover. There is also major concern about the future course of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Although both developed and developing countries face demographic challenges, there is a distinct North-South divide in the nature and intensity of these threats. This paper presents an overview of the principal demographic contrasts between the more developed and the less developed regions.