

## Favelas Growing 4.5% a Year in Brazil

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What grew 4.5% a year in Brazil between 1991 and 2000? Unfortunately it was not the economy; it was the number of people living in favelas (urban slums), reports the government statistical bureau (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística) (IBGE).

During the same period, average annual population growth was 1.6%. The IBGE says it is now estimated that by the year 2050, fully 80% of all Brazilians will live in a city.

With those numbers in his baggage, minister of Cities, Olívio Dutra, has arrived in Spain to meet with a UN task force on the Millennium Targets established to improve the situation of inhabitants of slums.

Dutra travelled along with Jorge Hereda, the Housing secretary, and Raquel Rolnik, head of Urban Programs.

According to Dutra, the model in place today excludes people. "Those who are most adversely affected are the poor and those of African descent. They live in substandard housing, do not have basic sanitation or access to jobs or leisure activities, not to mention education and healthcare," declared the minister, adding that "improving the situation of those living in precarious housing must be seen as a crucial element in the war on poverty."

Dutra declared that the problem of precarious urban housing requires a broad-based solution.

The minister reported that the Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva administration has spent 30% more on the problem in its first twenty months in office than was spent over the previous eight years.

Dutra said that money is being targeted at people who make up to five minimum wages because they are the people who account for 92% of Brazil's housing shortfall (estimated at 6.6 million homes).

UN data shows that half of the world's population lives in urban centers and that there are 900 million people who have substandard urban housing. According to the Ministry of Cities, in Brazil there are slums in 1,500 out of 5,561 municipalities.

A factor that aggravates the situation in Brazil is that slums are concentrated; 60% of slum dwellers live in only 224 municipalities, which have populations of more than 100,000.

Dutra will explain what the Brazilian government is doing in the areas of housing and sanitation and the problems in Brazilian cities with infrastructure.

The II World Urban Forum began on September 12 and ends on the 17th. There are representatives from 191 countries participating.

Agência Brasil

Reporter: Juliana Andrade

Translator: Allen Bennett