

# UN Projection Drops 400 Million More People

by Paul Gallagher

UN demographers have once again lowered their projections for the future human population, this time reducing their consensus guess at the global population in 2050, by 400 million people. Such scaling-down of population projections has become commonplace since approximately 1990, as the world's physical economy has sunk towards and into depression. This time, however, in a departure from past forecasts, the UN Population Division is pointing to *increased mortality*, or death rates, as an equal cause with falling fertility among child-bearing-age women.

In brief, the UN demographers have increased their forecast of the number of people who will die between now and 2050, by 200 million (more than 4 million more deaths per year), as well as lowering their projection of the number of babies who will be born, by the same 200 million over 50 years. And the driving force behind this sad change is the AIDS pandemic—despite that fact that UN agencies, including the Population Division, continue their 15-year record of *underestimating* the deadly expansion of that pandemic.

## Yesterday's 'Low Estimate,' Today's Consensus

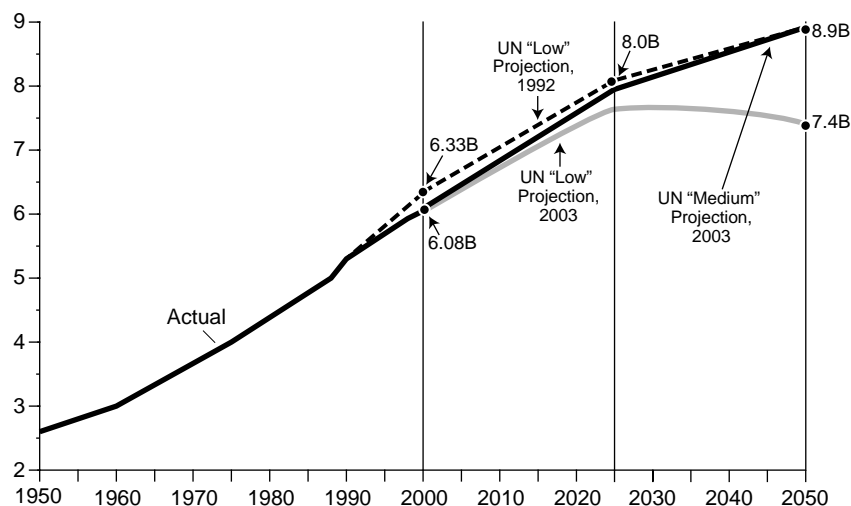
The Population Division produces, and the UN publishes, a *Revision*, or new world demographic survey and forecast, every two years. Its long-range forecast is always stated in terms of a "medium variant" projection—which gets all the publicity—and alternative "high" and "low" variants which only specialists normally discuss. The *2002 Revision*, in fact, starts from population estimates for mid-2003 (6.3 billion for the whole human population), so it could be called a "2003 Revision." **Figure 1** results from combining and comparing the "2003 Revision" with that of 1992, at the time of the Rio World Environment Summit, when the "crushing burden" of future population growth was being apocalyptically warned of. Most striking in the comparison, is that the *supposedly improbable* "low variant" of 1992's forecast out to 2050, has *essentially become the most-probable* "medium variant" of 2003's forecast. That 2003 medium variant projects a hu-

man population of 8.9 billion in 2050, whereas just back in the *2000 Revision*, that forecast was for 9.31 billion. The same can be seen in the forecasts for the year 2025's population: In 1992 it was 8.5 billion; in 1998, 8.039 billion; in 2000, 7.82 billion. Note that even in their "medium variant," UN demographers are predicting the human population to grow at a rate well under 1% per year over the next four and a half decades.

The drop in the latest, 2003 forecast comes from two shifts. First, 75% of *all* countries in the world are now expected to drop below simple-replacement levels of fertility during that time span. And second, the UN has increased to 53 the number of countries for which it is forecasting and "modelling" AIDS-caused deaths. But the UN's medium variant still embodies a critical assumption with no backing: that the "dynamics of the AIDS pandemic" will not change until 2010, after which they will improve, and "AIDS prevalence levels will decline"! This assumption is belied by all recent AIDS conference reports, even of agencies of the UN (see *EIR*, Jan. 31, "AIDS Plague Won't Peak for 40 More Years").

This should provoke us to look at the neglected "low variant" of the "2003 Revision" in Figure 1. It has every prospect of being far more likely, in fact, to reflect what will actually be happening to the human population unless there is an international reversal of current economic policies, which have collapsed physical economies and spread unchecked pandemics and war. That low variant shows the population growth of the human race ceasing entirely about 20 years from now, after which our numbers would begin, and continue, to fall.

FIGURE 1  
**World Population Projections Falling, As Mortality Increases**  
(Billions of People)



Source: UN Population Division (*Revisions*), 1992 and 2002.