



The clock is ticking. The World Population is predicted to hit the seven billion mark on 31 October this year. "A world of 7 billion is both a challenge and an opportunity," UN Population Fund (UNFPA) Executive Director Mr. Babatunde Osotimehin said in announcing the UN prediction.

The world population has increased by one billion since 1999 and by two billion since 1987. "What is astounding is that the last two billions have been reached in record time... The population has been adding new billions every 12 years in the last 25 years," said Mrs. Hania Zlotnik, Director of the Population Division at the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).

Population growth will slow down and the next one billion addition is expected in fourteen years' time. At the turn of the century the projected global population will be 10.1 billion.

"We must invest the resources to enable women and men to have the means to exercise their human right to determine the number and spacing of their children," Mr. Osotimehin said.

Unsurprisingly fertility is "the main driver of population rates in the world," according to Mrs. Zlotnik. A large part of the projected 10.1 billion population at the end of the 21st century is expected from 58 "high-fertility countries" in Africa, Asia, Oceania, and Latin America.

“The world hasn't collapsed by adding so many people, but what is important is that most of these people are being added in the poorest countries of the world,” she said. Although these statistics may look daunting and the world population continues to rise, the rate appears to be slowing. People have fewer children as wealth increases and children are not as exposed to deadly diseases such as smallpox and cholera.

Based on the medium projection of the UN, the number of people in the world will reach 8 billion by 2025, 9 billion by 2043, and then 10 billion by 2083.

Despite two world wars, tyranny and famines the world saw the biggest increase in its population in human history in the 20th century, due to decreasing mortality rate made possible by medical advances and increases in agricultural productivity.

The world population only reached one billion in 1804, the year Napoleon became Emperor of France. 123 years later when Charles Lindbergh became the first man to fly nonstop and solo across the Atlantic, the world hit the 2 billion mark.

As John F. Kennedy beat Richard Nixon in the 1960 US presidential elections, the world celebrated the birth of its 3 billionth citizen. Richard Nixon then resigned the US presidency in 1974 when the global population passed the four billion mark. The football star Lionel Messi was born in 1987, the year the earth's population reached five billion and it reached six billion 12 years later in 1999, the year the Euro was launched and the world rocked to Kenny Chesney's song She Thinks My Tractor's Sexy.

If the UN's prediction comes true and the seven billionth member of the human family will be born on 31 October 2011, he or she will share a birthday with English poet John Keats, Chinese President Chiang Kai-shek, American actor Bud Spencer, Dutch footballer Marco van Basten and US rapper Vanilla Ice.

As a matter of fact the date 31 October is just an educated guess, but it is likely that the landmark date will fall within the sign of the Scorpio.

According to a horoscope for 2011 found on the internet these are some of the characteristics of a child born 31 October 2011: “Some people might call you hard-headed. People generally admire your conviction and your wit, and you inspire trust in others due to your “no-nonsense” approach to life.”

Indeed this will come in handy in a world of seven billion with an increase in population of almost 80 million, the size of the population of Germany – Europe’s biggest nation – every year.