

**Opening Remarks by Mrs. Zainab Hawa Bangura,
Under-Secretary-General and Director-General, UNON
at the First Session of the Executive Board of UN-HABITAT
28 March 2023 at 9:00a.m. East Africa Time**

Honourable Zacharia Njeru, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Lands, Public Works, Housing and Urban Development, and Head of the Delegation of the Republic of Kenya representing our Host Country Kenya,

Excellencies and Honourable Ministers;

Excellency Ms. Martha Delgado, President of the UN-HABITAT Assembly;

Your Excellency Mr. Silvio Albuquerque, Chair of the Executive Board and Permanent Representative of Brazil to UNHABITAT; Distinguished Members of the Executive Board; Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director of UN-HABITAT;

Your Excellencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

A very good morning and welcome to the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON), Kenya.

The United Nations Office in Nairobi (UNON), is the main UN hub in the Global South and as the Director General of UNON, I am honoured and happy to warmly welcome you to the first session of the Executive Board of UN-HABITAT in 2023, on behalf of my dear friend and sister, Executive Director Maimunah Mohd Sharif and her team.

Mr. Ambassador Albuquerque, I would like to sincerely commend your outstanding leadership as the Chair of the Executive Board since the 2nd of April 2022, and to acknowledge the remarkable efforts you have been doing in the last few months and in preparation for this Session. Thank you Mr. Ambassador.

Excellencies, I'm really happy to see that we together continue to demonstrate our awareness and adapting to the next normal in our work and meetings. While UNON have lifted all COVID19 restrictions for now, we remain ever vigilant, with full precautionary measures being observed and applied. We are keen and committed to make our complex a safe haven, which will enable you to meet and deliberate on your critical mandate with our colleagues in UN-Habitat, UNEP and other UN agencies represented here.

Our new normal necessitates that we escalate our efforts and embrace technologies to ensure that conferences we hold here in our complex are inclusive and accessible. Hence, our Conference Services team is providing all possible means to facilitate your meetings..

We're grateful also for your unwavering support to our efforts in upgrading the conference facilities, which will increase the capacity and state-of-the-art digital capabilities as well ensure carbon neutrality in our UN hub in Africa.

I wish to also thank our host Government of Kenya, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and all Ministries for the unlimited support and excellent partnership with our UN system here in Kenya. It is only through this partnership with the Member States we can deliver our mandates and support countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals as well contribute to sustaining peace in our countries.

We at UNON as the main service provider to UN-Habitat, consider ourselves directly concerned in your important deliberations as governing body to enhance the capacity of UN-Habitat and strengthen the impact of its work on the ground. We work closely with UN-Habitat teams here in Nairobi and in the outposted offices around the world in humanitarian response contexts or in supporting the poor, the migrants, displaced people or refugees within human settlements. As partner, I appeal to all Member States to further advance your generous support and engagement with UN-Habitat

Finally, I would like to assure the Executive Board and Executive Director Maimunah of UNON's continued cooperation and engagement to plan and organize a successful second Assembly of UN-Habitat next June here in our compound. I'm looking forward to welcome and see you again here.

I wish you all a very fruitful meeting.

Thank you.