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FIRST SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE
UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME
(UN-HABITAT) FOR 2024

AFRICAN GROUP STATEMENTS

DELIVERED BY

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OPENING GENERAL STATEMENT

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson, for this opportunity.

It is my honour and distinct pleasure to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group.

Mr. Chairperson,

Mister Acting Executive Director

Excellences colleagues

1. At the outset, allow me to convey the Africa Group's sincere appreciation to H.E. Ambassador Silvio Albuquerque of Brazil for his capable leadership of the Executive Board for the past 2 years. The Group would also like to warmly congratulate Nigeria for taking up the Chairmanship of the Bureau of the Executive Board, and wishes to express confidence in its ability to steer the work of the Board until the upcoming elections in May 2025, on the margins of the resumed Second UN-Habitat Assembly. The African Chairmanship comes at a critical juncture and the conjunction of many challenges, notably, the expectation of a New Executive Director; the transition towards the alignment with the UN global system; also, the transition to a new strategic plan for the period 2026-2029, among others.
2. The African Group would also like to sincerely thank Kenya who served as Rapporteur and Vice Chair representing the African Group for two years. The Group is grateful for the good work and proud of the collective achievements attained with your support in the Bureau.
3. The African Group wishes to pledge its support to you Chair and is confident that your leadership will help us to provide clear guidance and direction to UN-Habitat from now up to the resume session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly, in May 2025 following the overall extension of the tenure of all UN-Habitat's bodies at the first part of the Second Session of the UN-Habitat Assembly.
4. The Group seizes this opportunity to reiterate its appreciation to the Acting Executive Director for keeping UN-habitat vibrant and effective while awaiting the appointment of the next Executive Director. In the same vein, the Group appreciates the secretariat for ensuring the availability of pre-sessions documents on time.

1. As I conclude, though the African Group will come back more substantially as we consider various Agenda Items, it is paramount for the Group to reiterates its strong call for the implementation of all resolutions adopted by the United Nations Habitat Assembly in an equal footing.
5. I thank you!

Agenda item 4:

Financial, budgetary and administrative matters, including the implementation of the resource mobilization strategy in accordance with the strategic plan for the period 2020–2025 and action by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) to address geographical and gender imbalances in the composition of its staff.

Mr. Chairperson,

1. Thank you for this opportunity. It is my honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of African States.
2. At the outset, the Group would like to appreciate the Secretariat for the very informative and insightful presentations.
3. The African Group takes note of the reports before us, and believes that they are a very useful document. We acknowledge efforts made by UN-Habitat in the prudent management of expenses that led to the increase of net assets in 2023. As noted in the prior years to 2022, expenses exceed revenue, a trend that resulted in a decline in net assets. The Group is encouraged by the positive outlook of the overall financial status of UN-Habitat. There are notable improvements on all the funding categories for the organization
4. The Group believes in the need to have a well-funded, fit for purpose UN-Habitat, responsive to the needs of Member States.
5. In this regard, the Group notes with concern the reduction in the regular budget allocation to UN-Habitat for 2024. On behalf of the Africa Group, I wish to encourage the Programme to up its resource mobilization strategy and embrace more ‘out of the box’ approaches in funds sourcing, away from the known traditional sources, including taking full advantage of multilateral platforms such as the World Urban Forum to promote UN-Habitat and mobilize financial support from difference stakeholders. The African Group wishes to assure the Executive Director of our unwavering support in this Regard.

Mr. Chairperson,

6. It is worthy to note that as at March 2024, voluntary contributions to the non-earmarked foundations have only be received from member states from two regional groups, including the African Group. The Group trusts that member states from other regions are preparing to make substantial

contributions according to their respective capabilities, so as to at least mobilize the 4 million USD 2024 approved budget for the Foundation non-earmarked fund,

7. The Group commends the Secretariat for its efforts on resource mobilization which coupled with financial austerity plans and efficient management have made it possible for the organization to return to solvency.
8. The Group takes note of the efforts of the Secretariat in staffing in terms of gender and geographical distribution. However, the Group remains concerned by the persisting geographical unbalance of professional and higher positions globally as well as the distribution across Africa of positions presented as occupied by officials from the African Group of member states. The Group acknowledges that the situation is not likely to change overnight, but would like to flag that this concern has been consistently voiced at least for the past five years. The Group reiterates its request to a more inclusive approach and to more timely concrete actions. The credibility of UN-Habitat also relies on its capacity to be effectively inclusive, including with regard to its staffing.
9. The Group further notes with great concern, the very small number of staff in the Regional Office for Africa which makes it difficult for it to provide sufficient support to the continent with the largest number of member states. The African Group encourages the Secretariat in general and the Regional Office in particular to come up with innovative ways, including requesting member states to second officials, so as to improve the staffing situation of UN-Habitat.
10. Lastly, on the annual financial contributions, the Group would like to express appreciation to all member states and donors who have remitted their contributions and continue to support UN-Habitat. The Group reiterates its continued efforts in contributing according to the respective capabilities of its member States; and calls upon member states and partners who are in a position to do so, to remit their annual contributions and provide funding which will help UN-Habitat in fulfilling its mandate especially in these times of increased challenges that affect housing.
11. I thank you!

AGENDA ITEM 5:

Update on the draft work programme of UN-Habitat and the draft budget of the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation for 2025

Mr. Chairperson,

1. Thank you for this opportunity once again. On behalf of the African Member States, I wish to express our appreciation for this report. It is indeed timely and very informative.
2. The African group appreciates the inclusive approach taken in the development of this document as followed, with input, from the Ad Hoc Working Group on Programmatic, Budgetary and Administrative Matters of the Executive Board to the review by the Programme Planning and Budget Division.
3. The African Group believes that the final report of the Chair provides us a way forward; a draft document to be considered by the second session in November/December.

Agenda Item 6:
Update on the preparation of the strategic plan of UN-Habitat for the period 2026–2029

1. Mr. Chairperson, thank you for giving me the floor to deliver this statement of behalf of the Group of African States.
2. Let me first convey the Group appreciate to the Secretariat for the very clear and straight forward presentations.
3. The Africa Group commends UN-Habitat for the actions undertaken to ensure the development of robust and broad strategic plan 2026-2029. This is in tandem with the decision of this Executive Board and the Group also welcomes wide consultation with member states and to ensure consistency with the global development trajectory.
4. The African Group requests the Secretariat to continue in this regard and to ensure that relevant global recommendations feature in the plan, specifically the maiden Africa Urban Forum to be held in September 2024 and the 12th Edition of World Urban Forum in November 2024. These will ensure a reflection of the needs and aspirations of the region in the international human settlements dialogue.
5. Furthermore, noting the recommendations of the review of the strategic plan 2020-2025, it is pertinent to call for inclusion of mechanisms to ensure that the strategic plan under development would be properly implemented at the grassroots for the benefit of people. At this stage, preliminary priorities Africa would like to put forward in the Strategic Plan for 2026-2029 are articulated on four main axes as follows: *sustainability, resilience, localization and inclusivity*.
6. For Africa, it is important that UN-Habitat becomes increasingly relevant as the global leader in innovation, thought and practices for sustainable urbanization. The increase in shocks induced by the environment, weather and other sources underline the necessity to take this organization more importantly than ever before. We therefore see the necessity for increased attention in the organization's flagship initiatives as are being presented to this Executive Board including the Sustainable Urban Resilience for the Next Generation (SURGe) initiative.
7. I thank you!

Agenda Item 7:

Implementation of the normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat, including reporting on its programmatic activities in 2023 and the implementation of subprogrammes, flagship programmes and technical cooperation activities

Mr. Chairperson,

1. Thank you once more for giving me the floor to deliver this statement on behalf of the Regional Group of African states on this particular agenda item.
2. The Group would like to appreciate the Secretariat for the very informative and insightful presentations.
3. The African Group, having considered the background reports, the delivery of programmes and projects to support governments and local authorities in building inclusive, vibrant, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and to advance the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals. The African Group however, seeks, more clarity on the concept of urban regeneration as well as its effectiveness as a tool that is being integrated with UNHABITAT flagship programs such as “Inclusive Communities, thriving Cities”.
4. The African Group while seeking clarity in the use of this concept of “Urban Regeneration” throughout the report, invites UN-HABITAT to better elaborate on how “Urban regeneration” will respond to UN-Habitat Assembly resolutions such as resolution 2/6 on the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals, resolutions 2/2 on accelerating the transformation of informal settlements and slums by 2030, resolution 2/7 on adequate housing for all and resolution 2/8 on urban planning and sustainable infrastructure.
5. The African Group therefore, calls on UN-Habitat to maintain its focus on initiatives that are clear, effective on the ground, and most importantly have transformative impacts.
6. I thank you!

Agenda Item 8:

Preparations for the twelfth session of the World Urban Forum

1. Thank you Chair for this opportunity to voice the view of the African Group on the Item under review.
2. At the outset, the Group would like to appreciate the Secretariat for the very informative and insightful presentations.
3. Excellency Chair, the Group of African States congratulates the Government of Ethiopia for hosting the maiden Africa Urban Forum to be held in Addis Ababa. It is the view of the Group that the African Urban Forum will offer a premium opportunity to show case the impact of the very many streams of work that are undertaken across the continent. It will also provide Africa and its partners to undertake a thorough conversation on the very many African perspectives on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.
4. Considering that 2030 is not far away, the Group would like to use the first ever Africa Urban Forum as an opportunity for a regional assessment of the implementations of the SDGs trough out the continent and especially SDG 11. The gathering is expected not to be a duplication of, but a contribution of harnessed African perspectives and engagements to the World Urban Forum and showcase priorities of the region in the context of human settlement development.
5. In this vein, the Group extends its appreciation to the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt, which will be our host at the 12th Edition of the World Urban Forum to be held in Cairo. The African Group seizes this opportunity to call for continued global support and collaboration for both aforementioned processes and we look forward to their outcomes.
6. Mr. Chair, dear colleagues, the African Group also welcome the plans and preparations for the 13th Edition of the World Urban Forum scheduled to be held in Baku, Azerbaijan and looks forward to more engagements on the planning prior to this global event.
7. I thank you!

Agenda Item 9:

Update on the implementation of all the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Habitat Assembly of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme

Mr. Chairperson,

2. Thank you for giving me the floor on this Agenda item. I am delighted to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group.
3. The Group would like to appreciate the Secretariat for the quality of the presentations that we have just received.
4. The African Group takes note of the reports by the Executive Director, and welcomes of the outcomes of the Second session of the UN-Habitat Assembly, especially the 15 adopted Resolutions on various topics.
5. The African Group reiterates the strong call for the implementation of all resolutions adopted by the United Nations Habitat Governing bodies in a balanced manner.
6. The Group welcomes the streamlined resolutions support process established within the secretariat prior to the second session of the Assembly, building on the lessons learned from the first session and how it fits into the implantation of Resolutions adopted during the Second Session of 2023.
7. The Group recalls its championship of a mechanism to ensure the proper monitoring of the implementation of resolutions. This is embodied in resolution HSP/HA.2/RES.10 on Equitable Financing and Effective Monitoring of the Implementation of Resolutions Adopted by the United Nations Habitat Assembly. This resolution was precisely adopted in a desperate attempt to enhance the balanced implementation of all resolutions. Its rather simple requests are apparently difficult.
8. The Group also wishes to commend UN-Habitat for the efforts in utilizing the limited core resources of the Programme to directly and indirectly support their implementation. The traction around the resolution on *Enhancing urban-rural linkages for sustainable urbanization and human settlements* in particular, is encouraging.
9. The African Group also notes with concern the crosscutting challenge of funding that continues to impede full implementation of these resolutions.

Further, the periodic liquidity freezes imposed within the regular budget continue to hinder their full implementation.

10. It is the Group wish and expectation that before the next Executive Board session, clear progress be seen in the online resolutions monitoring portal as well as in the activation of the funding window, including the receipt of previously accrued unspent balances.
11. Similarly, with respect to other resolutions such as HSP/HA.2/RES.9 on Creation of a Human Settlements Resilience Framework for Early Warning, Foresight, Risk Reduction, Crisis Response and Post-crisis Recovery and Reconstruction, one is concerned at the slow pace of its implementation, specifically as this resolution basically calls for, among other things, an operational framework which incorporates best practices, improves cooperation, and addresses gaps to strengthen resilience in human settlements. For Africa, a more serious focus on these is imperative. The ongoing flooding affecting our host country of Kenya among others provide a moral imperative to pursue a vigorous and balanced implementation of all United Nations Habitat Assembly resolutions as they are clear reflections of the felt needs of our people across the globe.
12. As I conclude, the African Group calls on Member States to think about UN-Habitat, its future, its centrality in addressing Sustainable Urbanization, its key role as the driver of the New Urban Agenda and SDG 11. Is it still worth something? All the good deliberations and ideas mean nothing if the adopted resolutions don't get implemented.
13. The African Group calls on all Members to re-dedicate themselves to this organization in spirit and action, and make that crucial step to financially revitalize the Programme. We all need a strengthened, fit for purpose organization.
14. I thank you!