

**Statement of the African Group at the opening of the first round of  
intergovernmental negotiations on the zero draft of Habitat III outcome  
document**

**Distinguished Co-facilitators,**

I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group, which associates itself with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Thailand to the United Nations on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

At the outset, the African Group wishes to take this opportunity to congratulate the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee on the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Urban Development (Habitat III) for providing a document more responsive to the housing and urban development major challenges, drawing on the Regional and thematic Declarations, the summary of regional reports as well as recommendations from Policy papers.

The document provides a useful basis for our discussions and we look forward to the next days when our inputs will be provided in more details. We have full confidence in your able leadership to conduct the negotiations in a transparent, open and inclusive manner, taking into consideration all remarks, inputs and contributions from Member States and other stakeholders.

**Co- facilitators,**

Progress in advancing human settlement Agenda has been made since the first Habitat conference which took place in Canada in 1976. Despite the progress made, challenges remain. The African Group is of the view that the outcome document should reflect global challenges in urbanization areas, in a manner that eradicates poverty, promote inclusive growth, improve well-being and resilience, and provide new opportunities in planning and managing urban development.

Furthermore, the outcome document should build on the unfinished business of MDGs, particularly the goal of adequate shelter for all. Urbanization is a key issue of any development process while cities and human settlements are the driving force for economic growth. The African Group believes that both cities and human settlements should be considered in an equitable manner in the outcome document. Cities and human settlements are not simply spaces but act as critical means to generate a positive development force.

### **Co- facilitators,**

The African group wishes to welcome the range of critical issues having prominent consideration in this draft. Specifically, the Group welcomes the call for a more integrated and strategic territorial approach to national urban policies, the acknowledgement of the importance of capacity-building and development cooperation, and the strong reference on housing and basic services (adequate shelter for all), infrastructure, public spaces, land, mobility, and a critical recognition of the UN system wide coordinating role of UN-Habitat for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, and urbanization as a force for structural transformation of national economies.

The Group would like to take this opportunity to stress the following points that were not reflected in the zero draft but are critically important for the Group:

First, there is need to set up a clear vision of sustainable urban development for another twenty years, that will seek to prioritize the needs and interests of all member States, especially LDCs, SIDS, LLDCS and African countries, and enhances international cooperation in housing and urban development.

Second, African countries are at various levels of urbanization. When we talk about leaving no one behind, it is critical that we prioritize policy and research that gives priority on how to better understand the urban system in order to accurately understand how to connect them to the global economy. The draft

should make reference to others actors such as primary producers of food, including farmers and other agricultural stakeholders within the food value chain, as a key factor to ending hunger and eliminating urban poverty.

Third, we note that the document did not address issues of territorial integrity and sovereignty, population dynamics, development planning , public sanitary conveniences and municipal markets. We would also like to see a strong reference to strengthening food security through urban agriculture, upgrading of existing slums and prevention of new ones and partnerships especially at local government levels.

Fourth, regional integration is an important element for the Group. The African Group in line with African Union Agenda 2063 would like to emphasize the contribution of urban and human settlements development to continental integration process.

Fifth, the draft should call for the establishment of financing mechanisms, including the setting up of a well' resourced operational fund for facilitating the implementation of the new Agenda.

Finally, the group wishes to raise the issue of the establishment of an International Multi-stakeholder Panel on Sustainable Urbanization. Recognizing that it will be coordinated by UN-Habitat, the Group would like to request detail clarification from the Secretariat in the form of a concept note on its objectives, role, function, secretariat, location and mode of financing.

As you lead us through this process be rest assured of the African groups support and constructive engagement.

**I thank you.**