

Closing Statement by the African Group at the First Informal Intergovernmental Negotiations on the Zero Draft Outcome Document of Habitat III, May 20, 2016, New York

1. We thank the Bureau and the Secretariat for ably steering the intergovernmental negotiations over the last three days.
2. We have had very frank and productive exchange of views. It seems to us that the process is moving in the right course, and further consultations will be instrumental in bridging the gaps.
3. This morning, we discussed follow up and reviews. Various views were expressed. Just like the G77 and China, Africa also articulated its support for the section with some minimal changes.
4. However, some delegations called for deletion of some paragraphs in this section. We heard that this may not be the right forum to discuss aspect of expanding the membership of the Governing Council as proposed in the draft.
5. We believe that this approach may not be very productive and helpful to the process. In fact, it may alienate the vast majority of us. And since negotiations have just started, it is important we all remain on track.
6. An agenda is a plan of action involving what is to be implemented and by whom. The New Urban Agenda and its follow up and review are two sides of the same coin that must go hand in hand at Quito.
7. Therefore, the Group is of the view that follow up and review must remain in the text as it reflects the recommendations made by our Ministers.
8. Furthermore, our Heads of States and Government will be meeting next month in Kigali, Rwanda to endorse the Abuja Declaration on Habitat

III. They have taken it upon themselves to promote urbanization as a driver of transformative change sustainable development.

9. In that regard, the positions we have expressed here is their position. Besides being technical, it is also political -which means it is them who can agree to change it.

10. Therefore, we expect the Bureau, in making its next revised draft, to retain follow up and review section in particular specific references to the strengthening of the UN-Habitat.

11. We are looking forward to positive future engagements in the process. I thank you all, and for colleagues going back to various capitals, bon voyage.