

Malawi Statement at PrepCom3

Honourable Co-Chairs, Distinguished Participants

Greetings from Malawi, the warm heart of Africa.

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to deliver this short statement on behalf of the Government of Malawi at this august gathering to add our voice to those that have spoken before me on the matter under discussion-the New Urban Agenda. Malawi has actively participated in the process of coming up with a common position on the New Urban Agenda

Before I go further Co-Chairpersons, allow me to extend my sincere and heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to the Government of Indonesia for the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to all of us. Tarima Kase

Malawi has a relatively low level of urbanization (16% of the national population) But, is urbanizing at a considerable rate 3.7-3.9% per year for the period 1998-2008. The urban population is projected to be at 30% of the national population by 2030 and at 50% by 2050

Malawi's four major cities (Lilongwe, Blantyre, Zomba and Mzuzu) account for 13% of the national population. But they generate 33% of the national GDP. In comparison, rural areas contain 85% of the country's population but account for only 6% of the national GDP. But being an agricultural country, national development policies and priorities have for a long time focused on rural development as an end in itself but also as a means to reduce urban migration by raising agricultural productivity and value-addition and creating markets and job opportunities in rural areas.

Nevertheless, the Government of Malawi, just like many other African member states, committed itself to implement the Habitat II Agenda, ***of ensuring adequate shelter for all and making human settlements safer, healthier and more livable, equitable, sustainable and productive in an urbanizing world.*** Some notable efforts include:

- Implementation of a Rural Growth Centres Project and Secondary Centres Development programme as strategies to manage rapid urbanization and promote economic growth and infrastructure development in rural areas and medium size towns;

- Implementation of Slum Upgrading Programmes in the four major cities of Lilongwe, Blantyre, and Zomba, with financial and technical assistance from UN-Habitat.
- Establishment of Roads Authority and Roads fund to improve funding and delivery of road infrastructure as part of the structural and institutional reforms in the road transport sector
- Formulation of the National Housing Policy to improve housing delivery
- Formulation of a National Land Policy which formed the basis for the review of land-related laws to support land-reforms for improving land administration, urban planning and human settlement development
- Establishment of a Home Ownership Scheme for public servants
- Establishment of a Local Development Fund, with an Urban Window and a Public Land Development Fund for provision of infrastructure and services for housing development in the major cities.

Challenges in Implementing the Habitat Agenda

However, it is noteworthy, that Malawi has also faced a number of challenges in implementing the current urban agenda due to a number of factors. The challenges include:

- Limited capacity at both national and local levels for urban planning and management
Inadequate financial resources for infrastructure development, housing delivery and service provision.
- Rapid urban population growth which exerts pressure on housing delivery and infrastructure and service provision resulting in continued growth of informal settlements and
- Urban sprawl and ribbon development makes provision of basic services and infrastructure difficult and expensive.

The New Urban Agenda

In light of the above challenges, there is a growing realization that there is great need to address the underlying causes of poverty and to prioritize urban issues in the country's overall development planning. The government of Malawi realizes that to attain the urbanization dividend, there is need to put in place strong foundations to manage it so that it is sustainable and contributes to the economic development of the country.

Seizing this urbanization dividend requires bold policy reforms and planning efforts. In this regard, the government of Malawi has formulated policies which we believe will guide the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and instituted reforms, including:

- Finalisation of the Habitat III Report which has identified priorities for Malawi's New Urban Agenda
- Preparation of the Urbanization Review Report with financial and technical support from the World Bank. The Report also identifies areas requiring attention in order to manage urbanization
- Formulation of the National Urban Policy which we hope will promote the development of well governed and sustainable cities
- Review of the National Housing Policy which will improve access to adequate and safe housing for all income groups
- Creation of a new of a new government Department responsible for urban development matters.
- Initiating the process of devolving urban planning and management functions from central government to local councils to allow for more community participation.
- Reviewed the Town and Country Act, The Land Act and all other related land laws for improved urban planning and management.

Conclusion

In conclusion Mr. Chairman, I would like to say that the Government of Malawi is committed to playing its rightful role in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and will direct its efforts at strengthening partnerships amongst key stakeholders to improve capacity for urban planning and management at all levels.

The Malawi government also recognizes the importance of strengthening the capacity of the UN-Habitat so that it can continue to provide the much needed technical and financial support to member states. This will, to some considerable degree, create an enabling environment for the implementation of the New Habitat Agenda.

Thank you Mr. Chairman