

Draft Statement of the African Group on the Preamble and the
Quito Declaration

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.

The Africa Group fully identifies with the overall spirit of the outcome document as encapsulated in the preamble and also with the key pillars of what we will endeavour to achieve at Quito, as succinctly captured in the draft Declaration. While embarking into the process of further refining this draft, the Africa Group pledges its full commitment to ensuring that the collective spirit embedded in the Preamble and the Declaration is enriched and further consolidated.

The Africa Group welcomes the recognition of the momentous transformation the global community has entered at this advent of the new millennium. The impact of a dominantly urbanizing world manifests itself even in the many parts of Africa, and also Asia, where the non-urban population may still be dominant. We are cognizant of the fact, that this is a historical juncture at which both urban and human settlements in general have acquired a new dynamism calling for responses which are different from those of the past century.

Co-Facilitators

The Africa Group applauds the quest to seek a ‘paradigm shift’ in the way cities and human settlements are planned, developed and managed. Indeed, lessons are ample to confirm that business as usual is no longer a tenable approach. Nevertheless, for us in our region the shift transcends the spaces and places within human settlements; it also incorporates the total energy and power of urbanization and human settlement development, as aptly articulated since Istanbul in 1996. For Africa, therefore, the issue is not confined to urban, rather it is more about urbanization and human settlement development.

Indeed, the Quito meeting, coming almost as an immediate follow-up to the historic adoption of the 2030 Agenda. Our Group remains committed to ensuring consistency with the norms, values and

operational parameters of that anchor agreement. On our way to Quito and at the forum itself, we intend to go beyond simply the renewal of political commitment for sustainable urban development, as inferred in the Preamble. Africa intends to foster a commitment for implementation and achievement of results on the ground at the end of the next twenty years.

As it may well be appreciated, our region is entering a critical period in its development path during the next two decades. In almost every sphere and in all its geographical parts major demographic, economic, political transformations are evolving – all of which are connected to urbanization and human settlement development. Optimizing the emerging opportunities is a major quest, and we look forward to Quito in engaging with the international community on how we can collaborate on this endeavour.

Distinguished Co-Facilitators

We concur with the notion that cities and human settlements in general are human creations, thus underscoring the fact that there is a broad latitude for shaping the form and content of such creations. Above all, the notion also underlines the principle of collectivity and people centred-ness being the essence of cities and human settlements.

As we proceed in these preliminary consultations the Africa Group will contribute towards the framing of a succinct title to the Quito Declaration guided by the theme of the conference and the intended outcome. We will strive to ensure the attainment of more clarity on the dynamism within urban and human settlements for the Declaration to incorporate not only interventions on governing, planning and financing cities, but also modalities for harnessing the developmental force emanating from human settlement development.

While Africa can sufficiently identify with the listed features in the vision statement of the Declaration, reflections will be initiated on tightening the vision section of the document. While we all agree to the imperative of a shared destiny at all levels, a more coherent articulation is required to emphasize the linkages between the features and the focus they project for the development of a shared agenda. Of course we understand the challenges of capturing a universal vision in a world that has so many differences.

Critical to the outcome document are both the Commitments as well as the Implementation framework outlined in the draft. The Africa Group appreciates the effort made to remain consistent with the key elements of sustainable development as a basis for formulating the transformative commitments. We shall, in the course of our consultations seek for the support and understanding of other regions in also appreciating dimensions of commitments already taken whose shortfalls also may apply to other regions, and if appropriately incorporated may further enrich the Declaration.

With no doubt, the Africa Group enters these consultations with a full understanding that the outcome document needs to be a universal document enjoining shared goals and aspirations. We commit to foster a healthy balance between our regional interests and global aspirations. In the course of doing so, we will strive to ensure that previous global commitments that constitute 'unfinished business' in some regions are not neglected. Our region attaches great importance to dealing with some of the unfinished business of the past twenty years which exert a major bearing to wellbeing of our people.

Finally, the group wishes to register that the Declaration so far has not included components of the following and review mechanism. We believe that at the end of these consultations a consensus will be obtained on the proposals that have been presented. Allow me, distinguished facilitators to conclude by reaffirming our commitment to engaging positively and in a very cooperative manner to achieve a successful and implementable Habitat III outcome document.

I thank you.