Draft Statement of the African Group on the
Transformative Commitments
19 May 2016

Distinguished Co-chairs

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Africa Group.

The Africa Group believes that the transformative commitments, aligned to the three pillars of sustainable development as currently outlined in the zero draft provides a concrete way forward for national, sub-national and local governments and all stakeholders to achieve Agenda 2030 for sustainable development and our vision of cities and human settlements as people-centered, prosperous and planet sensitive.

However, these transformative commitments should take into account certain inarguable realities we face in the coming twenty years if they are truly to hit the mark.

<u>Firstly</u>, social inequality should and can be addressed in the New Urban Agenda if we sincerely wish to leave no-one behind.
<u>Secondly</u>, we need to take into full account the rapid and massive population increases that some regions will experience. This will be compounded by international and internal migration.
<u>Thirdly</u>, we need to prioritize tackling informal settlements and slums through participatory upgrading, slum prevention and the provision of adequate and affordable housing.

Furthermore, we should not shy away from acknowledging the potential of urbanization for harnessing and accelerating social, economic and environmental transformation if we are able to harness its positive energy.

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The Africa Group would like to make some concrete proposals on the transformative commitments we should be entering into:

With regard to the section titled: **LEAVE NO-ONE BEHIND, ENSURE URBAN EQUITY AND ERADICATE POVERTY**:

We should commit to enhancing people-centered urban and human settlements development through:

(a) providing basic services and housing to all, including people in vulnerable situations as part of integrated and inclusive community development ;

(b) integrating gender equality and women empowerment in urban development ;

(c) promoting consultative frameworks among all human settlements stakeholders and adopting community driven participatory approaches to human settlements development ; and

(d) ensuring safety and security in human settlements

Beyond equitable access to physical and social infrastructure, we need to also focus on access to basic services. We wish to emphasize the critical role of smart cities and human settlements with improved urban systems for improved functionality, efficiency and effective delivery of urban basic services and infrastructure. We note with concern the inadequacy of public sector housing and basic services which led to the adoption and introduction of private sector models of provision and management that are not affordable to the majority of urban residents in some countries.

We support placing adequate housing and shelter at the center of the New Urban Agenda, but we feel that we should acknowledge the role of housing in economic development and the contribution of the sector, through backward and forward linkages, to stimulating productivity in other economic sectors. Housing enhances capital formation, labour productivity, income, employment generation and savings and should be considered as a vehicle for driving inclusive economic transformation at local and national levels.

Safe and secure cities and human settlements are of such critical importance that they deserve a separate sub-heading, distinct from culture and diversity.

We acknowledge that some regions will experience massive population movements and demographic changes requiring major investments in their urban and human settlements development.

We further call for the New Urban Agenda to recognize the positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development.

We should also recognize that international migration requires coherent and comprehensive responses. In this regard we should cooperate internationally to ensure safe, orderly and regular migration involving full respect for human rights and the human treatment of migrants regardless of migration status, of refugees and of displaced persons. Such cooperation should also strengthen the resilience of communities hosting refugees, particularly in developing countries.

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Under section titled **SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE URBAN PROSPERITY AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL**:

The Africa Group calls for the New Urban Agenda to recognize the need to harness the transformative potential of urbanization to facilitate the reduction of poverty in all its forms and inequality as well as achieve inclusive, integrated, prosperous growth.

We wish to stress the role of well-planned cities in transforming the productivity of national economies, and the need to create the necessary cross-sectoral linkages. This will enhance the urban advantage resulting from increased agglomeration to enhance productivity through increased specialization, efficiency in service provision, lower transaction costs, and improved production complementarities. Improving the productivity of urban economies will also generate resources for local governments to fulfill their mandates. We therefore need to strengthen local, regional and national institutions to support local economic development. We should strive for the integration of urbanization into national development planning as driver of economic growth and transformation.

We support the way that an enabling business environment and jobs and livelihoods are addressed in the Zero Draft but propose that they be addressed in two distinct sub-headings.

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Under the section titled **FOSTER ECOLOGICAL AND RESILIENT CITIES AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS**

The Africa Group believes we should foster resilience of human settlements, including social and economic resilience, along the rural - urban development continuum and enhance rural-urban linkages. We therefore call for enhancing environmental sustainability, resilience and effective responses to climate change in cities and human settlements by
a) Strengthening capacities of local governments for strategic response to climate change adaptation and mitigation across the rural-urban continuum;
b) Developing infrastructure that is resilient and which will reduce the impact of disasters especially in slums and informal settlements, and building institutional capacities and mechanisms, and disaster risk management and mitigation including early warning systems and urban observatories

c) Promoting Green building and infrastructure technologies as well as the application of designs which mitigate climate change and adapt to its impact, including the urban heat island effect

d) Fostering the utilization of sustainable renewable energy and natural resources as well as investment in Low Carbon production systems in urban centres

e) Promoting resource efficiency in cities, to facilitate urban development in a manner that preserves rapidly diminishing natural resources, and allow cities to better manage water, waste, food, land, and energy; and

f) Developing systems for sustainable solid and liquid waste management, including promoting the principle of reducing, reusing and recycling of resources

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We believe that with these enhancements and an additional collective reflection on how to tackle informal settlements and slums which already affect 1 billion people globally, the transformative commitments will indeed propel us towards achieving our shared vision of sustainable cities and human settlements.

Thank you