



STATEMENT BY HON. ALICE WAHOME, EGH; THE CABINET SECRETARY FOR LANDS, PUBLIC WORKS, HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT DURING THE FIRST SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME (UN-HABITAT) ON 6TH MAY 2024

Director General of the United Nations Offices in Nairobi, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura;

**The Ag. Executive Director of UN-Habitat Mr. Michal Mlynár;
Excellences;**

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

It gives me great pleasure to join you during this First Session of the Executive Board of UN-Habitat for 2024. On behalf of the Government of Kenya, host to UN-Habitat and the United Nations Offices Nairobi (UNON), I welcome distinguished delegates to enjoy our hospitality and wish you fruitful deliberations.

My gratitude also goes to the organizers of this meeting for granting me this chance to make remarks on behalf of my country Kenya. Allow me to congratulate the Executive Director in acting capacity Mr.

Michal Mlynár and the secretariat, the Ad-hoc committees, and the Bureau of the Executive Board for the excellent preparations for this session.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

This First Session of the Executive Board of the UN-Habitat for the year 2024 is significant, as the following key issues will be discussed:

- i. Financial, budgetary, and administrative matters;
- ii. The draft work program of UN-Habitat and the draft budget of the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation for 2025;
- iii. Preparation of the next strategic plan of UN-Habitat for the period 2026–2029;
- iv. Implementation of the normative and operational activities of UN-Habitat;
- v. Preparations for the twelfth session of the World Urban Forum;
- vi. Implementation of all the resolutions adopted by UN-Habitat.

I am aware that in 2022, contributions to the Foundation Non-earmarked Fund reached their highest level since 2014 and, with reinvigorated expense controls in place; UN-Habitat reported its first surplus in more than a decade. In this regard, we appreciate the prudent management of expenses by UN-Habitat and urge them to maintain the same in future. However, I take note of the low contribution to the Foundation Non-earmarked contribution compared

to the Foundation Earmarked contributions by the governments. I confirm our government's commitment to continue being available in supporting the UN-Habitat and therefore urge Member States to honour their contributions to support the implementation of the agency normative and programmatic work.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am aware that Member States extended the current strategic plan until 2025 to align the planning cycle of UN-Habitat with the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) of the United Nations system during the second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly, in June 2023. They also decided to adjourn the regular second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly and to resume it in 2025 to adopt the UN-Habitat strategic plan for the period 2026–2029. It is my believe that the lessons learnt during the implementation of the extended strategic plan will heavily inform the development of the 2026-2029 plan.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Regarding the normative and operational activities of the UN-Habitat, I am aware of the country-level activities carried out by UN-Habitat to unlock the social and economic potentials of Kenya's refugee camps through area-based regeneration at the Kakuma-Kalobeyei areas. The Government is looking forward to having a successful and

sustainable self-sufficiency and community integration in the area. I am also aware of the work the UN-Habitat is undertaking to improve local revenue generation to assist our government amongst other Africa countries to mobilize adequate funding and/or financing for local action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Further, the UN-Habitat Urban Lab has been developing a Physical Land Use and Development Plan for Moyale Town. I am optimistic that the formulation and approval of the plan will elevate the town to a municipality, and lead to the offering of quality community services in Moyale. On behalf of the Government of Kenya, we thank UN-Habitat for these initiatives.

To meet the needs of Member States and to engage a wider audience, I call upon the UN-Habitat to continue strengthening capacity-building initiatives and especially on localizing the SDGs by identifying and addressing gaps in capacity. I also call upon UN-Habitat to continue supporting Member States and stakeholders in monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (NUA), including as part of the reporting on the SDGs and other global agendas.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The World Urban Forum 12 (WUF 12) will be held at the Egypt

International Exhibition Centre, in Cairo, from 4th to 8th November 2024. Allow me to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Egypt for accepting to host WUF12 and wish them a successful preparation of the event. In this regard, Kenya is looking forward to participating in the event. On the other hand, I take cognizance of the extensive work undertaken by UN-Habitat towards the preparations of the forum and thank them for working together with Member States, local governments, and stakeholders in the preparation of the event. I believe that the UN-Habitat will continue to advocate and track the progress of commitments contained in the Katowice Declared Actions, as set out in the outcome document of the eleventh session of the World Urban Forum, held in Katowice, Poland, in June 2022.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I note that at its first two sessions, held in 2019 and 2023, the United Nations Habitat Assembly of the United Nations Human Settlements Program adopted 15 resolutions on various topics, including both thematic and crosscutting ones. The program budget implication remains an important signpost to guide resource mobilization for the implementation of the resolutions adopted at the second session and one of the benchmarks against which the success of implementation can be assessed.

Allow me to commend UN-Habitat for the progressive implementation of the resolutions despite financial limitations. However, I call upon the UN-Habitat to hasten the steps towards ensuring structured and innovative approaches to increase institutional capacity to assess and address capacity gaps experienced by local and national governments in their efforts to achieve the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Agenda, specifically in terms of human capital. Further, I commend the UN-Habitat in collaboration with the University of Nairobi in undertaking policy reviews across five African countries– Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal and Zimbabwe- leading to the establishment of the Centre for Urban-Rural Linkages in Africa at the University of Nairobi in October 2023.

I am also aware that in response to resolution 2/1, UN-Habitat has been working with stakeholders on the development of international guidelines on people-centred smart cities, which it aims to complete by June 2025. I thank the office of the Executive Director of UN-Habitat for having appointed a Kenyan in the expert working group amongst those nominated by Member States.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To promote adequate housing for all, the Government of Kenya has prioritized affordable housing as a key pillar of the Bottom-up

Economic Transformation Agenda. It targets to deliver 200,000 affordable housing units annually, with an emphasis on slum upgrading and prevention and increasing social housing. I wish to express my appreciation for the support given by UN-Habitat in the Government's efforts and look forward to continue collaborating with UN-Habitat and other partners to achieve the vision for adequate housing for all.

Kenya is also cognizant of the negative effects of climate change in our cities and urban areas and especially on the poor populations who mostly inhabit vulnerable areas of our cities. Kenya therefore continues to champion the implementation of the Building Climate Resilience for the Urban Poor (BCRUP)" initiative, which was launched during the UN-Climate Action Summit in 2019. We urge UN-Habitat to work with Member States and other partners towards the implementation of the initiative, with the aim of enhancing the resilience of the urban poor to shocks precipitated by climate change.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I take cognizance that there is need to strengthen the partnership with other UN entities as well as relevant national, regional, and global organizations for advancement of resolutions adopted during the first and second sessions of the Assembly. I also take note of the establishment of the urban action-funding window by UN-Habitat as

a new funding mechanism in 2023, complemented by regular reporting on the implementation of resolutions. I recognize that this will improve the funding of underfunded resolutions with financial support from Member States.

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen;

In conclusion, Kenya is proud to host the United Nations Office in Nairobi, the headquarters of UN-Habitat and UNEP, among other United Nations agencies. As we embark on the session's agenda that is before us, I wish you fruitful deliberations as I reassure you of Kenya's continued commitment and support to UN-Habitat.

I THANK YOU.