

Statement delivered on behalf of the African Group by H.E Mr. Kelebert Nkomani, Ambassador/ Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe during 63rd regular meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), 1st December, 2016

Mr. Chairman,
Executive Director,
Excellences
Distinguished delegates,

I am pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group. The statement is aligned to that already delivered by the H.E the Ambassador/ Permanent Representative of the Argentine Republic to UNEP, UN-HABITAT and UNON on behalf of the G-77 and China.

This meeting is timely. A month ago, we had a very successful conference in Quito. Congratulations to the Government and people of Ecuador for effectively hosting the conference. We also extend appreciations to the ED and his team for the hard work during the conference.

The Group takes note of the extensive briefing provided by the Executive Director on the events before and after Quito. With the conference over now, serious work has to begin. The New Urban Agenda is a very ambitious and transformative document. Implemented in a timely manner, and with adequate means, it will transform our world in fundamental ways.

The Group is pleased to note that the UN- Habitat has a central role in this regard. We welcome the proposed main tasks contained in the ED's paper since they are in line with the new mandate as enshrined in the New Urban Agenda.

The Group believes that what needs to be done now is to ensure that the organization is properly positioned to effectively discharge its core functions

in the implementation, follow up and review of the Agenda, as well as to play its focal and coordinating role within the UN system.

Last month, the Second Committee of the UNGA concluded deliberations on the resolution entitled “implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) and the strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlement Program” (UN-Habitat)”.

Some of us took part in those deliberations. What surprised us from the negotiations is the fact that despite a new mandate given by the Summit to the UN-Habitat, some delegations strongly opposed language that requested for associated financial resource flows to enable the agency discharge its mandate.

It is disheartening to note that the resolution, as it stands, does not cater for provisions of financial resources. How the organization will execute the suggested tasks including developing an action framework for the implementation of the NUA remains a matter of serious concern to the Group.

In a similar vein, the Group also learnt with dismay that keeping the title “strengthening the UN- Habitat” in that resolution was an issue of serious contestation between developing countries and some partners. In our view, it seems that there is some disconnect between Nairobi and New York as far as matters of Habitat are concerned.

As the CPR accredited to this Organization, the Group believes that we are better placed to advice New York, and other forums on the issues affecting the agency. For that reason, our interactions with counterparts outside Nairobi, especially New York, is a matter that needs to be looked into so that we can constructively complement the work they do on sustainable urbanization and human settlements.

Moving forward, it's our expectations that future contributions of the CPR on matters pertaining to the UN- Habitat will be respected and taken on board. The Group stands ready to give views on the forthcoming assessment as maybe required.

In reference to point 4 on the ED's briefing note, the Group takes note of the current dwindling financial portfolio of the Organization. Last week, at the invitation of the ED, we the ADC, were briefed on the matter. It came as a surprise to us to learn of the dire situation, and wondered why the entire CPR had not been briefed well in advance.

Such a situation should be avoided in future. We can only provide meaningful support and advice to the organization if timely and requisite information is conveyed to effectively lobby our capitals. But be as it may, the Group urges all of us to do whatever is within our abilities to mobilize the requested 'bridging financing' to the agency.

The ED's paper seems to create the impression that the forthcoming assessment will determine the future of UN- Habitat. This is not the understanding of the Group. Based on the scope of the assessment, the exercise has clear parameters meant to strengthen the organization as contained in paragraph 172 of the New Urban Agenda.

Turning to the priorities put forward in the briefing, the Group takes note of the suggestions. However, we are of the view that further consultations should be done with the CPR with a view to reviewing and enriching the priorities.

Last but not least, the Group refers to the recent note circulated to Member States calling for postponement of the dates for the 26th session of the Governing Council from April to May, 2017. The Group has considered the matter, and sees no justifications for rescheduling of the session.

Therefore, the Group is looking forward to starting the preparations for the session as earlier planned.

I thank you.