

STATEMENT DELIVERED BY H.E. BEYENE RUSSOM, AMBASSADOR OF THE STATE OF ERITREA ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP DURING THE UN-HABITAT EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING ON 28TH MARCH 2023

The Chair of the Executive Board,

Madam Executive Director,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the African Group in Nairobi, I wish to thank you for the opportunity to address this First Session of the Executive Board for 2023. I also wish to welcome the delegates who traveled from various capitals to join us in this important meeting as well as those joining online.

Excellency Chair,

This is a key meeting coming at a time when we are preparing for the Second Session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly in two months' time. The outcomes of this meeting will therefore contribute greatly to the success of the forthcoming assembly. The group takes note of the various agenda items and reports of the Working Groups and looks forward to a robust engagement on each agenda item. It's the group's expectation that each decision made by this session of the Executive Board will lead to the strengthening of this organization to effectively implement its mandate.

The group wishes to inform that it has fully participated in the working group meetings and secretariat briefings held prior to this Board meeting. We therefore have great expectations from this first session of the Executive Board for this year, and look forward to robust discussions and clear decisions on various issues that are key to the region. We hope that this Executive Board meeting will make decisions that will enhance the work of the organization in our region and provide it with adequate resources to deliver on its mandate.

On the organization's financial report for 2022, the Group notes the positive trend in contributions by members to the non-earmarked foundation budget. The Group also appreciates the efforts by the Executive Director to implement expenditure control measures and an intensive resources mobilization strategy that resulted in the budgetary surplus in 2022. We urge all member states to support the Secretariat to build on last year's success and enhance the organization's resource base to facilitate the implementation of its normative and programmatic work.

Excellency Chair,

It is our hope that the turnaround of the organization's financial position in 2022 creates a good basis for raising the baseline of the scalability model in subsequent budgets and implementation of key priorities that have been identified in the model. The Group is specifically keen to see the strengthening of the Regional Office for Africa and enhancing its capacity to successfully implement country programmes across the African continent.

The group is also aware of the additional resource requirements to facilitate implementation of the Board's decision 2022/6 which requested the Executive Director to provide an update on programmes and initiatives on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, at each session of the Executive Board.

It is the Group's view that a supplementary budget is necessary to support the implementation of the decision. Any technical support and capacity building extended to member states will enhance reporting and positively contribute to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, notably in Africa and the global south. The Group, therefore, urges the Board to allocate more resources for the implementation of its own decision which will contribute to the realization of the aspirations of member states to build sustainable cities and communities.

On the 12th New Urban Forum scheduled to take place in Egypt in 2024, the group welcomes the ongoing preparations to host a memorable event. It is noteworthy that this will be the second time that the forum will be held in Africa. We wish to express our support to Egypt as it prepares to host the forum and call on the secretariat and all member states to work together towards a successful 12th New Urban Forum.

Excellency Chair,

As I conclude, I wish to express the group's appreciation for the good work done by the Executive Director in turning around the organization especially financially. The Group wishes to assure the Executive Director of its full support for her work and to express its full confidence in her leadership.

We look forward to successful deliberations and wish to assure members of the group's commitment to work towards a stronger, more effective organization.

Thank You.