

**Statement by U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Nerissa Cook
UN-Habitat Executive Board
First Regular Session
March 28-29, 2023
Nairobi, Kenya**

Executive Director Sharif, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, and stakeholders.

It is my privilege to address you during the first meeting of the Executive Board in 2023. Let me begin by extending our condolences to the people of Türkiye and Syria, still recovering from the tragic earthquakes in February. The United States will continue to stand with you and provide humanitarian and recovery assistance to those affected by the disaster.

Executive Director Sharif, I would like to first recognize your leadership for putting UN Habitat on a more stable financial footing. It is a momentous achievement that UN Habitat decidedly broke with the trend of deficit spending and is now running a surplus for the first time in over a decade.

I would also like to acknowledge the essential role played by the Executive Board in diligently exercising its oversight responsibilities. UN Habitat's success depends on our continued joint efforts to provide that oversight. UN Habitat's return to solvency is an achievement of which we can all be proud — and one that sends a strong signal to all potential donors about the program's commitment to sound financial practices.

Unfortunately, the context in which UN Habitat operates has only become more complex. We gather today in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and amid protracted conflicts, growing climate and environmental crises, and devastating refugee and food emergencies exacerbated by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

These challenges have made it more difficult to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals, while increasing the urgency to do so. We need to redouble our efforts to get back on track. Cities and urban settlements, where most people live, are depending on us to do so.

To enable UN Habitat to realize its full potential in addressing these challenges and advancing the SDGs, we call on all Member States to do their part by contributing to UN Habitat, including to the core budget.

Given these challenges, we welcome the focus of the upcoming Habitat Assembly on achieving a sustainable urban future through inclusive and effective multilateralism in times of global crisis.

Finally, I would like to express U.S. appreciation for UN Habitat's commitment to work with the Executive Board to strengthen accountability, including to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. These important topics are fundamental to our collective goals to build sustainable, inclusive communities.

Executive Director, thank you and the staff of UN Habitat for your tireless efforts to build safe, sustainable, and secure cities for all.

Thank you.