

AGENDA 9: INTERVENTION BY MALAWI ON THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT ON PROGRESS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL GUIDELINES ON PEOPLE-CENTRED SMART CITIES

Mr. Chair, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

My delegation, thanks the Executive Director for the detailed report on the progress of the development of the international guidelines on people-centred smart cities. We commend the approach to ensuring that digital technologies play a transformative role in fostering sustainable, inclusive, and human-rights-based urban development.

We would like to emphasize the importance of aligning the guidelines with the challenges and opportunities faced by countries in the Global South, particularly in light of our ongoing efforts to integrate digital solutions into urban planning and governance. We acknowledge the critical need to maximize the benefits of digital technology in urban sustainability while ensuring that its deployment respects human rights and addresses the digital divide.

In line with the **Global Digital Compact**, Malawi welcomes the integration of the compact's principles into the guidelines. The Compact's vision of an inclusive, open, and sustainable digital future is essential in ensuring that smart city technologies benefit all urban residents, especially those from marginalized communities. We encourage UN-Habitat to further strengthen the

link between the Compact and the guidelines, ensuring that the principles of digital inclusion, equity, and sustainability are at the core of urban digital transformation.

Mr. Chair, Malawi is also encouraged by the extensive global consultations undertaken, which demonstrate a broad and inclusive process. However, we stress the importance of ensuring that the consultations reflect the diverse experiences and perspectives of countries in the Global South. To this end, we support the emphasis on regional consultations, and we would like to see even more focused engagement with African cities, where unique challenges and opportunities for digital transformation exist.

Regarding **global knowledge and best practices**, the World Smart Cities Outlook 2024 provides a valuable data-driven foundation for the guidelines. Malawi urges that the report's findings, particularly those related to social inequalities and digital governance, be utilized to shape practical recommendations for countries with limited resources. We encourage UN-Habitat to continue leveraging existing partnerships and expertise, especially from the Global South, to ensure that the guidelines are contextually relevant and effective.

On the timeline, Malawi recognizes the importance of meeting the deadlines set for the development of the guidelines. However, we also stress the need for adequate financial and technical support to ensure that consultations are inclusive and comprehensive. We

are mindful of the resource constraints faced by UN-Habitat and encourage continued efforts to mobilize resources to support the successful completion of the process.

Malawi also acknowledges **the key challenges** outlined in the report, **including balancing ambitions** with **limited resources** and ensuring comprehensive consultations. We understand the complexity of managing such an ambitious process, and we remain committed to supporting UN-Habitat in overcoming these challenges. We call for continued support to enhance the participation of stakeholders from resource-constrained regions and to ensure that the guidelines reflect a truly global perspective.

In conclusion, Malawi looks forward to the completion of the international guidelines and to their adoption at the UN-Habitat Assembly in 2025. We remain committed to supporting this process and ensuring that the guidelines contribute to creating smarter, more inclusive, and sustainable cities for all.

I thank you Mr. Chair.