

**Statement by the State of Palestine on behalf of Asia-Pacific Group
First Session of the Executive Board of UN-Habitat, 25-27, 03 2025**

Mr. Chair,

Madam Executive Director,

Distinguished Delegates,

At the outset, the Asia-Pacific Group would like to express its sincere appreciation to you, Mr. Chair, for your capable leadership of the Executive Board over the past year. We also extend our gratitude to the Executive Director for her strong leadership and commitment to advancing the mandate of UN-Habitat, which has been instrumental in guiding our collective efforts. We also thank UN-Habitat Secretariat for its dedicated efforts in preparing the working documents for this session in a timely manner.

We commend the Report of the Executive Director on the Financial Status of UN-Habitat as of 31 December 2024 and welcome the Programme's prudent financial management, including the surplus achieved in many of the funds, reflecting strong financial management and accountability. At the same time, we emphasize the need for sustained and enhanced resource mobilization to expand essential programmes, particularly in regions with pressing urban challenges, such as Asia-Pacific. We appreciate the contributions from donors in our region and encourage increased collaboration to enhance funding allocations toward Asia-Pacific priorities.

The Asia-Pacific region, home to over 54% of the world's urban population, continues to experience rapid urbanization or entering the transitional stage, alongside growing challenges, including climate vulnerabilities, lack of affordable housing, environmental degradation, increasing impacts of natural and man-made disasters, the persistence of slums and social exclusion, and rising unemployment.

In this regard, the Group takes note of the draft work programme for 2026 and acknowledges the considerable efforts invested in its preparation. We commend its strategic focus on reducing spatial inequality and poverty, enhancing shared prosperity, strengthening climate action, and improving urban crisis prevention and response. We emphasize the importance of aligning this programme with our regional priorities, to deliver targeted solutions for affordable housing, sustainable infrastructure, disaster risk reduction, and improved urban governance.

Recognizing the emerging urban challenges across our region, we underscore the need for capacity-development programmes to empower local and national governments. We stress the importance of enhancing knowledge-sharing platforms, fostering regional and technical cooperation, and developing innovative financing mechanisms tailored to the needs of Asia-Pacific cities. These efforts will accelerate the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, and the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Looking ahead to the Strategic Plan for 2026-2029, we stress the importance of ensuring its alignment with the evolving urban challenges of the Asia-Pacific region, while making it more centered on the quality of life. We appreciate the consultative approach in developing the draft strategic plan, and as we anticipate its adoption at the resumed Assembly session, we reaffirm its critical role in advancing climate action, affordable housing, sustainable land use, and resilient infrastructure development in our region.

We acknowledge the Report of the Executive Director on Normative and Operational Activities, including updates on programmes in Ethiopia and Central America, and appreciate UN-Habitat's continued efforts to address global human settlement challenges, particularly in areas affected by conflict and disaster.

We recall decision 2024/6 of the Executive Board of UN-Habitat at its second session on 4-6 December 2024, and encourage the Executive Director to expedite the submission of a comprehensive report on the status of the development of the efforts to reconstruct the human settlements in the Gaza Strip, in accordance with the decision's timetable. Given the large-scale destruction and deteriorating humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, we emphasize the importance of the reconstruction Plan for Gaza submitted by the Arab Republic of Egypt in full coordination with the State of Palestine and Arab countries. This Plan, adopted by the Extraordinary Arab Summit held in the Arab Republic of Egypt on 4 March 2025, has garnered broad international support, and prioritizes emergency relief, reconstruction, recovery and long-term economic development. In this regard, we call upon UN-Habitat to align its recovery plans for the reconstruction of human settlements in the Gaza Strip in line with this endorsed Arab Plan, facilitating technical and financial cooperation and leveraging its expertise in sustainable reconstruction.

Mr. Chair,

Regarding the internal management improvements, we welcome the Report of the Executive Director on Actions to Update and Improve Internal Management Policies and Procedures. We recognize the progress made in strengthening recruitment processes, promoting equitable geographical representation, and advancing gender parity. It remains essential that the Asia-Pacific region is adequately represented at all levels of UN-Habitat's workforce, reflecting the diversity and expertise of our region in shaping global urban development policies.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.