

Mr. Chair a.i.,
Madame Executive Director of UN-Habitat,
Excellencies,

At the outset, the Group of 77 and China would like to convey its sincere appreciation for the Chair for capably leading the Executive Boardt.

The Group appreciates the efforts of H.E. Ambassador Pedro Leon Cortez Ruiz, the Permanent Representative of Colombia, for leading the *Ad-hoc* Working Group on Programmatic, Budgetary and Administrative matters, and takes note with appreciation of the briefing of the Deputy Permanent Representative of Portugal, in his capacity as Chair of the *Ad-hoc* Working Group on the Development of a Stakeholders' Engagement Policy, on the progress made in drafting the policy which is of great importance to the work of the Programme. The Group encourages Member States to continue to engage with a view to finalizing the policy, in alignment with the intergovernmental nature of the Programme.

The Group welcomes the efforts to broaden the contributor base to the core budget of the Programme, and encourages Member States in a position to do so to contribute to UN-Habitat's core financial resources, in order to empower the Programme as the leading UN Programme responsible for advancing urban development.

In light of the concerning slow improvement in the financial situation of the Programme, increasing financial contributions is essential for strengthening its mandate and maintaining its impact globally, which is one of the most important to developing countries.

The Group recognizes as well the updates on the normative and operational activities of the Programme in 2024. In this regard, the Group welcomes the updates on Ethiopia and Central America and the Dominican Republic long-standing

programmes, stresses the need to foster the activities of the Programme in developing countries, and calls for intensifying capacity-building initiatives, including for the implementation and the reporting on the New Urban Agenda.

The Group recalls Executive Board decision 2024/6 of December 2024, and requests the Executive Director to present the comprehensive report on the Status of the Development of the Efforts to Reconstruct the Human Settlements in the Gaza Strip no later than the third session of 2025.

The Group takes note with appreciation of the initiative by Egypt to propose the Gaza Reconstruction Plan, which was adopted by the Extraordinary Arab Summit in March 2025. The Group further urges the Programme to expand its presence on the ground, including in areas affected by armed conflicts and natural disasters, prioritizing emergency relief, reconstruction, recovery, and long-term sustainable economic development.

Mr. Chair,

The Group recognizes the Draft Strategic Plan for the period 2026-2029, and its centrality to improving the quality of life of urban dwellers around the world, welcomes the consultations leading to it, and reiterates its commitment to continuing the engagement on enhancing the current Draft Plan with a view to its possible adoption at the resumed session of the Second UN-Habitat Assembly in May.

The Group is hopeful that the new plan will be implemented in a manner that enables it to articulately meet different regional urbanization priorities, and that its monitoring and evaluation frameworks will be developed to lead to more efficient results, fully taking into consideration the recommendations by the different assessments of the implementation of the current plan, particularly the one by the

United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services, in order to improve the quality of life in communities and human settlements

The Group further reiterates the need for the implementation of the UN-Habitat Assembly resolutions and decisions on equal footing, and in a balanced manner, and stresses its commitment to positively contribute to a successful resumed Second Session of the UN-Habitat Assembly.

The Group remains concerned about the uneven geographical representation within UN-Habitat workforce, and requests the Secretariat to provide an update on the concrete measures taken to improve the geographical balance across all staff categories, and to accelerate its efforts towards realizing equitable geographical allocation of the professional posts, as well as to expand its outreach activities to the underrepresented regions.

Finally, the Group urges different delegations to refrain from politicizing UN-Habitat's work, avoiding discussions on issues beyond the Programme's mandate.

I thank you.