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Statement by

H.E. Jeronimo Chivavi

**Permanent Representative of the Republic of Mozambique to
the UNON**

Chair of the African Group

Before

**the Open-Ended Committee of the Permanent
Representatives**

Nairobi, the 26th of May, 2025

Thank You Chair for giving me the floor.

Excellency Chair of OECPR,

Madam Executive Director

Excellencies Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am privileged to address this august body on behalf of the African Group, in my capacity as the Chair of the African Group.

Allow me to commend you, Madam the Executive Director, and through you, to your team, for the work carried out by the UN-HABITAT and the unwavering support provided to our countries.

A special word of appreciation to the distinguished Permanent Representatives and Heads of Mission for your support.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The African Group acknowledges and appreciates the merit of the draft documents under consideration.

On the *Draft Strategic Plan 2026-2029*, the African Group welcomes the current draft and the inclusive consultative process initiated here, in Nairobi, for its development. The African Group stresses its position on the issue of gender, which in its understanding and belief can only apply to “man and woman”. In this regard, the Africa Group considers and understands all references made to gender in the document as strictly linked and associated to “man” and “woman” and excludes all possible other interpretations. **With this understanding, the Group advises against opening any debate on the definition of Gender within the context of UN-HABITAT.** The Africa Group also reiterates the definition provided in SDG-5 on gender issues emphasizing gender equality and women's empowerment.

Furthermore, the Group reaffirms its willingness to engage constructively in finalizing the draft, and sorting out any pending issues.

On the *International Guidelines on People Centered Smart Cities*, the Group underscores the importance of its technical mandate, acknowledging its added value, especially in support of Member States to employ technology in establishing and managing new smart cities. Nevertheless, the Group reiterates the need to fine-tune the current draft to allow for its adoption at the Assembly. The Group is of the view that neither the Secretariat nor the experts have the expertise to draft specific sections, on digital human rights. The Group believes that maintaining this section, will divert the guidelines from their original purpose.

The African Group, therefore, and in a spirit of compromise, is ready to work on the proposal tabled during the informal consultation of the document and to delete the section on human rights which is not relevant to the context and objectives of these guidelines and replace it, in the introduction of the document, with a short paragraph with references on human rights and, mainstreaming agreed language on sensitive matters throughout the text.

On the *Stakeholders Engagement Policy*, the Group affirms its position on the importance to stick to the UN practice of accrediting stakeholders and fully respect the intergovernmental nature of the UN-Habitat. In this regard, the African group, who engaged in good faith and with a spirit of compromise in the process of negotiations throughout these past years, to reach consensus on the draft stakeholders policy, has come up with the conclusion that the persistence to impose a new language in the draft policy to elevate the status of stakeholders and NGOs to that of Member States and put them on an equal footage, cannot be accepted nor validated by this Group as it undermines the sovereignty of Member States, and constitutes a true violation of International Law, which has to be observed and respected by all Member States.

The Africa Group believes that a stakeholders engagement policy has to be in line with the principles of International Law, that should guide the work initiated for its development. Any attempt to use this exercise

to circumvent International Law and its principles will prevent this Group from engaging further.

Regarding the *implementation of resolutions*, the African Group appreciates the efforts made thus far by UN-HABITAT. However, the Group wishes to express its concern over the limited or delayed implementation of key resolutions pertinent to the African region, specifically those addressing adequate housing for all, the transformation of informal settlements and slums, the urban planning and sustainable infrastructure, and on the equitable financing and effective monitoring of the implementation of resolutions.

On this last particular resolution which has been tabled by the Africa Group, and presented as an innovative solution, that established the urban action funding window, to allow unspent balances of earmarked contributions to be directed towards resolution implementation needs, the Africa Group views the approach followed by the Secretariat in its engagement with donors as not sufficient. In this regard, the Africa Group believes that the Secretariat, instead of limiting itself to a factual information in the report, indicating that “as of February 2025, the funding window remained empty”, it should have better communicated on the efforts deployed and approach followed towards the donors to enable reallocation of unspent funds to unfunded resolutions, and to further on the follow up action, the Secretariat is planning to do, to pursue this very important matter.

The African Group reaffirms the need to prioritize capacity-building in urban planning, sustainable urban development, and reporting under the New Urban Agenda. We further emphasize the importance of mobilizing resources to promote resilient, affordable housing projects in developing countries, especially across Africa.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The African Group reiterates the strategic importance of the UN-HABITAT in advancing both the regional and global urban agenda. The

Group values its role in offering political, technical, and capacity-building support, as well as mobilizing financial resources to support sustainable human settlement initiatives.

The African Group also wishes to reiterate the need to reinforce regional and country offices and to coordinate implementation of the strategic plan through effective regional implementation and monitoring frameworks

In conclusion, the African Group reaffirms its unwavering commitment to supporting UN-HABITAT in the fulfilment of its mandate. The Group encourages the organization's leadership to continue driving forward the global urban agenda and to champion sustainable urbanization for the benefit of all.

Thank you