

**Opening Remarks by Ms. Anacláudia Rossbach,  
Executive Director and Under- Secretary General, UN-Habitat.  
First Session of the Executive Board April 2026.**

- Honourable Sebastien Groth, German Ambassador to the Republic of Kenya and Chair of the Executive Board;
- Mr. Cassius Kuisenya, Housing Secretary, representing H. E Ms. Alice Wahome, Cabinet Secretary for Land, Public Works, Housing and Urban Development of the Republic of Kenya;
- Honourable Ministers;
- Distinguished Representatives of the UN-Habitat Executive Board Members;

Your Excellencies, colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

All protocols observed,

I am honoured to welcome you to the first 2026 session of UN-Habitat's Executive Board.

Your presence today reflects a strong collective commitment to advancing sustainable urbanization across the world. As we navigate changing landscapes and mounting challenges for cities and multilateralism, your leadership and collaboration are essential.

At the outset, allow me to express my sincere gratitude to the **Government of Kenya**, our host country, for its steadfast support of UN-Habitat's mission. Kenya's commitment to urban development and housing was once again evident during the recent African Urban Forum.

I also wish to warmly acknowledge the distinguished representatives of **Malawi and Poland**, in their capacity as co-facilitators of the process towards the high-level meeting on the midterm review of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. Your support underscores the importance of this process and the strong engagement of Member States in shaping its outcome.

Excellencies,

In the current global context, impacted by the Middle East situation, this Executive Board session comes at an important juncture, enabling us to take stock of progress so far achieved and to anchor the next phase of our work in your guidance and collective priorities.

The year 2026 has already seen a number of important achievements. Just to mention a few:

Just two weeks ago, UN-Habitat actively participated in a very successful 2nd edition of the **African Urban Forum**, hosted by Kenya, which brought together the African and international community and saw housing as a central theme throughout. The discussions and events organized created space for innovative solutions and partnerships to advance our mandate and priorities.

Earlier this month, I also had the pleasure of holding a series of **informal dialogues with all five regional groups**. These dialogues provided valuable exchanges on multiple topics, including the impact of UN80 on UN-Habitat and our work across regions. I thank you for the strong level of engagement, support and direct guidance received from many delegations.

On the **implementation of our new Strategic Plan for 2026-2029**, important groundwork has already been laid. We have made progress in aligning internal delivery, adjusting to our new organizational structure, and advancing the monitoring framework that will allow us to track results and strengthen accountability. We have also continued to advance our resource mobilization efforts. Through a co-creation approach, we have consolidated our new **Resource Mobilization Strategy**. Your support has been critical.

Looking at the rest of this year, major milestones are upon us, starting with the 13<sup>th</sup> session of the **World Urban Forum**, next month in Baku.

Excellencies,

As I address you today, UN-Habitat, in close collaboration with the Government of Azerbaijan, is finalizing preparations to welcome you and the global urban community to Baku in one month's time, from 17 to 22 May. Close to 20,000 participants have already registered, and that number is

expected to grow further. Thanks to the strong support of the Government of Azerbaijan and the dedication of all our teams, I am confident that, together, we will make this session of the World Urban Forum a landmark moment for sustainable urbanization, in particular for housing, land, basic services and the transformation of informal settlements.

Some Member States have expressed concerns about the timing of the Forum, especially in view of the ongoing situation in the Middle East. Let me assure all delegations that preparations for the Forum are going full speed, that the turnout is expected to be very high, and that we are in close cooperation with both the UN Department of Safety and Security and the host country Azerbaijan to ensure minimum disruption and maximum security for all participants.

Excellencies,

This year, we are also strongly committed to meeting our moment on the **New Urban Agenda**, through preparing for the high-level meeting on the midterm review of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, which will take place in New York, on 16 and 17 July 2026. Ten years after its adoption in Quito, the New Urban Agenda retains its full relevance, and UN-Habitat is determined to continue supporting Member States in advancing it.

In parallel, this year is significant for UN-wide reforms, in which UN-Habitat is fully engaged. In regards to **UN80**, UN-Habitat has been participating actively across various work packages, promoting efficiency, impact and stronger delivery on the ground, while also bringing visibility to the organization's distinct value and expertise. Indeed, the **UN80 initiative** has provided UN-Habitat with a UN-wide platform to shed light on housing, land, basic services and the transformation of informal settlements. Excellencies, with your support, and through our collective efforts, we hope to continue leveraging the UN80 initiative as an opportunity to advance our mandate.

**On the ground**, UN-Habitat continues to demonstrate its unique value, supporting Member States, local and regional governments with innovative solutions and sustainable practices aimed at achieving lasting impact. Our efforts are focused on leaving no one behind, supporting the

most vulnerable communities, from informal settlements to crisis-affected areas, in concrete ways. Importantly, UN-Habitat has now established a new regional office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia. In this region, composed of over 400 million residents who are experiencing high urbanization rates, UN-Habitat's efforts will focus on scalable solutions for access to housing and land, integrated urban basic services, climate resilience and zero waste-related work.

Excellencies,

In essence, this first year of implementation of our new Strategic Plan is absolutely critical - in the months ahead, we will elevate our priorities through global processes and milestones, including during **WUF13** next month, but also through the work of the **Open-ended Intergovernmental Expert Working Group on Adequate Housing for All**, the review of **Sustainable Development Goal 11** at the **High-level Political Forum** in New York, and on its sidelines, **the midterm review of the New Urban Agenda**. Through a comprehensive global stakeholder engagement process, our efforts are centred on accelerating global advocacy for local delivery.

Yet, we must be frank about the constraints that UN-Habitat continues to face. Our capacity to deliver support is contingent on **adequate and predictable funding**. As a UN Secretariat programme, UN-Habitat is affected both by Regular Budget liquidity challenges and by the effect of the global decline in Official Development Assistance.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

In this context, early and predictable contributions are most important and I wish to express my sincere **appreciation to Member States who have already made early remittances to our Foundation non-earmarked fund for 2026, including India, Japan, Pakistan, the Philippines, Peru and Tanzania**. Early contributions are essential in enabling timely planning and effective programme delivery, as predictable core funding remains a vital foundation for UN-Habitat's work. These efforts will be critical in helping us reach the approved non-earmarked budget level of USD 5 million for 2026, as approved by the Executive Board.

I am also pleased to report that in 2025, UN-Habitat received USD 3.81 million in Foundation non-earmarked funds from 31 Member States<sup>1</sup>, which is the **highest number of contributors over the past six years**. I extend my sincere appreciation to all contributing Member States, including consistent contributors as well as new and returning contributors across 2025 and 2026, such as Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Iraq, Madagascar, Morocco, Peru and Togo. I would also like to acknowledge those who have increased their contributions, including Japan and Tanzania for 2026, as well as Kenya, which has tripled its contribution since 2025. This broadening and strengthening of our core funding base is both encouraging and essential. I warmly encourage all Member States who have not yet contributed to consider doing so, and, where possible, to make early remittances, so that together we can ensure the predictability, flexibility and effectiveness of UN-Habitat's work in delivering on our shared commitments.

Excellencies,

As we advance in this session, I would like to thank all of you for your dedication and continued support to UN-Habitat. I look forward to meaningful cooperation and constructive dialogue. Before handing over the floor to you, Honourable Chair, I would like to acknowledge your leadership and guidance in steering our discussions forward, thank you.

With your permission, Honourable Chair, I would also like to take this opportunity to give the floor to two new UN-Habitat Directors, **Mr. Patrick Canagasingham**, our new Director for the Regional Programme Division, and **Ms. Toni-Shae Freckleton**, our new Director for the UN-Habitat New York Office. I am very pleased to welcome them both in the room today, in your presence. Dear Patrick, over to you for a few words.

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<sup>1</sup> 2025 contributions, in USD: **Germany** (1,161,595); **Saudi Arabia** (500,000); **China** (350,000); **Kenya** (200,000); **Spain** (197,383); **South Africa** (160,000); **Namibia** (150,000); **Iraq** (150,000); **India** (100,000); **Philippines** (100,000); **Angola** (100,000); **Republic of Korea** (69,244); **Singapore** (60,000); **Barbados** (55,000); **Cote D'Ivoire** (52,016); **Benin** (51,444); **Zimbabwe** (50,000); **Mauritius** (50,000); **Morocco** (50,000); **Portugal** (35,294); **Burkina Faso** (35,243); **Japan** (22,690); **Botswana** (20,000); **Madagascar** (20,000); **Chile** (20,000); **Rwanda** (10,000); **Togo** (10,000); **Mozambique** (10,000); **Czech Republic** (7,093); **Pakistan** (5,920); **Peru** (5,473).

*[Short intervention by Patrick]*

Thank you dear Patrick and welcome. Dear Toni-Shae, over to you for a few words as well.

*[Short intervention by Toni-Shae]*

Thank you and welcome dear Toni-Shae.

**Honourable Chair of the Executive Board, Mr Groth, German Ambassador to the Republic of Kenya**, over to you.

Thank you.