Fourth meeting of the Bureau of the Executive Board of UN-Habitat 2026
(Extended Bureau meeting)
Sunday, 1 November 2026, 14:00-17:00 (Beijing Time)

Statement by the Executive Director

Opening remarks

Your Excellency **Mr. Chen Shaowang**, Chair of the Executive Board of UN-Habitat, and Vice Minister of Housing and Urban-Rural Development of People's Republic of China and our host today,

Representatives of His Excellency **Mr. Nga Kor Ming,** President of the United Nations Habitat Assembly, Minister of Housing and Local Government of Malaysia,

Representatives of His Excellency **Amb. Håkan Åkesson,** Chair of the UN-Habitat Committee of Permanent Representatives and Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Sweden to UN-Habitat,

Your Excellency, **Amb. Susan Nakhumicha Wafula** Chair of the ad hoc working group on programmatic, budgetary and administrative matters of the Executive Board, and Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Kenya to UN-Habitat,

Distinguished Representatives of Mexico, Mozambique, Slovakia, Germany,

Excellencies, colleagues,

Good afternoon.

Let me begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Chair of the Executive Board for convening this extended Bureau meeting in Fuzhou, alongside the global observance of World Cities Day 2026. I thank all of you for joining us for this important exchange, and our Chinese hosts for bringing the international urban community together around a shared agenda for sustainable urban development.

This year's World Cities Day theme - Regenerating the City: Adequate Housing for All - speaks directly to one of the most pressing challenges facing cities worldwide. It calls on us to consider

how we can improve existing urban areas, enhance living conditions, and expand access to adequate housing and basic services, while ensuring that the benefits of urban development reach all residents. Hence, for UN-Habitat, this theme is very important to our mandate and to the implementation of our 2026-2029 Strategic Plan.

Fuzhou provides an important setting for this global conversation led by Members of our Governing Bodies, and I wish to sincerely thank again our host for World Cities Day 2026, and for this meeting. Bringing together international perspectives and local experience allows us to learn from different approaches to urban renewal and consider how practical solutions can be adapted across diverse contexts. I hope our time here will encourage an exchange of experience that moves beyond dialogue and helps advance concrete action towards more inclusive, liveable and sustainable cities.

Successful action and delivery depend on our collective commitment, from local and regional governments and partners to Member States and our governing bodies. The Executive Board has a central role in overseeing the implementation of UN-Habitat's normative and operational activities, approving and overseeing the annual programme of work and budget, adopting decisions within its mandate, and guiding efforts to mobilize resources. Its Bureau supports the effective functioning of the Board, including preparations for its sessions, dialogue among Member States and the identification of issues requiring the Board's attention.

Equally important is the contribution of our other governing bodies. The UN-Habitat Assembly provides a universal intergovernmental platform for setting the overall vision and direction of our work. The Committee of Permanent Representatives plays an important role in preparing and following up on the work of the Assembly and the Executive Board, and in sustaining engagement between their formal sessions.

Each body has its own mandate, responsibilities and working methods. Our collective effectiveness depends on respecting these distinctions while strengthening coherence, complementarity and communication among them. We should reflect upon how our respective processes can reinforce one another, how political dialogue on sustainable urbanization can be sustained between formal sessions, and how our governing bodies can help strengthen the visibility, partnerships and resource mobilization needed to implement the Strategic Plan.

I therefore welcome this extended bureau meeting as an opportunity for an open and forward-looking exchange among the leadership of our three governing bodies. I hope we can identify practical ways to work more effectively within our respective mandates, maintain a shared sense of strategic direction and support the Executive Board in carrying out its core responsibilities during the 2026–2027 period and beyond.

Our discussions also take place as we look towards a very important milestone: the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of UN-Habitat in 2027. It will be an opportunity to reflect on five decades of international cooperation on human settlements, recognize the progress achieved and consider the challenges that remain. It should also be an opportunity to look ahead and renew our collective commitment to sustainable urbanization. The world has changed considerably since the establishment of UN-Habitat, but the need for inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities has never been more evident.

As we prepare for this anniversary, we should consider how to strengthen the organization's relevance, demonstrate the value of its mandate and build the partnerships necessary to deliver greater impact. The discussions and outcomes of Urban October and World Cities Day can help inform this reflection, linking the global urban agenda to the priorities and practical experiences of cities and communities.

Excellencies, colleagues,

I encourage us to use today's meeting to exchange views candidly, identify shared priorities and consider practical steps that can strengthen our collective work. We have an opportunity to reinforce the contribution of our governing bodies, support the implementation of the Strategic Plan and build momentum towards the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of UN-Habitat.

I am grateful for your leadership and continued commitment to UN-Habitat. I look forward to our discussion and to the progress we can make together.

Thank you.

AGENDA ITEM 3: Preparations for the 2026 second session of the Executive Board

Madam Chair,
Excellencies,

As you may recall, at the Bureau meeting on 1 September 2026, the Bureau approved the draft agenda and organization of work for the 2026 second session of the Executive Board, which will be held on 24 and 25 November 2026. The agenda is shown on the screen to refresh our memory.

As we continue the preparations, today I wish to highlight a few expectations for the upcoming Executive Board session.

First of all, one of the most important topics to be considered is the draft work programme of UN-Habitat and draft budget of the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation for 2027.

The 2027 Work Programme is the first to be fully aligned with the Strategic Plan 2026–2029, with a budget proposal of USD$5.9 million, corresponding to the cost to implement the proposed work plan. We hope that the programme and budget will be favorably considered for approval by the Executive Board.

Another highlight is our normative and operational work. In this session, we will present our country programme in Kenya and Lao, as well as our work to support the Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance, and our work on urban crisis prevention and response initiatives, including in Ukraine and in Gaza.

Excellencies,

Another important topic on the agenda is the outcomes of the thirteenth session of the World Urban Forum held in Baku, Azerbaijan in May 2026, under the theme "Housing the world: Safe and resilient cities and communities". The Forum provided an important high-level platform for Member States through the full-day Ministerial Meeting on the New Urban Agenda, chaired by the Republic of Azerbaijan and supported by Kenya, Malaysia and Poland, with an outcome being the Chair's Summary which reinforced the need to integrate housing into national and local development strategies and connect it with land, infrastructure, services, mobility, jobs, public spaces, social protection and climate resilience. It also highlighted the importance of strengthening urban finance, municipal capacity, data systems, accountability mechanisms and multilevel governance. WUF13 culminated in the *Baku Call to Action*, which provides a shared framework for renewed political commitment to adequate housing and sustainable urbanization and recognizes that housing is more than shelter. It is the foundation of dignity, inclusion, resilience, stability and opportunity.

In addition, we will also present the outcomes of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the midterm review of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda convened by the President of the General Assembly in July 2026, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 79/214. As a key outcome of the meeting, the General Assembly adopted resolution 80/291, entitled "Political Declaration to Renew Commitment and Accelerate the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda". In the Declaration, Member States reaffirmed their commitment to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda as the global framework for sustainable urbanization and human settlements and provided renewed political direction for its second decade of implementation, through 2036. The Declaration recognizes sustainable urban development as a driver of poverty and hunger eradication, economic growth, social inclusion, resilience and

environmental sustainability. It emphasizes the need to address the global housing crisis, tackle informal settlements and homelessness; improve access to land, basic services and infrastructure; promote integrated territorial and urban planning; strengthen climate and disaster resilience; and ensure that data, technology and innovation serve an inclusive and people-centred urban development.

Excellencies,

Many of you have personally provided leadership and made important contributions for the UN-Habitat milestones of this year. I therefore take this opportunity to thank you and all other Member States for supporting our work and mandate. These outcomes will continue to inform the work of UN-Habitat as we start the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2026-2029.

Finally, as I conclude, I am pleased to inform you that - in full accordance with the rules of procedure of the Executive Board - the formal notification and provisional agenda for the upcoming session was shared with Member States on 13 October 2026, and that all pre-session working documents for the session have been made available online in all six UN official languages on 27 October 2026, four weeks prior to the session.

Further - the Secretariat technical inputs for the draft decisions to be considered by Member States at the upcoming session of the Board have been circulated to Member States last Monday, in support of the informal consultations planned for 11 and 18 November.

I look forward to your continued leadership and guidance in the preparations towards the second session of the Executive Board of 2026.

With that, I give the floor back to you Madam Chair.