

**Statement by Mr. Masoud Al Hermi
Advisor at HRH the Prime Minister Court
Kingdom of Bahrain
Plenary Meeting
25th Session of the Governing Council
UN-HABITAT
Nairobi, 20 April 2015**

Mr. President,

Mr. Joan Clos, Executive Director of UN-HABITAT,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentleman,

At the outset we would like to congratulate you Mr. President and members of the bureau on your election. We are confident that under your able leadership this session of the Governing Council will be successful.

We wish to extend our deepest condolences to the Government and the People of Kenya and in particular to the families of the victims of the atrocious terrorist attack in Garissa. The Government and people of the Kingdom

of Bahrain fully support the measures being implemented to combat terrorism and violence and ensure that peace and security prevails all over Kenya.

Mr. President,

The theme of this session of the Governing Council, "*UN-Habitat's Contribution to the Post-2015 Development Agenda in Order to Promote Sustainable Urban Development and Human Settlements*" is of particular importance in terms of advancing the post-2015 agenda.

We believe that giving clear directions through this Governing Council to UN-Habitat as far as its work programme and budget for the biennium 2016-2017 are concerned, is essential for the contribution UN-Habitat will be able to provide to the post-2015 Agenda and the Habitat III conference.

We share the view of His Excellency the Honorable President Uhuru Kenyatta who in his statement in the opening session, called for the strengthening of the UN-Habitat including governance processes and financial resources to allow it to play a more active and visible role.

In this context I am pleased to mention that the Kingdom of Bahrain has provided financial support to UN-Habitat to enhance its capacity to deliver on a number of activities including financial support to the Trust Fund of the Special Human Settlements Programme for the Palestinian People, support to preparations for WUFs, the UN-Habitat Amman office for the translation of publications into Arabic and for the Experimental Reimbursable Seeding Operations Fund (ERSO).

Mr. President,

In its development efforts, the Kingdom of Bahrain attaches high importance to sustainable urban development in its Human Settlements.

In this context, previous and current government programmes have introduced improvements in the field of energy and water efficiency, public transportation and more efficient usage of public spaces.

Under the leadership of His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, Prime Minister, the Government of Bahrain has consistently pursued a policy which has enhanced the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and

the MDG's. An overriding concern for the government has been and continues to be putting the Bahraini citizens at the center of development through pursuing inclusive economic and social policies. This has led to the achievement of most of the objectives of the Habitat Agenda and the MDG's. It is in recognition of this that HRH the Prime Minister of Bahrain was awarded the 2006 Special Citation to the Habitat Scroll of Honor.

Mr. President,

As early as in the 1960's Bahrain was the first country in the Arab region that embarked on the construction of a new town called Isa Town as a modern integrated urban area.

Over the past few decades, government has provided on average to more than 65% of the citizens of Bahrain a housing service at a cost of USD 7.2 Billion. For a country with an area of around 800 square kilometers and a national population of a little over 615,000 of a total population of 1.25 Million, this is indeed a very substantial achievement. As provided for in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Government

in its programme of 2015 – 2018, is committed to continue to pursue this policy of providing social housing to citizens with limited income.

Currently the government is in the process of constructing 5 new towns which are expected, in conjunction with other projects; to provide within the near future an addition of 40,000 units to its housing stock.

Sustainable approaches have been and will continue to be adopted in the design, construction and operation of these new towns.

To ensure a more sustainable approach, the government is moving from direct provider to regulator and facilitator in the housing sector, whereby the private sector involvement is essential. Partnerships with private sector are being further strengthened.

As a token of Bahrain's commitment for advancing sustainable urbanization and sustainable development, I am pleased to mention two important initiatives. Firstly, the Kingdom of Bahrain and UN-Habitat will re-launch at Habitat III *'His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa bin Salman*

Al Khalifa UN-Habitat Award' to respond to the New Urban Agenda. The award is meant to support initiatives at city level that promote the innovation for sustainable urbanization. Secondly, the Kingdom of Bahrain is hosting from 5th till 7th of May 2015 the High Arab Forum at Ministerial level, with participation of stakeholders, on Sustainable Development. The Forum is organized by ESCWA, UNEP and the League of Arab States.

During the forum, UN-Habitat is organizing a side event, titled '*Towards more inclusive, integrated, resilient and sustainable cities in the Arab region*'.

The Kingdom of Bahrain would like to reiterate its strong support for UN-Habitat in fulfilling its important mandate in the area of sustainable urbanization and in particular in enhancing the capacity of the developing countries to meet the challenges of rapid urbanization. We also fully support the activities leading to the Habitat III conference.

Thank you Mr. President.