

**Draft Statement by the State of Palestine on behalf of the Asia Pacific Group (APG) at the upcoming session of the Executive Board of UN-Habitat, 6-8 May 2024**

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Esteemed Chair, distinguished Excellencies, and esteemed delegates,  
Allow me to deliver this statement on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group.

At the outset, the APG wishes to extend its congratulations to the Federal Republic of Nigeria for assuming the chairship of the Executive Board, and to you, Your Excellency, Ahmed Musa Dangiwa, Minister of Housing and Urban Development of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for presiding over this Executive Board meeting. We also wish to convey our sincerest thanks to H.E. Ambassador Silvio Albuquerque of Brazil for his excellent work as the previous Chair of the Executive Board. We commend the Acting Executive Director for his dedicated efforts in meeting with the regional groups in advance of the Executive Board meeting. Similarly, we extend our sincere appreciation to the Secretariat for its timely preparation of the working documents for this meeting.

**Mr. Chair,**

We commend UN-Habitat for its prudent financial management as of December 31, 2023. The surplus achieved in various funds underscores the organization's commitment to fiscal responsibility and efficient resource allocation, while facilitating impactful interventions, particularly in addressing pressing issues such as urban poverty, inadequate housing, and environmental degradation. In this regard, we applaud the donors of our region for their contribution to these funds and encourage UN-Habitat to allocate more projects to the Asia-Pacific region in its upcoming work programme.

**Mr. Chair,**

Regarding the draft work programme and budget for UN-Habitat 2025, we commend UN-Habitat's focus on flagship programmes such as "Inclusive Cities" and "People-Centered Smart Cities." These initiatives underscore the urgent need to leverage urbanization for sustainable development. However, we stress the importance of intensifying efforts to ensure equitable access to resources across urban and rural areas, particularly in critical capacity-building initiatives like digitalization and e-learning, to bridge the digital divide and foster inclusive development.

**Mr. Chair,**

We note the Mid-term Evaluation of Strategic Plan 2020-2025 conducted by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) which will aid UN-Habitat in moving forward and implement the best practices with accountability and in a transparent manner.

Looking ahead to the strategic plan for 2026-2029, we emphasize the significance of aligning UN-Habitat's priorities with the evolving needs of our region. Robust stakeholder engagement and participatory processes are indispensable to ensuring the plan's relevance and effectiveness in addressing our specific challenges, exacerbated by rapid urbanization and climate change.

**Mr. Chair,**

We recognize the efforts towards implementing the UN development system reform and improving internal management policies within UN-Habitat. However, the challenges highlighted, particularly regarding UN-Habitat's project-funded management structure and increasing reliance on earmarked funding, present significant obstacles. Of particular concern is the insufficient presence of UN-Habitat in vital United Nations sub-regional hubs and countries, risking a fundamental shift in its current engagement. We believe that it is crucial for UN-Habitat to address structural and operational constraints to optimize its engagement in the reform process. This necessitates alternative funding mechanisms, bolstering flexibility within its operational framework, and fostering stronger partnerships with other UN entities to leverage synergies and ensure the efficient delivery of results.

**Mr. Chair,**

The APG welcomes recent developments in our region. We welcome the news that UN-Habitat will open a new regional office to focus on Eastern Europe and Central Asia. We commend the various national urban forums that have taken place in our region, translating the New Urban Agenda into the local context. These include those in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Philippines and Malaysia.

**Mr. Chair,**

The Group is keen to collaborate with UN-Habitat for the successful Asia Pacific Ministerial conference on Housing and Development (APMCHUD), which will return after several years of hiatus. The 7<sup>th</sup> APMCHUD will be held tentatively on 12-14 August 2024 in Penang, Malaysia. It

will be the platform to accelerate the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Goals, during which the Asia Pacific New Urban Agenda platform will be a major initiative that will be discussed and deliberated.

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to Indonesia for hosting the 6th Spatial Planning Platform on 7-8 November 2023 and the upcoming 10th World Water Forum on 18-24 May 2024. These events provide invaluable platforms for international collaboration and knowledge sharing, furthering efforts towards sustainable urban development and water resource management.

The Group would also like to welcome “the Quality of Life Initiative” presented by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia’s Quality of Life Program, supported by UN-Habitat. The initiative includes an innovative indicator which is globally relevant and locally applicable, to assess and accelerate progress on local and global policy agendas on improving the quality of life in cities.

The Group also is keen on participating actively in the 2024 World Cities Day Global Observance and the 12th Session of the World Urban Forum (WUF12) in Cairo as they are an excellent opportunity to showcase best practices that could be replicated in other countries for the improvement of the lives of our people. We notice the important roles played by the Awards including UN Habitat Scroll of Honor and the Global Award for Sustainable Development in Cities (Shanghai Award) on the urban development.

**Mr. Chair,**

The Asia-Pacific Group recognizes the steps made in promoting equitable geographic distribution and gender parity within UN-Habitat’s workforce. The efforts to ensure diverse representation among Member States and gender-balanced staffing are so far commendable. However, we emphasize the need for sustained initiatives to bridge existing gaps and foster inclusivity, especially in underrepresented regions.

Finally, we appreciate the preliminary report of the Executive Director on the “Status of the development of the efforts to reconstruct the human settlements in the Gaza Strip” and commend UN-Habitat for its swift undertaking of the mandate to support the efforts to reconstruct human settlements affected by conflict and disaster.

**Thank you, Mr. Chair.**