



STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MR. KHALED HUSSEIN ALYEMANY, MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY, PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF YEMEN TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 21: UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME, IN THE SECOND COMMITTEE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 2 November 2010)

Madam Chair,

1. I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 21: Implementation of the outcome of the UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat). The Group thanks the Secretary-General for the report contained in document A/65/316, as well as for that contained in E/2010/72 and for the detailed presentation by the Executive Director.

2. The Group welcomes the new Executive Director of UN-Habitat, Dr. Joan Clos, and is confident that, under his able leadership, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme will strengthen its support to developing countries in their efforts to address the emerging urban challenges that are seriously undermining the achievement of developmental goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

Madam Chair,

3. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme plays a unique and key role in the overall pursuit of sustainable development. Recent trends in human settlements, including increasing urbanization and growing mega-cities, increase the need to focus on implementing the Habitat Agenda, and in particular MDG Goal 7 and the targets to halve by 2015 the proportion of people living without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation; and to continue working towards cities without slums, beyond current targets, through reducing the slum populations and improving the lives of slum dwellers.

3. The growing trend of rapid urbanization means that a significant portion of the challenge to achieving sustainable development is the challenge of managing cities and urban sprawl in a sustainable manner. We are therefore encouraged by the efforts of the UN Human Settlements Programme to improve the monitoring of sustainable urbanization conditions trends and to deepen the international community's understanding of the challenges and impact of rapid urbanization.

4. The Secretary-General's report identifies a number of major demographic, environmental, economic, social and spatial challenges, manifesting themselves in rapid growth of urban slums and squatter settlements, increasing vulnerability to climate change and other negative environmental impacts affecting the poorest countries and people disproportionately, thus exacerbating an already growing trend of urban inequality and leading to further marginalization of the urban poor. Like income inequality anywhere, growing urban economic inequality will significantly compound socio-economic challenges already faced by the millions of poor people living in urban areas, including women and other vulnerable groups. The Group urges UN-Habitat to continue to promote sustainable urbanization and to support efforts of developing countries to address urban poverty and inequalities, by intensifying its work in the areas of slum upgrading and prevention; improving access to safe drinking water and sanitation, promoting effective human

settlements financing mechanisms capable of upscaling slum-upgrading programmes; addressing gender inequalities and promoting partnerships. The Group also urges UN-Habitat, as the focal point for the Habitat Agenda within the UN system, to continue its useful work of monitoring, analyzing and reporting global urban conditions and trends.

5. Given the proportion of people living in urban areas, and the fact that this number will steadily increase, the role of cities in addressing the climate change crisis is another important factor. Cities have the potential to influence both the causes and consequences of climate change. Cities are confronting urban pollution, and most of the world's growing cities are located in the developing countries and in vulnerable (or in low elevation) coastal areas that are increasingly vulnerable to sea levels rise, and within reach of severe coastal storms. On the other hand, cities offer opportunities to provide leadership in climate change mitigation and adaptation, through inclusive urban planning and management, particularly in the areas of domestic energy and urban transport. UN-Habitat should continue identifying and sharing innovative urban development planning and management approaches and practices that are responsive to the global challenge of climate change.

6. The poorest countries and people are also the most vulnerable to human-made and natural disasters, and we welcome UN-Habitat's work in this area, focusing on integrating a human settlements perspective in to the earliest stages of emergency relief and to facilitate transition to early recovery and reconstruction.

Madam Chair,

7. The fulfillment of both the internationally-agreed goals on the provision of adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development, including the target on improving the lives of slum dwellers, requires a holistic and integrated approach through nationally-owned, led and pro-poor strategies focusing on, inter alia, urban poverty eradication, access to basic urban services, including access to adequate and affordable housing, safe water, the provision of modern, affordable energy services; waste collection and disposal.

8. Meeting these goals also requires partnerships between the public, civil society and private sectors. The World Urban Forum and the Global Urban Campaign have proved to be effective advocacy tools for raising global awareness of sustainable urbanization issues and facilitating the sharing of knowledge, best practices and innovative approaches for addressing emerging urban challenges. We also commend UN-Habitat for coordinating the UN Pavilion at the Shanghai World Exposition 2010, which has attracted a record number of visitors and has facilitated the exchange of innovative ideas and experiences on sustainable urban development .

9. The UN-Habitat Agenda is a significant component of the broader development agenda of internationally-agreed development goals, including the MDGs. During this year's review session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, it was stressed at several stages that cities are key engines of economic growth for any country and functioning transport networks are an essential ingredient for transactions between businesses and individuals. We must find ways to promote urban productivity and improved living and working conditions for urban populations by appropriately meeting mobility and transport needs in an economically efficient and environmentally and socially sustainable manner. There is scope for UN-Habitat to play a greater role in this regard, within its specific mandate and through the implementation of its medium-term strategic and institutional plan.

Madam Chair,

10. We welcome the continued good performance of UN-Habitat in regards to its fundraising activities, and on securing a steady increase in resources over the past six to seven years. We remain concerned, however, at the imbalance in the levels of core and non-core funding. We have consistently argued for greater predictability and reliability of funding for operational activities of the UN in general, and that argument should be repeated here. The continued unpredictability of funding of the Programme that is attributed to the imbalance between earmarked and non-earmarked contributions, as well as dependency on a small number of donors, lessens the ability of the Programme to function as Member States require, and hampers the effective and efficient implementation of the Programme according to the national priorities of developing countries.

11. We continue to express our support for the Medium-term Strategic and Institutional Plan for 2008-2013 and the Experimental Reimbursable Seeding Operations in support of pro-poor housing and urban development, as they are important developments to help take UN-Habitat's Agenda forward. We hope that the Plan will give renewed impetus to coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda, and to achieving targets 10 and 11 of MDG-7.

Madam Chair,

12. There remains a continuing need to bolster progress in the achievement of shelter for all and sustainable human settlements through building adequate capacity at regional and national levels. This can be done partly through sharing of experiences, common regional policy formulation and implementation within the context of the Habitat Agenda and MDGs.

13. We continue to express our support for the series of ministerial meetings held at the regional level on housing and urban development. These meetings should continue to focus on integrating the Habitat Agenda and related internationally agreed development goals into national plans and strategies.

14. In conclusion, we urge the international community to give due attention and support to achieving the goals of the Habitat Agenda, including through financial support on a predictable basis, given its focus on critical aspects of human livelihoods, basic needs and, poverty eradication. Further, UN-Habitat and all other development partners should continue to play a major role in supporting the efforts of developing countries in the provision of shelter for all and the achievement of sustainable human settlements.

Thank you, Madam Chair.