

Opening Remarks by Mrs. Zainab Hawa Bangura

Director-General of the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON)

on the occasion of the Second Session of the UN Habitat Assembly

5 June 2023

- Your Excellencies, Dr. William Ruto, President of the Republic of Kenya and First Lady Rachel Ruto,
- Your Honour, Mr. Slumber Tsogwane, the Vice President of the Republic of Botswana,
- Honorable Román Meyer Falcón, Secretary of Agrarian, Territorial and Urban Development of Mexico and President of the UN-Habitat Assembly,
- Honorable Ministers,
- Madam Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat),
- Madam Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, Deputy Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP),
- Distinguished delegates, colleagues, friends, ladies and gentlemen:

A very good morning to you all.

1. First, I would like to thank His Excellency Dr. William Ruto, President of the Republic of Kenya, for being with us this morning for this second session of the UN Habitat Assembly. The first session was held four years ago in May 2019. Your presence here today, Mr. President, is a strong indication of the close partnership between Kenya and the United Nations, and Kenya's commitment as a host country to the heart of United Nations operations in Africa and the global south.
2. UN Habitat is the UN global urban and human settlements thought leader and the focal point for all urbanization matters within the UN System. It is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable human settlements, towns and cities, in an urbanizing world.
3. UN Habitat is geared towards mitigating climate change and making environmentally friendly cities with focus on "Green" building materials, construction technologies, climate-responsive housing and settlement design. In Kenya, as an example, UN-Habitat is supporting the efforts of the government to put in place policy, legislative and programmatic measures for accelerating urban action for a carbon-free country. This will help in promoting

the use of appropriate building materials and green technologies with the aim of enhancing the use of eco-friendly and cost-effective building materials made from locally available natural resources. UN Habitat is also supporting the regeneration and the reclaiming of the Nairobi River to curb pollution to create more liveable public spaces in Nairobi.

4. UN Habitat and UNEP, with support from the European Union, launched the Go-Blue initiative, to protect Kenya's coastal ecosystem while creating environmentally friendly jobs. Other projects by UN Habitat include waste management projects in Kiambu, Tata Taveta, Kisumu and Kisii and Energy Climate Resilience Development for Poverty Reduction in Narok and Nairobi counties, just to mention a few. UNON, as the main service provider to UN Habitat, continues to work together with UN Habitat on going green as UNON launched its waste collection and sorting stations, leading to reduction of waste and increased recycling on our complex.
5. This Second UN-Habitat Assembly being held in Nairobi, is an indication of the importance and relevance of Nairobi as a UN global hub. The United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON), as the only UN office in the global south has seen an increasing number of UN offices seeking to relocate their staff to Nairobi with the

objective of working together to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It is for UN Habitat, UNEP and the growing confluence of UN entities operating in and from Nairobi that the Secretary-General has proposed, and the General Assembly has approved, an unprecedented programme of investments in our complex, including a substantial and long-overdue expansion and upgrade of this conference facility.

6. Lastly, I would like to thank Member States for the great support they provide to UN Habitat, UNEP, UNON and all UN agencies, funds and programmes working in Kenya. As UNON we are particularly grateful for Member States support to our capital investments which will ensure the provision of upgraded facilities in our Gigiri complex and transform us into an iconic premises in Africa. We thank you, President Ruto, for your tremendous support for these capital projects. As we move forward with these projects we are conscious of our responsibility to do so in close partnership with UN Habitat and UNEP. For its part, UN Habitat is a key stakeholder for the conference upgrade project and helps us to ensure that we are working in alignment with the principles of sustainable urbanization.

7. Your excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I wish you a successful deliberation, exchange and networking

session in this Assembly, and we look forward to the important resolutions and outcomes of the meeting.

Thank you.