Statement delivered on behalf of the African Group during discussions on the Agenda item 2 “How to make UN-Habitat fit for purpose in the post Habitat III Period” March 14-15, 2016, Gigiri, Nairobi.

1. I have the honor to deliver this statement on behalf of the African Group. At the outset, let me thank you chair for giving me the floor, and the secretariat for providing us with the discussion paper on their perspectives on Transformation of UN-Habitat.

2. The Group has carefully studied the discussion paper. In our view, the paper has given some good suggestions on the future role of the UN-Habitat as explained in paragraphs no. 3, 4, 5 and 6. We consider these as useful inputs for further improvements.

3. However, with the functions delineated, the Group had also expected to get some suggestions on the nature of the organizational machinery to support their full and effective realization. In other words, we had expected also to get views on whether or not UN-Habitat, in its present form, is fit to deliver these new and evolving mandates.

4. The Group believes that the paper has not directly responded to that question. Rather, it has given the impression that Habitat is suitable to perform, and that what is needed is business transformation.

5. We believe business transformation could be a good idea. However, without strong and effective anchor institution to review and support; it will never
stand the test of time. Indeed, experience has shown that such initiatives may not yield much, and may indeed present many unforeseen challenges.

6. Business transformation, as explained in the paper, will not promote full and effective representation of member states in decision-making, transparency and accountability. Neither will it empower Habitat as the lead agency within the UN system in promoting sustainable urbanization and human settlements matters. It is essentially organizational status quo with innovative methods of sourcing funds.

7. What we are looking for is a transformative approach, because effective service delivery cannot only be about mobilizing finances or changing business practices. But most importantly, it is about the capacity of the organization to provide specialized technical support, and its ability to galvanize all actors to a common course since contemporary human settlement challenges have increased in scope and complexity.

8. That is why the General Assembly established UN-Habitat to be the focal point for all urbanization and human settlement matters within the UN system, and to promote socially and environmentally sustainable human settlements. In view of the new global sustainable development agenda dispensation, Member States will even be expecting much more from Habitat as the normative and operational work will substantially increase to cover all states.
9. We doubt that Habitat as it is today will meet such expectations. And with inadequate political voice and visibility coupled with dwindling financial resources from the UN regular budget, Habitat might struggle for relevance among other UN entities. This might reduce it to a mere spectator without capacity to provide system wide strategic direction on sustainable urbanization and human settlement matters.

10. But on a positive note, Habitat has clear niche that touches on all states and non-state actors. Therefore, the Group believes that Habitat III must strengthen UN –Habitat to make it fit for purpose, in particular in assisting member states deliver SDG 11 of Agenda 2030, the Paris Climate Agreement, and the New Urban Agenda which are universal in scope.

11. In essence, UN- Habitat must be transformed into a global institution with global appeal and authority on decisions regarding the human settlement agenda for implementation by all states and non-state actors. African states have support this strategic vision because we know the vast majority of the SDGs will only be realized depending on how the world manages urbanization process and the wider human settlement agenda.

12. Indeed, last month, our Ministers met in Abuja, Nigeria, and agreed to on some eight pillars to be incorporated as the basis of the New Urban Agenda, and to “Strengthen UN-Habitat to make it politically visible, as the key player in mobilizing all relevant actors, state and non-state in implementing
agenda 2030, the Paris Agreement and the outcome of Habitat III. The specifics of that agreement include among others:

- Establishing universal membership at its Governing Council to give it more authority and legitimacy in decision-making

- Ensuring additional, stable and predictable financial resources both from regular and non-regular budget of the United Nations.

- Improving the ability of the organization to provide capacity building to developing countries in designing, planning, implementation and sustainable management of urban and other human settlements

- Empowering UN-Habitat as the global anchor institution that mobilizes and leads all actors on the sustainable urbanization agenda, urban governance, and which leads the UN system in the implementation of mandates on urbanization and human settlements

I thank you for your kind attention.