The Chairperson of the CPR,
Excellencies,
Colleagues
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The African Group is delighted to participate in this very important sub-committee meeting. We thank the secretariat for the briefing on preparations for the WUF-9 to be held a couple of months away from now in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Madame Chairperson,

We have noted in the briefing that there is proposal to change the WUF structure and programme which relates to the working arrangements of the WUF. We would like to make the following observations:

1. The existing WUF structure was approved in WUF 1, later discussed by the CPR and approved by the Governing Council. This was because WUF was created by GA resolutions A/RES/56/206 and 56/205 in 2001 ‘as a non-legislative technical forum in which experts can exchange views’ and that the Advisory Committee is an advisory body to the ED. Its only Member States that can alter this arrangement as the Secretariat does not have the prerogative to do so.

2. GC26/6 gave clear directives on how WUF-9 and future sessions should be conducted. The proposal put forward by the Secretariat is coming way too late for Member States to have robust inputs and proceed for approval through the CPR. The resolution requested the ED to improve and define a timely planning process, for UN-Habitat and all external stakeholder involved, and explicitly emphasizes the
need for the CPR to be actively consulted in the planning and organization of sessions to ensure transparent, inclusive, effective and timely planning. The ED has been requested through the resolution and our previous subcommittee session that the CPR be adequately consulted and fully involved in the preparatory process. This has not happened. In this regard, we request for a calendar of events to allow the CPR vet the process and the programme.

3. WUF is a biennial non-legislative meeting convened by UN-Habitat. Changes in its non-legislative nature, its structure and working arrangements must be discussed with the CPR, endorsed at a Governing Council and finally by the General Assembly. It is part of the UN-Habitat’s activities, work programme and strategic plan and has to be coordinated and driven by UN-Habitat. Because it is neither a negotiations platform nor a monitoring or reporting mechanism, its declaration is absolutely non-binding. Its outcomeis delivered in the form of a WUF Report to every Governing Council.

4. On page 6 entitled ‘World Urban Forum Connected to UN-Habitat’: The title implies that there is a ‘connection’ between WUF and UN-Habitat while WUF is an integrated part of UN-Habitat. It asserts that the WUF provides inputs to the subsequent Work Programme and Budget as well as in the new strategic framework. This is not correct. WUF is simply part of the Work Programme and Budget as an activity to raises awareness, improve collective knowledge and increase collaborations between stakeholders.

5. It is further suggested that the WUF-9 will be the starting point for a road map to 2026 and will contribute to reporting on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, work programme and 2030 Development Agenda. The WUF cannot be a devise for reporting. It has not been defined as such.
6. On Page 9: **High level Roundtables** will be result-oriented and be led at the level of heads of States and/or Ministers. Why should such level be required? Previous roundtables have been Mayors Roundtables, Ministers Roundtable, and others **by Peers** like Professionals, Business, Universities, Researchers, and Parliamentarians Roundtables. This format has been useful in reflecting on the WUF theme from their own perspectives and then assembles in the plenary Dialogues on sub-themes. The new format proposes thematic roundtables instead. Why has this been changed? It is important to note that there is no space/session for gathering by peers.

7. **Dialogues** proposed will be led by UN-Habitat and key partners. All Dialogues should be prepared by UN-Habitat that will prepare concept notes, programmes and nominate speakers. We would like to know who the key partners are. Transparency on this aspect is essential given the attempts to give responsibilities to the General Assembly of Partners (GAP, see note below on GAP).

8. The twenty **Special Sessions** proposed represent a dramatic increase from previous WUFs. Previous WUFs had the following: Special Session on South-South Cooperation, Special Session on Inter-agency cooperation, World Urban Campaign Special Session, Special Session by the Host Country, Region and sometimes Host City. The new special sessions seem to be a mirror of the Habitat III 22 issue papers that defined the 10 policy units and are not driven by UN-Habitat. Why is that so? Could this be an attempt by design to use WUF as a monitoring platform on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, as implied on page 6? Again, it is proposed that those be organized by UN-Habitat and the UN system. Why such a move?

9. It seems that the proposal is a fundamental shift from an advocacy, outreach and communication activity of UN-habitat to a **REVIEW**
MECHANISM on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. We are aware that a progress report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda should be done every four years (para 166), building on existing platforms and processes such as the World Urban Forum convened by UN-Habitat (para 167). WUF is a platform to showcase and promote dialogue but cannot in any case become a monitoring and reporting device in itself.

Conclusion,

10. We urge the Secretariat to withdraw the suggested programme and amend the current proposal with full responsibility of UN-Habitat to lead, coordinate, organise, plan the event, including sharing the names of focal points in charge for the above listed events in UN-Habitat and also nomination of speakers.

11. The Secretariat to prepare a comparative analysis of former WUFs to new WUF format for consideration by CPR and advice on programme. The Group also requests the Secretariat to prepare a concept note on the WUF theme and to make available a list of the staff and consultants engaged in the WUF preparation. Approval of the programme by the CPR to become a requirement – calendar must be provided by the Secretariat.

12. Finally, the Group wishes to let other Member States know that the WUF coordinator has assured GAP that they will be given explicit responsibilities in the preparation of the World Urban Forum (email of GAP Executive to their members on 25 October). We are also aware of the GAP letter to the ED in that regard in order to secure their engagement in the process, requesting for key roles in the WUF for organizing sessions and have speaking roles in plenaries.