REMARKS

BY

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DURING

THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE SPECIAL AFRICAN MINISTERIAL SESSION ON SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION AND HOUSING TOWARDS THE HIGH-LEVEL MEETING FOR THE REVIEW OF THE NEW URBAN AGENDA

By videoconference

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Department of Political Affairs, Peace, and Security

(DPAPS)
I consider it an honour and pleasant duty to participate (albeit virtually) in this special meeting of relevant African sector Ministers, in preparation for the upcoming high-level meeting on the review of the New Urban Agenda. The Chairperson of the AU Commission, HE Moussa Faki Mahamat, would like me to convey his warmest greetings and best wishes to all of you for accepting the call to meet prior to the session in order to strategize on the theme of “Sustainable Urbanization and Housing”. And to also thank our friends of UN Habitat and UNECA for the continued kind facilitation.

Hon Ministers,

Excellencies,

This preparatory meeting, provides us with an important political platform to determine the actions required to accelerate progress on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda and compellingly, to do so in a coordinated manner that makes for greater impact and sustainability in the face of daunting global and regional dynamics.

Through the constructive and comprehensive reflection on the achievements and gaps in the implementation and the articulation of Africa’s own position on how to make further progress, we can produce outcomes that have the potential to transform our continent meaningfully. Provided we keep in mind our umbrella goal of UN Agenda 2030 and especially the related and decentralized continental Vision of Agenda 2063.
Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen

The implementation of the agenda in Africa is fundamental for the development of all countries and cities in the region, and to ensuring their sustainable future. The consequences of uncontrolled urban growth, changes in family patterns, increasing numbers of urban residents living in slums, along with persistent challenges relating to exclusion and inequality and growing insecurity face the region. Additionally, there are significant challenges arising from increased international migration and the intensification of climate change related disasters.

Recent trends in the world and in particular Africa, are quite disturbing. Despite some progress made over the decades, we are currently going through very trying times for many in urban and rural centres. Our governments are under stress to effectively respond and deliver impactful services for balanced and inclusive development that in turn engenders peace and stability for sustainable development. Our regional, continental and global institutions are similarly challenged. It cannot be business as usual.

We need to effectively unpack the peace, security, and development nexus by also unpacking the dynamics and linkages in multilevel-governance, from the different tiers of local through national to international, and horizontally recalibrating and energizing our partnerships to oil the wheels of effective governance and service delivery.

Honourable Ministers,

Indeed, the African Union has since upheld the importance of housing and urbanization which has been demonstrated in the transformation of the former African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (AMCHUD) into a Sub-Committee on Urban Development and Human Settlements (HUD) of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee
No.8. (AU- STC.N08), and the establishment of the Coordinating mechanism which facilitates a closer collaboration between the AUC, UN-Habitat, UNECA and other partners dealing with human settlements development.

To ensure our commitment to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, we developed a common position for Habitat III, which has been our main negotiating document. In collaboration with UN-Habitat and UNECA we translated the New Urban Agenda into a Harmonized Regional Framework. Our implementation has prioritized amongst others; the development of an African Charter on the Values and Principles of Urban Development as an instrument with a view to deepening sustainable urban development. The African Union remains committed to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda in the region. But more remains to be done.

Hon. Ministers,
Excellencies,

As you consider a coordinated African approach, allow me to suggest the following as being of key priority focus:

- Knowledge systems management for informed, smart policy-making as well as execution and continuous impact assessment;
- Clearly identifying the dynamics of rural, peri-urban and urban linkages and the implications of climate change management, conflict prevention, culture and governance capacity;
- the almost direct linkages between rural impoverished, conflict afflicted zones with inner-city slums and resultant urban development challenges;
- social protection of the vulnerable, particularly in the rural poor areas and inner cities;
- the impending youth bulge mixed bag of opportunities and possible disaster in a digital age of opportunities and enormous challenges and therefore, relevant critical choices to be made;
- climate security as we prepare to host COP27 in Egypt later this year;
- constantly reviewing our working methods to cope by delivering smartly and inclusively.
• Identifying strategic change enablers in terms of policies, programmes, institutions, countries, partnerships, individuals; including gender and generational categories.

The upcoming high-level UN meeting in New York to review the implementation of the New Urban Agenda is another opportunity to take these reflections forward. And this consultation should hopefully bring in rich African perspectives and contexts into the process.

Hon Ministers,

Distinguished participants,

On that note, and on behalf of the Chairperson of the AU Commission, I wish you fruitful deliberations.

I thank you for your kind attention.

Asanteni sana.