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**African Heads of State Dialogue on
“Urbanization in Africa within the context of the Post 2015
Development Agenda and Agenda 2063: Africa’s Position on Habitat
III”**

24 September 2015

New York, USA



UNGA 2015



Excellency, Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki Moon

Excellency, Executive Director of UN Habitat, Dr. Joan Clos

The President of the African Development Bank,

Ministers present

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to address this High Level Dialogue on Urbanization in Africa, and to express our appreciation to UN-Habitat for spearheading the Africa Urban Agenda, and convening this Dialogue.

This year's UN General Assembly is very critical for our world, as we celebrate 70 years since the formation of the UN; the adoption of the post-2015 Development agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals and prepare for the critical Climate Change negotiations in Paris, as well as celebrating 20 years since the historic Beijing Women's Conference.

Africa has been and remains very active in all these processes, especially through its continental framework, now Agenda 2063 and the Common African Position on the post-2015 agenda and sustainable development goals.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

The proposed SDG Goal 11 commits all of us ***to make cities and human settlements inclusive, resilient, safe and sustainable.***

This is a critical issue for Africa's development. In 1960, as the independence and anti-colonial movements were gaining momentum, only one city – Johannesburg – had over a million inhabitants.

Today, we have 33 cities across the length and breadth of the continent with over a million inhabitants, and Cairo, Lagos and Kinshasa are expected to reach megacity status, with over 15 million by 2025.

By 2025, it is also projected that the total number of African cities with over a million people would have reached 64, overtaking the US, Europe and India in the next fifteen years. Africa is urbanizing very fast, from being the least urbanised.

The current urban areas were designed to hold far less populations than they currently do, which has resulted in several challenges we all are aware of. We need to develop more new cities with capacities to take on higher populations in limited areas, rather than allowing the current unplanned, unmanaged urbanization toward mega cities.

This poses major challenges for the implementation of Africa Agenda 2063 as most countries, if not all, should plan for this urban revolution.

On Agenda 2063 we put emphasis on a people-centered structural transformation of Africa supported by industrialization, infrastructure, agriculture, trade, regional integration, and more. People come to cities on the whole in search of employment and services such as education (skills development) health services, housing etc. Therefore due consideration should be given to the nexus between urbanization, industrialization, social transformation and economic development, which need to be tackled together.

As we urbanise and populations grow, as they are going to be growing fast especially in Africa, feeding the population becomes of paramount importance. Urban agriculture as currently practiced by the low-income households must be enhanced not only to supplement their meagre incomes but also as a form of food security. Peri-urban and rural agriculture must be modernised and commercialised to allow for bulk production and agro-processing to meet the food requirements of the city dwellers.

These are the challenges for our macro-economists, development and urban planners, politicians, private sector and other actors, who must work in collaborative way to make urbanisation productive and beneficial to our people.

Our first 10 Year Plan for the implementation of Agenda 2063, and our work anticipated on the Sustainable Development Goals should focus on issues that are critical to African cities. These matters have to be tackled in a manner that seeks to provide the necessary infrastructure and services such as energy, transport, water, sanitation and housing in a manner that ensures that we eradicate informal settlements, provide safe spaces, ensure integrated cities and build cities as cultural, educational and economic hubs of our countries. We must also pay attention to waste and environmental management, take advantage of technologies to the protection of our citizens and oceans and have projects on waste recycling to meet growing energy needs.

Urban areas have also been very important determinants of the prevailing peace and insecurity in our countries, which result from the failure to recognise that urban areas are a conglomeration of many people of different cultures, races, religions and even political affiliations. Insecurity also arises when the people fail to attain their expectations while in the cities, which may lead to desperation and other un-intended consequences such as violence and crime.

We must find innovative and new ways to manage our diversities including the adoption of integrated national urban policies, rules and regulations; the strengthening of urban governance, planning and design; the development of skills and the integration of urban economies in national development. As we saw, the cities contribute quite a lot.

The AU has prioritized the development of an African Charter on Urban Development and Human Settlements to lay down key principles and minimum standards towards facilitating sustainable urbanization and human settlements development. We recognize the need to consider the continuum of human settlements inclusive of mega, large, medium and small cities and towns, as well as urban growth centers and villages. A focus on urban-rural linkages is critical as Africa urbanizes.

I believe that our national, regional and continental efforts to move Africa to the next level would be greatly enhanced if all countries could recognise

urbanization as a key pillar of regional development. In doing this, we need data and information to make informed policy decisions at all levels. Emphasis should also be placed on education and training of urban planners and engineers to meet contemporary African needs.

In this regard, we trust that the United Nations system, led by the Secretary General, will greatly assist us in responding to the knowledge gap and data challenges and provide a platform for standards in the production of high quality statistics in this regard.

I recognize the key role played by regional institutions such as the African Development Bank (AfDB), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the private sector as well as other non-state actors including women and youth in promoting sustainable urbanization and human settlements development. Our collective efforts will lead to a better urban future for Africa.

We look forward to our continued collaboration with the UN System as we move towards the implementation of Agenda 2063, and the Sustainable Development Goals, and in the design and implementation of the outcome document of Habitat III – the new urban agenda. We believe that the African Common Position on Habitat III being developed by the AU with the support of UNECA, AfDB and UN-Habitat based on wide consultations that are underway will be a major continental input into this process, within the framework of Agenda 2063.

I thank you for your attention.