



## **AFRICA URBAN FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE URBANISATION FOR AFRICA'S TRANSFORMATION.**

### **DECLARATION Addis Ababa, 4 to 6 September 2024**

#### **Preamble**

**We, the member states of the African Union and participants of the First Africa Urban Forum convened in Addis Ababa by the African Union, and hosted by the Government of Ethiopia from 04 to 06 September 2024:**

**Recognizing** that urbanization is an irreversible trend that must be harnessed for the structural transformation of Africa where the bulk of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), wealth and prosperity are produced and most people are living;

**Acknowledging** that the Africa We Want is dependent on the way African urban areas and cities are planned, governed and managed so that they become true engines of economic growth, social inclusion and sustainable development;

**Conscious** of the challenges of infrastructure deficits, housing shortages, informal settlements, environmental degradation, social inequalities, economic disparities, and poverty that impede the opportunities for economic growth and development, technological innovation, and improved living standards;

**Recalling** the Common Africa Position to the Third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (CAPH III);

**Cognizant** of the commitments made in the Maputo Declaration of 2009, the formation of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee No. 8 (AU-STC8) on Public Service, Local Government, Urban Development and Decentralization, - Brazzaville Declaration 2014, and the Cairo Declaration 2022;

**Mindful of** the outcomes of the High-Level Meeting for the review of the implementation of the New Urban Agenda by the United Nations General Assembly in April 2022, and the need to harness the transformative force of urbanization in Africa to achieve the African Agenda 2063 vision;

**Recalling** the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for sustainable development through internal fiscal and other financial mechanisms;

**Also recalling** the African Climate Summit in September 2023 in Nairobi, recognizing the close linkage between urbanization and climate change in Africa;

**Recognizing** the development of the Harmonized Regional Framework for the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda in Africa;

**Considering** the two Charters under the AU-STC No.8 mandate, namely the African Charter on the values and principles of Public Service and the African Charter on the values and principles of decentralization, local governance and local development;

**Reaffirming** the commitments made during the four Ordinary Sessions of the AU-STC No.8, and building on the foundational agreements underscoring our collective responsibility to address the complexities and harness opportunities of urbanization and steer Africa towards a sustainable urban future;

**Mindful** that sustainable urbanization requires an all of government, all of society approach and multi-level, multi-sector partnerships.

## **COMMIT TO:**

### **1. Strengthen Political Will**

- i. Fast track** the realization of UN Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development Goal 11, linked SDGs and aspiration 1 of AU Agenda 2063 on a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development;
- ii. Encourage** each member state to design national territorial plans for human settlements that align infrastructure investment and human settlements development, environmental management, greening and public spaces with inclusive economic development, so that the role of cities and towns in structuring the socio-economic development of their hinterland is supported, and the role of cities is recognized and the power of the supply chain and agglomeration economies are fully unleashed, making them engines of economic growth.
- iii. Establish** national urban forums for the implementation of integrated and inclusive national urban policies that underpin the national territorial plan in each member state to address urban planning and inequalities, consequences of climate change, and financing needs for the development and management of cities and towns, or the development of such policies where they do not yet exist.
- iv. Ensure** that the implementation of the AU's framework: the "Africa Urban Resilience Programme" (AURP) adopted by member states to increase the capacity of cities to address shocks and stresses related to climate change

and disasters is embedded in the national territorial plans for human settlements and associated urban policies leveraging the UN Secretariat flagship initiative on Building Climate Resilience for the Urban Poor (BCRUP) launched by the Head of State of Kenya who is championing BCRUP in Africa, the African Union Commission led Aqinile Partnership on Urban Resilience in Africa (an implementation mechanism of AURP) and the African Union Commission partnership with the Resilience Initiative for Africa (RIA).” as well as the Sustainable Urban Resilience for the Next Generation (SURGe) initiative of the Egyptian Presidency of UNFCCC COP27 in November 2022, that is currently being operationalized by UN-Habitat.

- v. **Organize** experience sharing among countries about implementing effective national territorial plans and supporting urban policies such as financing affordable and resilient housing delivery as vector of social inclusion, economic and environmental transformation.
- vi. **Incentivize** that African city-regions can play an active role in speeding up the realization of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), through coordinated cross-border investment strategies that foster alignment and cooperation partnership between cities and regions of Africa.
- vii. **Ensure** that the impact of inward cities migration is mitigated through appropriate interventions at City, Region and Country level.
- viii. **Encourage** urban development results in the significant investment in addressing the challenge of informal settlements through allocation of resources and formalization. This should be done in line with the ten key actions of the Global Action Plan for Slum Transformation which consolidates a collective partnership to shaping Cities for All, leaving no one and no place behind, which was adopted at the UN-Habitat Assembly in June 2023, in Nairobi, Kenya.

## 2. Implement institutional Framework and Policy Alignment

- i. **Strengthen** and sustain this platform as an African collective to advance our common agenda and impress upon the incoming top leadership of the Commission and the Commissioners the need to support and advance our agenda through the African Urban Forum.
- ii. **Call on** the African Union, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and other bodies such as the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG Africa) to elevate the management of urbanization among the priorities of the political agenda of Africa at the local, national, regional and pan African levels.
- iii. **Also call on** the African Union Executive Council and the African Union Commission to choose managing urbanization for the structural transformation of Africa as the African Union theme of the year in the nearest future and dedicate the debates of one of the upcoming conferences of heads of State and government of the African Union to that topic.
- iv. **Ensure** that AU-STC-8 finalizes the development of the African Union model law on Housing, and Urban Development with the technical assistance of UN Habitat, UNECA and the support of professional associations and civil society organizations active in this field in Africa, in due consultation with member countries on the final text.
- v. **Strengthen** the ability of AU-STC-8 to oversee the implementation of sustainable urban development initiatives across Africa.

### 3. Promote Resource Mobilization and Financial Planning

- i. **Encourage** national governments to put in place transparent mechanisms for sharing public financial resources in order to ensure that investment and operations costs of managing urban development are met at the appropriate level of governance following respect to the subsidiarity principle promoted by the African Charter on the values and principles of public service and the African Charter on the values and principles of decentralization, local governance and local development based on the locally determined priorities for development.
- ii. **Call on** the African and international finance community to explore innovative ways and financial models that are responsive to the needs of the low income groups to finance investments in African cities and regions, including leveraging funds for investments in cities and regions through bonds issuing on the capital markets; the creation of special purpose vehicles, equitable access to climate finance, and public-private-partnerships (PPP), in line with optimizing the role of sustainable urbanization for Africa's structural transformation with due consideration that the African Countries should take up the funded programmes based on their self-determined development pathways.
- iii. **Call upon** financial institutions to support the development of fit-for-purpose housing policies to address the need of low-income earners, basic services (water, electricity, roads, waste management, healthcare, etc) and to unlock the potential of housing sector (job creation, industrial development, revenue generation) embedded in a green industrialization and economy framework as defined by the AU, AfDB and UNECA and also based on the set priorities of the countries.
- iv. **Encourage** development banks particularly the Shelter Afrique Development Bank (ShafDB) in collaboration with other DFI's, multilateral and bilateral institutions, to anchor the mobilization of concessional financial resources from both domestic and international sources, including public funds, private sector investment, and development assistance, to bridge the financing gap in housing and urban development industries.
- v. **Develop** abilities for cities and municipalities to use green climate financing to build inclusive and just urban climate resilience strategies including mitigation and adaption measures through the development and implementation of bankable climate related action programs and projects. These should be designed to be compatible with country platforms to accelerate just transitions, with an acknowledgement that the African countries should be allowed to utilize their natural endowments to drive their own development Agenda as part of the just transition on a timetable determined by the countries themselves.
- vi. **Support** African cities and Regions to develop comprehensive financial plans that include long-term gender-and-climate-sensitive budgeting for infrastructure and social services, and to harness own-sourced revenues to strengthen financial sustainability.
- vii. **Also Support** African cities and Regions to expand domestic resource mobilization to modernize and digitalize the public functions and operations

through investments in telecommunication infrastructures and human capital development to deliver better service for everyone.

4. **Advance Capacity Development and Knowledge, Reporting and Accountability**
  - i. **Accelerate** the adoption of digital technologies across urban planning, governance, and reporting processes, ensuring seamless integration of digital solutions to foster sustainable urban development.
  - ii. **Implement** the provisions of the New Urban Agenda adopted in Quito in 2016, and the harmonised regional framework of NUA for Africa, ensuring periodic reporting and adherence to its guidelines, while fostering regional cooperation to support tracking and implementation of its principles across the continent.
  - iii. **Strengthen** harmonized regional frameworks to enhance monitoring, evaluation, and reporting on urbanization progress, enabling effective collaboration among member states and improved data-driven decision-making.
  - iv. **Implement** capacity-building and training programs through regional workshops, conferences, and online platforms for urban planners, local government officials and officers, and community and civil society organizations leaders by partnering with academic institutions, underpinned with dedicated financial resources mobilized at the local and national governments levels, with the support of development cooperation partners and international organizations.
  - v. **Explore** the potential of open-source online knowledge products and peer exchange system to reinforce traditional training and capacity building programs.
  - vi. **Organize** an annual Cities and Urban Development Week to raise awareness, share best practices, foster collaboration, and track progress on urban development. It builds capacity, engages the public, and drives policy innovation for sustainable, inclusive cities, on the initiative of the African Union, the African Development Bank, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, with the support of UN-Habitat and the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa, to provide a forum for exchanging information, best practices and lessons learned from urban development management experiences in Africa.
  - vii. **Develop** in collaboration with the Statistical Commission for Africa a comprehensive set of data systems and performance indicators to track progress towards the aims of the present declaration, using both qualitative and quantitative metrics.
  - viii. **Encourage** member states to put in place a monitoring, reporting and verification system that will enable the measurement of achievements and challenges at the local, regional, and national levels in the implementation process of the national urban policies, aligned with national determined contributions, and the New Urban Agenda of the United Nations and to publish relating progress reports.

**5. Strengthen Partnership, Advocacy, Outreach, and Communication**

- i. Collaborate** with regional institutions such as the RECS, Development Banks, UN-Habitat, UNECA, UCLG-Africa, to provide strategic support and resources.
- ii. Engage** non-governmental stakeholders and community-based organizations to ensure diverse perspectives and expertise are incorporated into urban development initiatives, strategies, and actions
- iii. Promote** inclusive and sustainable urban planning approaches that actively involve all stakeholders, including women, youth, elderly, people with disabilities and other marginalized and vulnerable groups, in the decision-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation process.

**Acknowledgements**

**Recognizing** the invaluable contributions of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in backstopping African countries through development of relevant tools, advocacy, research, policy recommendations, and capacity building to foster sustainable urban growth which seeks to integrate urban policies into national development strategies.

**Further Recognizing** the Ministry of Urban Development and Infrastructure, of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for their visionary leadership, dedication and spectacular hospitality in ensuring the successful organization of the Inaugural Africa Urban Forum.

**Expressing** our profound gratitude to the People and Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for their hospitality in hosting this Inaugural Africa Urban Forum held in Addis Ababa.

**Addis Ababa Ethiopia,  
September 6th, 2024**

**The Members of the Africa Union and participants**