

Statement by Dr. Dafer Aljalahma,
Deputy Minister, Ministry of Housing, Kingdom of Bahrain to the 22nd
Session of the Governing Council of UN-HABITAT
Nairobi, Kenya,
30 March 2009

Mr. President,
Mrs. Anna Tibaijuka, Executive Director of UN-HABITAT
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is a pleasure and honour for me to address this twenty second session of the Governing Council of UN-HABITAT. As this is the first time I am addressing the Governing Council since the Kingdom of Bahrain became a member of the Governing Council, I would like to take this opportunity to express our strong commitment to and support for UN-HABITAT in its endeavour to fulfil its mandate of promoting socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all. We look forward to further strengthen the excellent existing cooperation between the Kingdom of Bahrain and UN-HABITAT, under the able leadership of Mrs Tibaijuka, in relation to activities at the national, regional and global levels.

The establishment of the Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa UN-HABITAT Award is a milestone in our relations with UN-HABITAT. H.H. Shaikh Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bahrain, established this Award on the occasion of his receiving the 2006 Special Citation of the Habitat Scroll of Honour in July 2007. H.H. the Prime Minister personally presented, with the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, during the World Urban Forum in Nanjing, the Award to the first winner which was the Green brigade from Burkina Faso. The subsequent Awards will be presented on the occasion of the World Urban Forum meetings.

Mr. President,

This session of the Governing Council meeting takes place in the midst of a financial and economic crisis which has adversely affected developed and developing countries alike. The crisis will no doubt have serious consequences for the availability of resources for social services and private capital to finance improvements in housing, basic infrastructure

and services. Countries all over the world are now reviewing their plans and strategies in the light of the consequences of the global economic and financial crisis. In view of this we note with satisfaction that the dialogue on the special theme will focus on “promoting affordable housing finance systems in an urbanizing world in the face of the global financial crisis and climate change”. Our delegation will participate actively in this dialogue.

The Kingdom of Bahrain with its strongly diversified economic base and strongly local demand driven economy, in particular its housing and real estate sector, managed to limit the impact of the crisis on its development programmes. Bahrain also benefited from its role as the region’s central hub for Islamic financing. With a lower risk because of its asset based borrowing; Bahrain has more easy access to this financial system.

To satisfy the increasing demands for housing, the Government of Bahrain is adopting a two-phased approach to meet the housing needs. As a short term measure it has substantially increased the output of its government housing delivery system to meet increased demands now and in the future. This combined with a medium term measure of a redesign of the Housing System to better provide targeted housing services to low-income and needy Bahraini families will ensure access to housing for all now and in the future.

Mr. President,

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to state that the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain has financed the translation of the State of the World’s cities Report 2008/2009 into Arabic. I would like also to take this opportunity to recall that the \$500,000 contribution by the Kingdom of Bahrain to UN-HABITAT was made subject to disbursement for innovative mechanisms for pro-poor housing finance. It is, therefore, of great importance to us to see that this contribution is actually disbursed to the intended beneficiaries.

Thank you very much.