Draft 1

National Statement

Republic of Vanuatu

81st Commission of the

"Regional Cooperation for resilient and sustainable urban development in Asia and Pacific"

Chair,

I am honored to deliver this statement on behalf of the people and Government of the Republic of Vanuatu.

At the outset, allow me on behalf of the People and Government of Vanuatu to express our heartfelt sympathies and support to the people of Myanmar and Thailand especially to the families who lost their loved ones following the devasting earthquake of 28 March 2025.

Just three months prior, Vanuatu experienced a 7.3 magnitude earthquake that claimed multiple lives, injured hundreds, displaced thousands and caused unprecedented damage particularly in our capital city, Port Vila. Port Vila city remains largely closed for business for safety reasons and as demolition work continues on affected buildings.

Chair,

As the region with the fastest urbanization in the world, creating resilient and sustainable cities must be a priority for our region as we face complex and uncertain economic, environmental and social risks. However, economic growth and development in cities across the region remain uneven with gaps in digital technologies and finance for development widening the divide.

Vanuatu is experiencing rapid urbanization particularly in the capital, Port Vila. With a growing urban population comes challenges to infrastructure, the

environment, social services, housing, unplanned settlements and poor living conditions.

The Vanuatu Government recognizes the importance of urban centers as engines for business and innovation and at the same time cognizant that climate induced disasters will continue to increase in frequency and intensity in coming years.

To mitigate the impacts of rapid urbanization and natural disasters, the Vanuatu Government is in the process of developing its Smart Cities Guidelines along with other initiatives such as the Port Vila Urban Resilience Hub. These policies are people-centric and they focus on harnessing evolving, transformational technologies to better respond to changes in local urban environments and needs and on building resilient, sustainable and inclusive urban areas. A blend of traditional and scientific knowledge will guide policy directions.

To address informal settlements around our main cities, the Vanuatu Government is developing its National Housing Policy aimed at providing affordable housing to low-income earners.

The Key to creating resilient and sustainable urban development is to create an enabling environment to attract both public and private investments to fund urban infrastructure to catalyze sustainable development efforts. The Vanuatu Government is committed to this endeavor through its engagement with multi-stakeholder partners – because we are stronger when we work together and share our best practices and experience.

The Vanuatu Government is seeking opportunities to power our economies and to explore ground-breaking solutions to address our urban development challenges. As we endeavor to build our smart cities and villages and the opportunities for prosperity and security, we endeavor to ensure no one is left behind.

I thank you.