



# Strengthening the analytical basis for reform policies based on the principles of effective governance for sustainable development\*

## Summary

There is a need for ownership of the principles of effective governance for sustainable development to accelerate action on building strong institutions and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. For this to happen, mechanisms are needed to support a culture of realizing the principles at all levels and among both older and younger generations of public sector workers. In addition, greater effort could be made to promote awareness among parliamentarians and permanent secretaries with an emphasis on encouraging “ministerial excellence” and leadership development to enable implementation. In-depth consideration of regional studies could be useful, as could further discussion of the public sector situation and trends in specific practice areas, such as strategic foresight, building on the work of past sessions and using the strategy guidance notes as a point of reference, where applicable.

## Recommendations

The Committee recommends that the Council encourage governments at all levels to apply the principles of effective governance for sustainable development, endorsed by the Council in its resolution 2018/12 of 2 July 2018, to all public institutions and in support of the implementation of all Sustainable Development Goals, taking into account different governance structures, national and subnational realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities. (Paragraph 8)

The Committee also recommends that the Council encourage governments to continue to identify and review related technical guidelines and experiences to operationalize the principles at the national and subnational levels, including from sectoral perspectives, and to further engage the relevant United Nations organizations, regional organizations and professional and academic communities in this regard, in an inclusive manner, together with all relevant stakeholders. (Paragraph 9)

► See: [ECOSOC resolution 2021/12](#)

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\* Excerpt from Committee of Experts on Public Administration, Report on the twentieth session. See Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2021, Supplement No. 24 ([E/2021/44-E/C.16/2021/7](#))

## Discussion

### **Promoting ownership of the principles to accelerate action on the Sustainable Development Goals**

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The Committee underscores the need for ownership of the principles to accelerate action on building strong institutions and action on the Sustainable Development Goals. For this to happen, mechanisms are needed to support a culture of realizing the principles at all levels and among both older and younger generations of public sector workers. As observed in previous sessions, addressing public sector workforce capability gaps calls for strengthening related training programmes, peer-to-peer learning and exchange of good practices within and across countries and provision of basic training on the Goals for all public sector

workers. Attention to subnational levels in professional development and training should receive greater attention, given that local authorities are the main operational levels of government. In addition, greater effort could be made to promote awareness among parliamentarians and permanent secretaries, with an emphasis on encouraging “ministerial excellence” and leadership development to enable implementation.

### **Regional studies on effective governance for sustainable development**

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The Committee welcomes the recent initiative of the African Peer Review Mechanism to undertake a baseline study of the implementation of the principles in Africa and recalls that the purpose of the study is to establish the experiences and state of readiness of governments in Africa to apply the principles of effective governance for sustainable development in national contexts. The forthcoming study will serve to recommend to governments in Africa steps towards building resilient, inclusive and accountable public institutions and sharing best institutional practices among States members of the African Union.

The Committee takes note of an executive summary of the study, in which the African Peer Review Mechanism recognizes the significance of the principles to the expanded mandate of the Mechanism, namely that of monitoring and evaluating the implementation of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want and the 2030 Agenda. The

Mechanism will also report in the study on the impact of the pandemic on the implementation of the principles and present case studies on policy design and implementation in a selection of study countries. The Committee considers the case of Kenya in some depth, noting the progress that has been made in applying the principles, which are grounded in the basic law of the country, throughout the public sector, while observing the budgetary impact of a shift to emergency response measures and the consequent constraint on efforts to strengthen oversight functions, sound policymaking, integrity, transparency, and stakeholder participation.

The Committee also welcomes a draft study on the implementation of the principles in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, which concludes that many of the problems and obstacles of institution-building in the region have common ground and might be dealt with by using similar tools and approaches. The

Committee notes study observations regarding progress made in transparency in the Russian Federation through the digitalization of public services, as well as the action taken by the Government to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic with the engagement of the private sector. It is further reported in the study that different countries in the region face challenges in the form of an apparent lack of expertise and resources in the public sector, sometimes associated with arbitrariness in recruitment, an inflated State apparatus, inadequate professionalism of public servants and absence of human resource management systems. Lack of collaboration among public authorities has also been identified as a

## Review of technical guidance

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The Committee takes note of recent efforts to promote operationalization of the principles by the Secretariat in collaboration with the members. The Committee encourages the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to continue to support their operationalization and further engage the relevant United Nations organizations, regional organizations and professional and academic communities in this regard. Governmental schools and training institutes of all kinds also have an important role to play, inter alia by raising awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals and the principles and including related skills development in training programmes. Particular attention is given to the principle of sound policymaking, given the long-standing challenges for public institutions and sustainable development such as policy integration, risk management, stakeholder engagement and monitoring and evaluation.















Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, long-term policymaking will be crucial to ensure the resilience of public institutions, and strategic planning and foresight is key in that regard. Building on the Committee's contribution to the high-level political





concern in some countries where interdepartmental coordination and dialogue among different governmental actors is limited. Issues of subsidiarity and sharing of responsibilities and resources among levels of government are a concern. The Committee takes note of study findings suggesting that sound policymaking is also a challenge in the region, with low levels of statistical information including disaggregated data on gender and age, as well as lack of software for data analysis. The development of unified registers of information and databases accessible to all public entities is thought to be a way forward.

forum on sustainable development and referring to the guidance note on strategic planning and foresight, the Committee underscores that there is, however, a tension in public administration between responding to urgent and important needs and, at the same time, attempting to deliver on longer-term policy objectives. Discretionary management practices could help strike a balance between transactional and strategic approaches to government functions in some cases. In general, however, structural challenges in the design of institutions tend to militate against a strategic mindset in the public sector. Some Governments have established offices responsible for strategic foresight to overcome this challenge, which could serve as examples for others.



The Committee concludes that more in-depth consideration of regional studies could be useful, as could further discussion of the public sector situation and trends in specific practice areas, such as strategic foresight, building on the work of past sessions and using the strategy guidance notes as a point of reference where applicable.

## [Related expert papers on this topic \(2016-present\)](#)








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-  Effective governance for sustainable development: putting principles into practice and reviewing outcomes (E/C.16/2020/3) (20 January 2020)  
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-  Towards a set of internationally recognized principles of responsible and effective governance ([E/C.16/2017/6](#)) (3 February 2017)  
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-  [Sharing responsibilities and resources among levels of government: localizing the SDGs \(Conference room paper\)](#) (January 2016)
-  [Promotion of diversity in employment and an inclusive workplace culture \(Conference room paper\)](#) (14 March 2016)
-  Promotion of innovation and learning in the course of public policy implementation (Conference room paper - [English](#) | [Spanish](#)) (8 March 2016)
-  Possible development of a set of internationally-recognized principles of governance by CEPA ([Background note](#)) (15 April 2016)

See also:

-  APRM baseline study on the implementation of CEPA principles in Africa ([Executive summary](#))
-  Praia City Group handbook on governance statistics ([Framework](#))

## [Related meetings](#)

-  HLPF 2023 VNR Lab: [Principles of effective governance in VNRs: Enhancing policy coherence for sustainable development](#) (19 July 2023, New York, USA)
-  Workshop: [Strengthening National Institutional Capacities for the UN Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development and AU Agenda 2063](#) (27 to 29 October 2022, Cape Town, South Africa)
-  Workshop: [Promotion of Intergenerational Equity for Sustainable Development](#) (8 March 2022, virtual meeting)
-  Webinar: [Policy Coherence in Africa in Response to COVID-19](#) (17 January 2022, virtual meeting)
-  Workshop: [Sound policymaking for sustainable development with a focus on Latin America](#) (18 February 2021, virtual meeting)
-  Workshop: [Sound policymaking for sustainable development with a focus on Africa](#) (18 February 2021, virtual meeting)
-  Workshop: [Strategic planning and foresight in Africa in response to COVID-19](#) (8 December 2021, virtual meeting)