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**Opening Remarks
African Regional Workshop on Effective Governance
for Sustainable Development: Putting Principles into Practice**

**Pretoria, South Africa
30 October 2019, 9:30 a.m.**

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

On behalf of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, it is my distinct pleasure to welcome you to this “African Regional Workshop on Effective Governance for Sustainable Development”.

Our focus over the coming days will be on putting principles into practice. We will explore the path to building strong institutions for implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. This work will also take us towards the objectives of the African Union Agenda 2063: the Africa We Want, with which the universal SDGs share many similarities.

Let me first express my sincere gratitude to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) for co-hosting this workshop. Your generous partnership has made this important event possible.

Let me also extend appreciation to the United Nations Development Programme, UN Economic Commission for Africa and the UN Resident Coordinator in South Africa. Their expertise has strengthened the programme and made this a truly collaborative effort in the spirit of One UN.

Finally, I wish to recognize the Government of South Africa for hosting us here and for making us feel so much at home in this beautiful country.

This is the first regional workshop on the principles of effective governance for sustainable development, adopted by the UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) and endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in July 2018. Seeing so many senior officials here today who are active in the APRM and SDG review is an encouraging sign. Indeed, it bears witness to the serious engagement of African countries in building strong institutions for the future we want.

Excellencies,

Just last month, world leaders came together at the SDG Summit and other high-level events at the United Nations in New York to chart the course forward. We heard from Governments and all stakeholders about their efforts to incorporate the SDGs in national policies, plans, budgets and development cooperation efforts, and in the operations of multilateral and financial institutions.

Yet these efforts take place amidst enormous global challenges. Hunger is on the rise, inequalities are increasing in many countries, youth unemployment remains a challenge. The world continues to face existential threats of climate change and environmental degradation, and challenges to curbing corruption and illicit financial flows, among many others in specific circumstances.

I think we can all agree that we have moved beyond the point of needing to justify the role of strong institutions as a critical enabler of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 – whatever a country’s governance system or level of development. This fact is clearly reflected in the political declaration of the SDG Summit. It calls for accelerated action to strengthen institutions for more integrated solutions, bolster local action and leave no one behind.

The United Nations Secretary General has thus issued a call for a decade of action to deliver on the SDGs by 2030. During the high-level week alone, 126 new actions to accelerate progress on the SDGs were registered by Member States and stakeholders, on an online database hosted by DESA.

Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues,

As CEPA has observed, building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions should not be seen as a technocratic efficiency exercise. For many years, public sector reforms have focused heavily on questions of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. These “three Es” are crucial in promoting sound public management and finance, but alone will not take us to the future we want.

This is one reason why I am excited about the UN CEPA principles of effective governance for sustainable development and the prospect of seeing the principles put into practice in African contexts.

As we work collaboratively to leave no one behind and heal our planet, the UN CEPA principles remind us of the need to:

- balance questions of effectiveness with attention to social development and intergenerational equity, and
- to devise institutional reform policies that promote prosperity for all.

They point to institutions of the future and to concrete strategies that can help countries move forward, in accordance with their own conditions and priorities.

At UN DESA, we are committed to working with the African Union to accelerate action for all SDGs. This workshop is part of that commitment. It will focus on dialogue among

technical experts along with the sharing of ideas, lessons learned and experiences on building capacities of public institutions.

And it is a good opportunity to continue to strengthen the momentum needed for the successful implementation of our two complementary Agendas. The outcomes of this event will influence collaboration and activities going forward into 2020 and beyond.

I look forward to being part of the conversation and wish everyone an engaging and productive time together.

Thank you.
