



Concept Note

Description of Event

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG), is organizing a Capacity Development Workshop on “The Future of Governance and New Mindsets, Knowledge, and Competencies fit for the 21st Century”, which will be held from 10 to 12 December 2024 in Tangier, Morocco. The Workshop is being organized within the framework of the 8th edition of the African Forum of Territorial Managers and Training Institutes, which will take place from 10 to 12 December 2024 under the theme ‘Educate an Africa fit for the 21st Century: Roles and Responsibilities of Local and Regional Governments.’

Objective

The 21st century has presented governments, including those in Africa, with multifaceted challenges, such as adapting to climate change, navigating rapid technological development, and addressing escalating conflicts. In line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UN 2.0 Quintet of Change, there is an urgent need for agile, innovative, and anticipatory governance.

The Workshop will offer a platform for national and local government officials from African developing countries and private/public sector stakeholders to build the necessary capacities to address interlocking crises and accelerate the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It will help to enhance their understanding of the current context and drivers of change that might influence the future of governance, and the capacities needed to promote anticipatory governance in the areas of digital and data governance, innovation, strategic foresight, and mindsets needed to navigate the 21st century. Additionally, the workshop will examine strategies to promote these mindsets through changes in various

sectors at the individual, organizational, and institutional levels. Participants will explore critical topics related to the future of governance and actively engage in collaborative strategy planning and design thinking sessions focused on innovative governance models. By equipping participants with the tools and mindsets needed for 21st-century governance, the workshop will contribute to creating a more resilient and sustainable future.

Thematic Focus

The workshop will focus on the future of governance and new mindsets, knowledge and competencies needed in the 21st century. The 2024 Pact for the Future¹, adopted by the UN General Assembly, highlights the need for increased capacity-building efforts to bridge digital divides and foster innovation, futures thinking, and foresight among Member States. Creating a forward-thinking culture is also the focus of work at the United Nations, as presented by the UN 2.0 Quintet of Change². The framework outlines a modernized system with enhanced expertise in data, innovation, digital technology, foresight, and behavioral science to accelerate implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

UN DESA, in collaboration with schools of public administration, has developed a competency framework outlined in the publication 'Changing Mindsets to Realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'.³ This framework identifies key mindsets and associated competencies crucial for advancing the achievement of all 17 SDGs. Changing mindsets, defined as beliefs and attitudes that affect the way we think and behave, is needed among government officials and society to promote policy change and better services. The competencies focus on forward-looking attributes to build a new organizational culture, emphasizing practical behaviors aligned with the Principles of Effective Governance for Sustainable Development and the 2030 Agenda to drive mindset change and address complex challenges.

Most Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and developing countries lie in the African region, facing the highest vulnerability to global crises⁴. According to the 2024 E-Government Survey⁵, most African countries have EDGI levels below the global average, indicating significant disparities in digital infrastructure, connectivity, digital skills, and e-government readiness. Building digital capacities and digital mindsets among government officials and public/private sector stakeholders from African developing countries is critical, considering the importance innovation and digital government has in enhancing public service delivery. Utilizing systems thinking and strategic foresight are key to navigate uncertainty and address the challenges of the future. Approaches rooted in systems thinking support societies to progress in the three dimensions of sustainable development, including economic, social, and environmental⁶. Strategic foresight is a necessary capacity to enable systems thinking and foster sound

¹ <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sotf-the-pact-for-the-future.pdf>, Pact for the Future, 2024

² https://un-two-zero.network/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/UN-2.0_Policy-Brief_EN.pdf, UN 2.0 Policy Brief, 2023

³ <https://publicadministration.desa.un.org/sites/default/files/publications/2023/Changing%20mindsets%20report%20-%201%20October.pdf>, Report on Changing Mindsets to Realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, New York, 2021

⁴ https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ldc2023_en.pdf, The Least Developed Countries Report, 2023

⁵ <https://desapublications.un.org/sites/default/files/publications/2024-09/%28Web%20version%29%20E-Government%20Survey%202024%201392024.pdf>, UN E-Government Survey 2024

⁶ <https://desapublications.un.org/policy-briefs/un-desa-policy-brief-no-158-how-can-we-accelerate-transformations-achieve-sustainable-> *It shone light on two, challenges the world is facing.*, UN DESA Policy Brief No. 158, 2024

policymaking as it provides a structured and participatory approach to exploring future challenges and opportunities, which allows policymakers to create resilient and adaptable governance strategies.

Format

The workshop will be held in person in Tangier, Morocco from 10-12 December 2024.

Target Audience

National and local government officials from developing countries in Africa and other regions, academia, think tanks, schools of public administration, civil society organizations, the private sector, and representatives of regional and international organizations engaged in shaping and implementing public policies.

Methodological Approach

The workshop will run for three days. It will be composed of expert panels, hands-on activities and action planning sessions.

Expected Results

The workshop is expected to equip participants, including national and local government officials, with enhanced knowledge of the drivers of change that might affect the future of governance and key areas of change in the public sector. Participants will leave the workshop with a better sense of how new mindsets, such as innovation and foresight mindsets, can be directly applied at the individual, organization, and institutional level. The new mindsets and competencies provided by the workshop are expected to assist in accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and achieving the SDGs. It is anticipated that actionable and innovative governance strategies, which can be applied to participants' specific contexts, will be discussed. Through group discussions and activities, the workshop is also expected to strengthen collaboration among public sector leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders in Africa, which is key to addressing future challenges.

Contact Persons

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