UN CEPA

Comment by:

Akhlaque Haque, PhD.

President, South Asia Network for Public Administration (SANPA)

Professor of Public Administration,

University of Alabama at Birmingham

ahaque@uab.edu

"The Committee would be delighted to hear your views on agenda item 3: Governance and institutional perspectives on advancing sustainable, inclusive, science and evidence-based solutions for the SDGs. For your remarks, you would be asked to kindly refer to the expert paper prepared by Committee members on this topic, outline potential missing elements and respond to the recommendations contained in the last section of the paper, while taking into account the current global context and aiming to go beyond "business as usual".

Commentary

Key Points for 3-Minute Remarks at UN CEPA Session

On behalf of the South Asian Network for Public Administration (SANPA) and the University of Alabama at Birmingham, USA, it is my honor and privilege to highlight short remarks about the UN CEPA Report that relates to Governance and institutional perspectives on advancing sustainable, inclusive, science and evidence-based solutions for the SDGs. I will make three critical points that needs attention by the Committee with respect to South Asian countries including Bangladesh where SANPA is housed.

1. Strengthening Local Governance & Grassroots Innovation

The expert paper rightly emphasizes systems thinking and institutional resilience but understates the role of **local governance** in SDG implementation. In South Asia, decentralized decision-making is critical for addressing disparities exacerbated by political transitions (e.g., Bangladesh's interim government post-Hasina).

Formal mechanisms to empower municipal bodies and rural councils in budget allocation and SDG prioritization.

- **Proposal**: Pilot a regional "SDG Localization Fund" to finance community-led climate adaptation (e.g., coastal resilience in Bangladesh) and equity-focused health initiatives.

2. Bridging the Science-Policy Gap in Fragile Contexts

While the paper advocates science-informed policymaking, it overlooks challenges in **politically volatile environments** like South Asia, where evidence is often sidelined by short-term crisis management.

- **Response to recommendations**: Pair the pentagram's "competent workforce" action with **regional skill-sharing platforms** (e.g., SANPA-led training on AI-driven fiscal monitoring to curb corruption).
- **Beyond business as usual**: Integrate traditional knowledge with scientific data (e.g., indigenous flood forecasting in Bangladesh's Haor basins) to enhance policy legitimacy[1].

3. Reimagining Multilateralism for Regional Solidarity

The paper's call for partnerships must address South Asia's **trust deficits** (e.g., India-Bangladesh tensions over Rohingya refugees).

- **Missing element**: A regional framework for cross-border SDG synergies (e.g., joint climate adaptation projects in the Sundarbans).
- **Proposal**: Establish a **South Asian SDG Innovation Lab** to co-design solutions for shared challenges (e.g., transboundary water governance, anti-corruption tech).

Closing Appeal

"To accelerate SDGs in polycrisis, we must *localize governance*, *democratize science*, and *regionalize solidarity*. Let us move beyond siloed reforms to co-create a resilience pact rooted in South Asia's realities."

Citations:[1] reflect sections of the CEPA paper on systems thinking, budgeting, and partnerships.