

23rd session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA)

Written Statement by Samarthanam Trust for the Disabled

Agenda Item 6: Principle of Effective Governance for Sustainable Development

Governance plays a vital role in accelerating the phase of sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda mandates all the concerned stakeholders to practice fair and just governance and its principles on the ground in letter and spirit to achieve the international commitment promised to the community of nations by the State parties. The estimated over 8 billion human individuals and all the living entities on the planet should live a life with dignity and respect. There should not be any kind of suffering in any form. The human suffering and suffering of living entities in all its forms and manifestations should be ended by 2030 through the creation of a fair and just social order in the world.

Effective governance and access to justice are interlinked. There is no access to justice without the practice of effective governance in all the institutions at all levels in all the spheres. The principles of effective governance should be an integral part of any institutional systems and framework of the United Nations and its agencies along with all State parties. Let us try to understand various principles of fair and just governance and analyse each of these principles to what extent they are practiced and to what extent they have been contributing to achieving sustainable development by each institutional framework of State parties and the UN and its agencies.

Effective governance is not only limited to the institutions or the institutional framework of the national or local government but also all the other concerned stakeholders. It is the accountability of every stakeholder to contribute significantly to achieve sustainable development by 2030 and create a world that demonstrates a fair and just social order where every individual enjoys all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with others. Effective governance and its principles are of paramount importance in this context.

Fair Conduct of Elections, Representation and Participation

We should ask ourselves a few important questions. To what extent the elections conducted by different democratic bodies are fair, just, and transparent? What is the representation of different segments of citizens in the election or electoral process especially those who have minority status in the States parties? How effective is the participation in the election process? Is the participation effective, adequate, and satisfactory?

It is important to highlight that every citizen regardless of his or her identity should have the right to freedom of expression and opinion without any threat, fear, partiality, or nepotism.

Responsiveness

Responsiveness is a vital principle for fair and just governance. Responsive citizens and stakeholders effectively manage the situation and contribute to achieving sustainable development. All institutions and systems at all levels should be responsive to deal with such situations. Furthermore, questions arise concerning what extent the concerned stakeholders are responsive. Are they discharging or playing their roles effectively in a particular situation that demands their response? Are they neglecting the situation or the condition of human beings in difficult circumstances? Is the response effective? Is the response timely?

The State parties must ensure that the law administering agencies or ensuring access to justice are effective and responsive in protecting the interest of human persons. These agencies, institutions, and individuals must be aware of the principle of natural justice and discharge their accountability as established by the statute or the constitution of the State parties. The UN and its agencies should be proactive in protecting lives and saving human persons from all forms of danger and discrimination.

Efficiency and Effectiveness

Are the institutions effective to deliver what they are supposed to deliver? Is the delivery mechanism simple and accessible to all those who are entitled to it? Is the delivery system efficiently functioning? Is it reachable to the eligible persons? Whether there is adequate coverage? Is it reaching the neediest? These agencies and institutions through the effective delivery mechanism must ensure that sustainable development is achieved within the stipulated timeframe and reaches to all as the overarching goal states that no one should be and will be left behind at any cost.

Openness and Transparency

The institutions that are accountable for achieving SDGs to what extent have openness and transparency? Do they have an open information system policy? Are these institutions or delivery mechanisms transparent? Are they open for a social audit, program audit, or public hearing? Do they respond to the information requested under the Right to Information on time with at most accuracy? What accountability mechanism they have put in place to demonstrate their accountability to primary stakeholders? Every State party must ensure that the delivery mechanism that is accountable for achieving sustainable development including the UN and its agencies is open and transparent which should be demonstrated in letter and spirit.

Rule of law

Who is supreme in the States parties that have signed and ratified the instrument? Is it an individual who has been acting as an autocrat or the institution or the constitution or the established systems, procedures, and systemic rules established by the statutes of the State parties are supreme? Do the institutions have freedom and independence from the ruling political party? No individual is above the established procedure by the statute or constitution. All the established institutions and delivery mechanisms must make a conscious attempt to achieve sustainable development for the welfare of all human individuals regardless of their status and identity.

Ethical conduct

The ethical conduct of an established institution or delivery mechanism matters a lot in achieving sustainable development. To what extent these institutions, agencies, and delivery mechanisms have demonstrated ethical and moral conduct while making the system conscious, and have seriously attempted to achieve the internationally agreed goals to create a fair and just social order for all human beings? The ethical conduct of every individual significantly contributes to taking urgent action to prevent climate change and its impact on living beings.

Competence and capacity

One of the factors for the off-track in achieving the SDGs is the present competence and capacity of the institutions of State parties, the UN, and its agencies. Unless we improve the same, achieving the SDGs will remain a distant dream.

Innovation and Openness to Change

An innovative approach is a must to leverage change. The State parties and the UN and its agencies must demonstrate innovation and extensive application of technology in the delivery mechanism. We should be open to change and learning innovative strategies and approaches in our engagement with multiple stakeholders. Traditional approaches are outdated and require unlimited time to achieve SDGs.

Sound Financial Management

It is important for an effective management of financials. The world has been watching all the State parties that demand judicious spending of finances to achieve sustainable development. Inefficient management of resources will not lead us anywhere but cannot help us to achieve our goals.

Human Rights, Cultural Diversity, and Social Cohesion

SDGs is a promise made by 177 State parties to the international community and community of nations. This demands us to apply a human rights approach in our actions and processes. It is important to recognize cultural diversity and address the issues of intersectionality and dense or multiple marginalization. Generally, they are most needy and lag in the development process. This will help us to achieve social cohesion and social inclusion where every human person makes maximum attempt to enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with others.

Accountability and visibility

Every institution or delivery mechanism established by the State parties is highly accountable for discharging their roles and responsibilities. Accountability does not only demand the State parties but also the multiple stakeholders such as the national government, corporate agencies, civil society, the UN and its agencies to discharge their respective accountability to fulfil the promise that they made to over 8 billion human lives of this world to give them a new life and planet which is sustainable not only for the present generation but also to the future generations.

Samarathanam Trust for the Disabled exhibits dedication to effective governance for sustainability, exemplified by accountability, transparency, internal democracy, regular elections, decision execution, humanitarian aid, secularism, equal opportunities and social justice promotion.

Conclusion

The above-stated principles of effective governance in any context act as the catalyst and accelerator to achieve the agreed goals not only for their own country but for the entire world since this is a promise made to the international community, in other words to the entire world. Affirmative actions; proactive initiatives; collective accountability; enhanced investment in sustainable development; innovation; extensive application of technology; promoting international cooperation and sharing of resources can be some of the key factors that will accelerate the process. Voluntary review or submission of periodic progress reports by the State parties and cooperation with the UN and its agencies especially UNDP which has been leading the agenda will certainly realize the dream that the world leaders have seen.

Therefore, we urge the 23rd session of CEPA to conduct a focused discussion on the above-stated subject and explore a combination of strategies to adopt the principles of effective

governance in all the institutions and establishments at all levels to deliver the expected deliverables to the community of nations and the 8 billion human lives across the globe.