

Working Group III: e-Government Branch

6 April 2011 – Conference Room C

1. Structure and Agenda of the Meeting

The Workshop began with a welcome message and presentation by Mr. Vincenzo Aquaro, Chief, e-Government Branch. In his presentation Mr. Aquaro highlighted the fact that in 2010, for the first time, DPADM started a process of trying to bring the information, experience, knowledge and wisdom of CEPA members closer to the concrete operations of the UN Public Administration Programme. He then presented the main conclusions from last year's Workshop on issues such as funding, more direct modes of interaction with Governments, harmonization with other UN partners and the private sector, a niche for DPADM's e-Government activities, potential for scaling-up activities and programme continuity over time.

Mr. Aquaro then presented the main features of the work of the e-Government Branch, highlighting the **Products** (such as U.N. e-Government Survey and METER), the **Events** (such as Internet Governance Forum), the **Projects** (such as UNPOG), the **Technical Cooperation portfolio** for specific countries (such as Bahrain, Morocco, Colombia, others). These activities form an **integrated knowledge value-added chain**, characterized by the **indivisible complementarity of normative, analytical and capacity development / technical cooperation activities**.

Mr. Aquaro then focused his presentation on METER, the Measurement and Evaluation Tool for E-Government Readiness and requested the feedback of CEPA members to fine tune this tool, with special emphasis on an additional pillar on communication and public education aspects concerning e-Government development. He also mentioned that as METER has been designed to identify areas requiring policy attention, it will also contain inputs related to the UN e-Government Survey and a series of case studies and examples from UNPACS, indexed according to specific policy areas.

Following the presentation of the METER tool, CEPA members agreed that the discussion would focus on two main parts: 1) a conceptual discussion on e-Government's importance, trends and its key umbilical connections with public administration frameworks; 2) a more specific discussion on METER, a tool for self-evaluation of e-Government preparedness.

The Workshop then discussed the overall conceptual framework under which Governments should operate concerning e-Government development, including concrete examples from specific countries and practical suggestions and recommendations on how to improve METER as a tool to determine key entry points for e-Government policy-making and holistic enhancement of public administration frameworks.

Following the presentation and clarifications, the Workshop elected a Chairperson, Mr. Siripurapu K. Rao and a Rapporteur, Ms. Rowena Bethel.

2. Context and Trends

CEPA members agreed that there is no fundamental difference between the e-Government agenda within a country and public administration. In other words, e-Government **is an integral part of** public administration. Having agreed on that, the Workshop also acknowledged that there are many misconceptions concerning e-Government development; including the false notion - even within Governments - that e-Government would be only about technology. The Workshop also noted that, quite often, even leaderships within Governments can be unfriendly or prejudiced towards e-Government. One common misconception, for example, is to equate e-Government to the internet. E-Government is increasingly about the use of mobile phones as well. Currently small countries like El Salvador or big countries like Brazil have as many cell phones as they have people. The poor may not be able to afford a computer but they do have cell phones and know how to operate them. Therefore, m-Government (Mobile Government) is also a considerable subject for policy development.

The Workshop agreed that e-Government can advance UN internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The Group also agreed that there is objective evidence showing e-Government as a key contributing factor towards transparency, accountability, avoiding corruption and leakages, streamlining welfare benefits and having various other pro-poor benefits. For instance, the computerization of the Indian railway ticketing system enhanced efficiency and the citizens' capacity to book tickets and helped to end leakages. It also generated immense savings of time, money and improved affordability and the quality of service offered to citizens. The same trend happened in the Bahamas, when the improved connectivity with the southern islands through e-Government development eliminated the need for citizens to travel to the capital Nassau to obtain documentation, thus saving them considerable expenses with air tickets and hotels.

Having agreed on the inextricable linkages between Government and e-Government, the Workshop took a step further and also agreed on the crucial importance of making Government and e-Government as one and the same. In addition, it has been noted that ICT is merely a tool, whereas e-Government can become in itself an outcome.

The transformation of Government into e-Government is an irreversible process, which is gaining further momentum with the growth of social networks and the transformation of citizens into e-Citizens. The letter "e" in this case applies not only to "electronic", but also to "empowered" citizens.

E-Government helps to identify the true nature of problems confronting a Government because it can more accurately track, record and monitor ground level realities and government decisions.

Given the importance of these issues CEPA Workshop members highlighted the fact that e-Government development is not only about technology and that this message should be

disseminated and adopted by CEPA as a whole. The various angles of public administration – such as development management and capacity development – should incorporate the immense opportunities afforded by ICTs and e-Government development. In this regard, Governments should give more relevance to e-Government in their development agendas and should consider various modalities of operational incentives to accelerate the facilitation of service delivery and citizens’ satisfaction through improved e-Government accessibility. Donors and funding agencies should also realize that e-Government development is not only about technology, and should provide funding for e-Government as an additional opportunity for revamping public administration.

In summary, there was a consensus that e-Government is not and should not be just an add-on to conventional Government operations. It is in fact a unique opportunity to empower Government and citizens to handle development challenges and a key opportunity to re-think work flows and processes.

CEPA members shared their awareness that the demand for e-Government advisory services represents an irreversible trend. As DPADM is working with fewer resources it would be fundamental not to lose linkages with field work and connect it to the UN’s normative and analytical role.

3. METER Requirements

What is METER and how does it work? METER is a self-assessment tool to determine key entry points for e-Government policy-making. When working with the METER tool, participants are asked whether they strongly agree, strongly disagree or feel neutral about a series of statements regarding e-Government possibilities. The tool automatically compiles the answers and indicates the areas requiring policy attention and further discussion among civil servants, as well as other citizens who can be included as users of METER. This self-assessment focuses on five various main areas or pillars: 1) Commitment, 2) Legal Framework, 3) Vision/Policy, 4) Organization and 5) Technology. In addition, the group focused on the parameters for the development of a sixth pillar initially presented as “marketing and communication”.

Following discussions, the Workshop agreed that instead of using the expression “marketing”, METER as a tool could use the expression “public education”, having “marketing” as a sub-area.

CEPA members also:

- Reviewed the Meaning and Scope for this Pillar on Public Education
- Defined possible Sub-Areas for this pillar
- Contributed ideas for possible policy statements within METER
- Provided ideas on how to promoting METER to Emerging and Developing Countries

The aspects below were considered important concerning public education dimensions in METER:

- Financial:

- Considerable financial savings in the promotion of e-procurement modalities
- Tax system integration, thus facilitating the life of citizens
- Improving also the quality of expenditures

- Communications:
 - Bridging citizens and governments
 - Enhancing internal communications within Governments
 - Empowering and engaging citizens
 - Citizen-friendly administrations

- Internationally Agreed Development Goals
 - A tool to facilitate and expedite MDG monitoring
 - Enhanced efficiencies in service delivery, thus having a catalytic effect on MDG implementation and achievement

- “Marketing” Modalities
 - Utilization of town meetings
 - TV and media advertisements
 - Public campaigns

- Other key aspects to be addressed
 - Gender
 - Intergenerational aspects, integration of third age and vulnerable groups

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

- The Workshop members agreed that CEPA as a whole should establish a consensus on the principle that e-Government development does represent a unique opportunity for Governments to improve their procedures, work flows, and overall efficiency towards citizen-friendly administrations and achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs.
- CEPA Workshop members agreed on the importance of METER and highlighted its key role as a policy-making tool generating specific outputs, in line with rational methodological guidance.
- CEPA Workshop members agreed with the indivisible complementarity of normative, analytical and capacity development / technical cooperation activities being addressed by EGB and DPADM. The Workshop warned about the potential danger of cutting one of these dimensions, which would be self-defeating for the UN public administration programme.
- CEPA Workshop members agreed to continue supporting METER and make further suggestions through informal contacts with DPADM.

- CEPA Workshop members agreed to support stronger connections between CEPA and the UN Broadband Commission, particularly in highlighting the fact that broadband is not just about technology but mainly an opportunity to enhance the effectiveness of public administrations through e-Government development.
- CEPA Workshop members agreed that a policy of incentives for e-Government development should be in place particularly when civil service reform is being considered.
- CEPA Workshop members agreed that e-Government is not only about the internet and, therefore, Governments should prioritize mobile Government (m-Government) development.

New York
7 April 2011