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MESSAGE
BY
MR. SHA ZUKANG
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE 2012 UN CONFERENCE
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (RIO+20)

(To be delivered by ASG Jomo Kwame Sundaram)

**THE ELEVENTH SESSION OF
THE COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

New York, 16 April 2012

Madam Chair,
Mr President of the Economic and Social Council,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

[INTRODUCTION]

I am pleased to welcome you to the eleventh session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration.

First of all, I would like to express our deep appreciation to H.E. Miloš Koterec, President of the Economic and Social Council, for his personal participation in our meeting today.

I also would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the new Chair, Ms. Najat Zarrouk, and the new members of the Bureau of the Committee: Mr. **Mikhail** Dmirtriev, Mr. Kim Pan Suk, Ms. Marta Oyhanarte and Ms. Margaret Saner.

I am convinced that under your guidance, CEPA is set to hold yet another productive session this year.

As the Committee meets, we are just about two months away from the Rio+20 Conference. It is therefore timely for us to examine the challenges and opportunities of sustainable development from the perspective of this Committee.

[LOCAL GOVERNANCE]

As much as sustainable development is a global endeavour, it is local in many ways, especially as it relates to implementation.

Your choice of *local governance* as the topic of this year's session is pertinent and significant.

There are three features associated with sustainable development and local governance that I would like to discuss with you today.

[PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT]

The first point to emphasize is that sustainable development is not a top-down process.

Rather, it is bottom-up, and hence, necessarily about local initiatives.

By that, I am referring to people's engagement and participation in activities and programmes advancing sustainable development, their ownership of the processes, and their inputs to policy design, elaboration and implementation.

Today, progress in advancing sustainable development is based increasingly on local initiatives and actions by committed citizens.

This commitment and ownership can be very powerful. Together, they can build socially inclusive green economies, with environmentally-sound and technologically innovative jobs, especially for youth.

In fact, the frequency and diversity of such activities often serve as indicators of the level of local implementation – implementation on the ground, which is paramount for sustainable development.

In this process, local governments are closest to the people and have a vital role to play in educating, mobilizing and responding to the public.

[COLLABORATION]

The second point is that implementation of sustainable development cannot be a purely *technical endeavour*.

We need more than highly specialized professionals and experts working in silos. Why? Because sustainable development is a multi-stakeholder process... requiring interagency coordination, institutional collaboration and public- private partnerships.

Involving local governments and local constituencies in the collaborative and multi-stakeholder process of sustainable development is critical to the success of policy measures and programmes.

We've seen this in the implementation of local Agenda 21, which has provided many lessons learned and best practices in terms of collaborative partnerships.

[ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY]

The third point associated with sustainable development that I would like to emphasize relates to the role of technology.

Our modern economies, society and civilization are anchored on technological innovations.

Many of the challenges we face today -- such as biodiversity loss, climate change, land degradation, water, air and marine pollution, unemployment, and urbanization, among others -- are inter-linked with technologies.

Therefore, we will need technological innovation -- and technology dissemination and transfer -- to overcome these challenges.

Much of the ongoing discussion on a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication relates to the development, dissemination and transfer of green technologies, in order to enable more sustainable production and consumption.

Undoubtedly, information and communication technologies -- ICTs -- can be effective *catalysts* and tools for sustainable development. Used properly, they can lead to fast, reliable and citizen-centric service provision.

[ICTs: SOCIAL]

For individuals, ICTs have enhanced productivity by putting information at our fingertips.

This helps overcome disadvantages, and contributes to social equity. Thanks to these tools, many more groups and people now enjoy access to essential information, knowledge and services.

Take education, for example.

ICTs help complement and enhance traditional education. They can be remarkable teaching aids. Where there is good broadband infrastructure, connection technologies make it possible to access free textbooks, digital and e-publications.

Their vast potential in this area has yet to be fully tapped.

For governments, ICTs have helped improve governance, fight corruption and foster public participation in decision-making.

The information flows have also helped keep governments accountable for the promises they make.

[ICTs: ECONOMY]

ICTs have contributed much to economic development.

Recent experience points to a significant correlation between the rise of connection technologies and economic growth. This is seen in a number of emerging economies.

With the service sector accounting for nearly two thirds of the world's economy, ICTs are driving an efficiency revolution. Ultimately, even traditional industrial sectors, including manufacturing, will witness a productivity revolution... thanks to improved service, made possible by connection technologies.

In addition, connection technologies have given birth to new industries, with millions of IT jobs created.

[ICTs: ENVIRONMENTAL]

Today, as we seek to tackle challenges in hunger and poverty, climate change, disaster relief, food security, health, energy, water, oceans, urbanization, and more ... science and technology are critical in empowering nations to find solutions.

Estimates by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs suggest that over 100 national governments have published on-line national environmental management strategies.

Clearly, ICTs are playing a vital role in environmental protection -- in data collection, assessment, monitoring, early response, and the dissemination of knowledge and best practices.

[CONCLUSION]

Ladies and Gentlemen,

All this brings me to one concluding observation: advancing sustainable development -- spurred by local initiatives, collaborative multi-stakeholder partnerships, and technological innovation -- calls for enhanced public administration and governance.

Better public administration and governance, especially at the local level, can only accelerate progress towards sustainable development.

And it is about *this future* that we seek your advice today, and through the rest of the week.

I thank you, in advance, for your contributions.

And wish you a productive session.
