<u>**United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA)**</u>
11th Session   16-20 April 2012   CEPA-DPADM Collaboration

<u>**Working Group II: e-Government Development**</u>
Members: Mr**.** Luis <u>Aguilar</u>, Ms. Rowena <u>Bethel</u> (rapporteur), Mr. Walter <u>Fust </u>(chairperson), and Mr. S. K. <u>Rao</u>
Observers: Mr G.K. Scott (**AAPAM),** Mr**.** Simon Mamosi **(CAFRAD),** Ms**.** Jennifer Astaphan and Mr. Andre Griffith **(CARICAD)**
Venue: Conference Room C, United Nations Secretariat
Secretariat Resource Person: Mr. Vincenzo Aquaro
Friend of Rapporteur: Mr. Jonas Rabinovitch

<u>**WORKING GROUP II - e-Government Development**</u>

<u>**1.   Structure and Agenda of the Meeting**</u>

The Workshop began with a welcome message and introduction by Mr. Vincenzo Aquaro, Chief, e-Government Branch. In his introduction Mr. Aquaro recalled the fact that DPADM continued the process of aligning the information, experience, knowledge and wisdom of CEPA members with the concrete operations of the UN Public Administration Programme. He then mentioned the three main suggested themes for the discussion of the e-Government Working Group: 1) UNPACS and e-Government development; 2) U.N. e-Government Survey and the local dimension, in view of CEPAS's 11th Session main theme. 3) E-Procurement as a tool to promote transparency, accountability and efficiency in service delivery. These themes were introduced in more detail through presentations by two e-Government senior advisers: Mr. Richard Kerby and Mr. Jonas Rabinovitch. As part of the agreed procedures, the Workshop elected the Chairperson, Mr. Walter Fust and the Rapporteur, Ms. Rowena Bethel.

<u>**2.   UNPACS: United Nations Public Administration Country Studies and e-Government**</u>

The e-Government Branch debriefed CEPA members about the development of UNPACS on e-Government development, clarifying that the knowledge base contains information about Chief Information Officers or equivalent and about e-Government strategies and legal frameworks. CEPA asked for clarification on the definition of Chief Information Officers or equivalent (country focal point for e-Government) given the existing country diversity and about the collection of e-strategies. The e-Government Branch explained that UNPACS is covering 193 UN member states by describing the institutional setting for e-Government development under which the CIOs or equivalent public officials operate, and also by having a repository of existing key documents and e-strategies.

CEPA also asked about how a knowledge base such as UNPACS could lead to change in the ground. The e-Government Branch explained the connections between DPADM's normative activities, analytical activities and technical cooperation / capacity development activities. CEPA suggested that visible analytical products such as the U.N. e-Government Survey could be used to direct people to UNPACS and vice-versa.

CEPA discussed the development of Regional Roundtables to promote e-Government inter-Governmental exchanges and cooperation. CEPA also suggested that, at country level, DPADM should facilitate the creation of national consortia of all stakeholders to strengthen dialogue between government at various levels, private sector and civil society to promote leapfrogging and results-oriented public-private partnerships in e-Government development. The Workshop agreed that CEPA members also have important contributions to make into UNPACS by adding value through their experience and substantive knowledge. Additional modalities of cooperation from CEPA members into UNPACS should be explored.

3. U.N. e-Government Survey and local governance

The U.N. e-Government Survey 2012 was presented in terms of its various e-Government (e-infrastructure, e-literacy, e-service) and e-Governance (e-information, e-consultation, e-decision-making) components, indicators, areas of focus in 2012 and main regional results. CEPA members discussed questions about the connections between the U.N. e-Government Survey and the main theme of the 11th CEPA Session on local public governance. CEPA members highlighted the fact that the trend towards enhancing local governance is practically irreversible in view of current e-Government trends and as a consequence of globalization. CEPA members also noted that citizens are closer to local public administration than to central national levels. The Working Group agreed that there should be a mechanism to disseminate the U.N. e-Government Survey at regional and local levels, including the idea of strategic partnerships for enhanced local dissemination. The Working Group also supported the idea of exploring a special category of the U.N. e-Government awards, in conjunction with the U.N. Public Service Awards, focusing on service delivery at the local level. Another idea supported by CEPA members was to explore e-Government indicators at the local level and the use of ICT to support good governance processes at both local and national levels. A few implications of this core idea were also discussed and agreed upon such as: a) exploring strategic partnerships with ITU and the Broadband Commission; b) the utilization of e-Government to reduce corruption by enhancing transparency in public administration through the enactment and implementation of procedural laws designed to change the way Governments operate; c) recent innovations allow the availability of broadband in various bandwidths, thus making e-Government more accessible at all levels through decentralized infrastructure; d) enhanced use of tablets and mobile devices for civic engagement and innovative e-Governance modalities through social media; e) e-Government also offers practical tools to collect feedback and engage all segments of society to promote change through local consultations and inclusive decision-making processes.

4. E-Procurement as a tool for enhanced transparency, accountability and efficient service delivery

In response to specific demand coming from member states, the e-Government Branch presented the work recently developed on e-procurement as a tool for transparency and efficiency. The presentation highlighted key principles, merits and challenges, misconceptions and realities of e-procurement, as well as a conceptual framework for a Knowledge Guide on e-Procurement. This tool will be developed together with various partners including Multilateral Development Banks.

CEPA members supported the idea to develop a "Knowledge Guide Product on e-Procurement" due to its timeliness and relevance, particularly for developing countries. The Working Group agreed that this is not a prescriptive tool and is not intended to be a blueprint for e-Procurement design and will not express value judgment or validation of specific practices. The discussion highlighted the following aspects:

a) E-Government for public procurement is not a "magic box", the systems within countries should be designed transparently so that data is not manipulated; b) Partnerships with additional partners such as WTO could be explored; c) The e-procurement knowledge guide should become a living repository of organized information, so that it serves as a reference for countries embarking on e-Procurement. At the same time, it will be predominantly illustrative rather than fully comprehensive as resources are limited; d) This tool should express an awareness about procurement disclosure aspects, modalities of collusion, engagement of NGOs, balance between openness and data protection, provision of full credit to the sources of information contained in the knowledge guide; e) E-Procurement means different things to different people, so the tool should capture this diversity; f) Apart from being a repository, the e-Procurement tool should also somehow incorporate transformation pieces to allow countries to change and improve their respective realities in a demand-driven manner; g) The "Knowledge Guide Product on e-Procurement" should be designed as part of UNPACS.

5.   Additional Remarks

In the course of the session the Working Group II also discussed the following: a) the importance of engaging Parliaments in the debate; b) the importance of ICT being used effectively to promote good governance by highlighting positive examples / cases demonstrating the connections between good governance as a concept and its practical implementation within countries; c) the importance of capacity development and training; d) importance of discussing the extent of "digitization" and definition of priorities and entry points; e) the impact of new media /social media on decision-making processes of governments and for enhanced governance.

The Working Group agreed that from the perspective of developing countries the issues discussed are of extreme relevance. These include the utilization of ICTs, e-Government and e-Governance to facilitate service delivery, promote good governance, enhance transparency and accountability in public administration.

6.   Conclusions and Recommendations

- The Working Group members recommend that CEPA as a whole should encourage DPADM to explore modalities to promote the U.N. e-Government Survey at local and regional levels.

- The Working Group members recommend that CEPA should support the establishment of a special category of the U.N. e-Government award for efficient service delivery at the local level.

- The Working Group members recommend that CEPA should encourage the establishment of e-Government Regional Roundtables and strategic local multi-stakeholder partnerships to promote e-Government exchanges and cooperation having the U.N. e-Government Survey as a policy tool and UNPACS as a sounding board.

- The Working Group members recommend that CEPA should encourage DPADM to promote the establishment of national consortia to strengthen dialogue between government at various levels, private sector and civil society to promote leapfrogging approaches in e-Government development.

- The Working Group recommends that CEPA members should be encouraged to provide substantive contributions into UNPACS.

- The Working Group strongly supported the development of a Knowledge Guide Product on e-Procurement as an important knowledge base addressing the potential of utilizing ICTs and e-Government to enhance transparency and efficiency in service delivery.