Agenda item 8: Public sector workforce issues

New Administrative Reforms, Public Sector Workforce Issues and the IIAS Agenda:

IIAS Input this year consists of using the general call of its 2025 conference held in New Delhi, India (10-14 February) to discuss public sector issues as put forward by the relevant UNCEPA working group. Within the combined framework of IIAS/UNCEPA, additions are made based on the three main conferences organized by IIAS, namely the IIAS2025 conference, the EGPA2024 conference held in Athens, Greece during the first week of September and the IASIA2024 conference organized in Bloomfontein, South Africa, in July.

The objective is first to connect next administrative reforms (main theme of the IIAS2025 conference) with public service workforce issues discussed by the related working group at the UNCEPA and second to bring some substance to this framework from presentations and discussions at the three conferences. In doing so, the aim is to establish the relevance of IIAS conferences to the intellectual framework of UNCEPA and hence enrich the debate by creating synergies between the two. Examples of outputs from such synergies are subsequently presented. A list of relevant references from the UNCEPA and IIAS conferences is also provided.

1. **Next-Generation Administrative Reforms & Workforce Transformation**

One of the main themes of the IIAS2025 conference was the reimagining of public administrations as agile, inclusive, and digitally empowered institutions capable of addressing polycrises (climate, inequality, technological disruption) while accelerating SDG progress.

UNCEPA Focus: *"Building resilient public sector workforces for crisis response and SDG implementation."*

- **IIAS2025 Contribution**:
  - *"Anticipatory Governance for Polycrisis"* (New Delhi Conference Track 1): Link workforce agility to climate resilience and digital disruption.
  - *"Ethical AI in Public Employment Systems"* (Track 3): Address biases in AI-driven recruitment and performance evaluation.

- **EGPA2024 Input**:
    - *"Green Public HRM"* (Athens Study Group 4): Integrate sustainability KPIs into workforce training and appraisal systems.

Synergy: Use IIAS2025's crisis governance models and EGPA's green HR frameworks to operationalize UNCEPA's SDG-aligned workforce resilience goals.

2. Decentralization & Local Governance Capacity

A second theme of the conference was to empower subnational institutions with the authority, resources, and competencies needed to deliver equitable services, foster community participation, and localize the SDGs.

UNCEPA Priority: *"Strengthening subnational institutions for equitable service delivery."*

IIAS2025 Track 2:

- *"Localizing SDGs through Participatory Governance"*: Highlight case studies from India (host country) on municipal workforce upskilling.

IASIA2024:

- *"Decolonizing Administrative Practices in Africa"*: Propose inclusive competency frameworks for rural bureaucracies.

EGPA2024:

- *"EU Rural Revitalization Strategies"*: Share best practices on retaining talent in marginalized regions.

Synergy: Combine IIAS's localization models, IASIA's decolonial approaches, and EU rural strategies to enrich UNCEPA's guidance on decentralization.

3. Digital Governance & Workforce Readiness

A third them was to equip public institutions with digitally fluent workforces and ethical technological frameworks that enhance service delivery, foster trust, and align with the SDGs.

UNCEPA Focus: *"Closing digital divides in public service delivery."*

IIAS2025 Track 4:

- *"AI for Last-Mile Connectivity"*: Discuss India's digital public infrastructure (DPI) successes (e.g., Aadhaar, UPI).

EGPA2024:

- *"EU Digital Identity Frameworks"*: Compare GDPR-compliant systems with Global South innovations.

IASIA2024:

- *"Digital Literacy for African Civil Servants"*: Address infrastructural gaps in remote areas.

Synergy: Leverage IIAS's Global South DPI insights and EU regulatory rigor to shape UNCEPA's digital inclusion benchmarks.

4. Equity, Diversity & Intergenerational Justice

A fourth theme was to dismantle systemic inequities in public institutions by prioritizing intersectional inclusion, youth agency, and fairness across generations, ensuring governance reflects the diversity of the populations it serves.

UNCEPA Priority: *"Reducing inequalities through inclusive public employment."*

IASIA2024:

- *"Intersectionality in African Public Services"*: Propose quotas for women, youth, and minorities in leadership

IIAS2025 Track 5:

- *"Youth as Agents of Administrative Reform"*: Showcase India's YuWaah initiative for youth-led policy labs.

EGPA2024:

- *"Gender Mainstreaming in EU Procurement"*: Share metrics for tracking equity in public contracting.

Synergy: Merge IASIA's intersectional HR policies, IIAS's youth engagement models, and EU gender metrics to advance UNCEPA's equity agenda.

5. Ethical Leadership & Anti-Corruption

A firth theme was on cultivating integrity-driven institutions through transparent governance, accountable leadership, and innovative anti-corruption mechanisms that rebuild public trust and accelerate SDG progress.

UNCEPA Focus: *"Strengthening integrity institutions for public trust."*

IIAS2025 Track 6:

- *"Whistleblower Protection in Federal Systems"*: Analyze India's Lokpal Act and its workforce implications.

EGPA2024:

- *"EU Anti-Fraud Innovations"*: Highlight blockchain applications for transparent procurement.

IASIA2024:

- *"Anti-Corruption Training for African Auditors"*: Case studies from South Africa's Public Protector.

Synergy: Cross-pollinate IIAS's federal integrity mechanisms, EU tech-driven solutions, and African training models to bolster UNCEPA's anti-corruption toolkit.

Implementation Strategy

1. **UNCEPA-IIAS Knowledge Hub**:

   o Curate a repository of conference insights (IIAS2025, EGPA2024, IASIA2024) for UNCEPA working groups, emphasizing actionable reforms.

2. **Policy Labs**:

   o Host hybrid sessions at IIAS2025 to prototype workforce strategies (e.g., AI ethics guidelines, green HRM) for UNCEPA endorsement.

3. **Regional Dialogues**:

   o Use IASIA2024 (Africa) and EGPA2024 (Europe) as platforms to tailor UNCEPA's global frameworks to regional contexts.

Conclusion

By anchoring IIAS conferences in UNCEPA's mandate, this framework:

1. **Elevates Academic Relevance**: Positions IIAS as a thought leader in translating scholarly research into multilateral policy.

2. **Enriches UNCEPA Debates**: Infuses regional innovations (e.g., India's DPI, EU green HRM, Africa's decolonial approaches) into global governance discourse.

3. **Fosters South-South & Triangular Cooperation**: Connects EU, African, and Asian reforms through shared workforce challenges.

Outcome: A cohesive intellectual bridge between IIAS's *"Next Administrative Reforms"* theme and UNCEPA's *"Public Sector Workforce"* agenda, ensuring academia and multilateralism advance in lockstep toward the 2030 SDGs.

This alignment underscores IIAS's role as a critical partner in shaping the future of public administration, as envisioned in the **2024 UN Public Service Day Resolution**.

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