

Governance and Public Administration in Strengthening Efforts to Eradicate Poverty and Hunger

CEPA's Discussion at 6th Session in April 2007:

At its 6th Session in April 2007, the UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) discussed areas that require greater responsiveness from and improvements in governance and public administrations in strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger. The Committee brings a summary of its conclusions to the attention of the participants of the 2007 Annual Ministerial Review.

Alleviation of poverty and hunger depends on institutional reforms:

In eradicating poverty and hunger, improving governance processes and public administration should be addressed in tandem with poverty reduction policies and programmes. Governance and administrative reforms cut across sectors crucial to eradicating poverty and hunger. Difficult choices have to be made about the processes associated with the exercise of power and allocation of scarce resources. Governance reforms should aim for more responsive institutions and multi-stakeholder based decision-making, for participatory and transparent mechanisms of public accountability and for improved capacities for timely and efficient implementation of key programmes. Administrative reforms should reduce risks of uncoordinated policies, haphazardly run programmes and non-priority services that can add up to waste, costly mistakes or leakages. When faced with time-bound targets, such as halving the proportion of people who live on less than one dollar a day and those who suffer from hunger by 2015, focus should also be placed on medium and long term capacity building and institutional reforms, essential to reaching those targets.

CEPA Conclusions:

The Committee noted that Member States have made interventions on many levels thus far for the achievement of the MDGs. They include: (a) policies for economic growth, (b) redistributive policies for social objectives, (c) the mobilization and deployment of resources for implementing new and stepping up existing social programmes, and (d) improving governance and public administration to be more responsive, participatory, efficient and effective in implementing poverty alleviation initiatives, with the help of ICT tools whenever possible. In the time left, it may be helpful to focus on *how* to strengthen the capacities of individual countries. Also, the introduction of regional initiatives such as NEPAD may be helpful to assist intra-regional lessons learned and capacity-building.

In strengthening governance and public administration capacities relevant to the reduction of poverty and hunger, the Committee highlighted the importance of (a) leadership capacity for creating a consensus on a shared vision and common agenda of development, (b) an effective rule of law as well as a legal framework that encourages productivity, entrepreneurship and competitive markets while sanctioning rent-seeking, monopolies and speculative risk-taking; (c) well-functioning and transparent public institutions and participatory decision-making processes that promote a sense of public ownership and accountability; and (d) public servants who demonstrate professionalism, integrity and efficiency in implementing agreed upon policies and programmes.