

**BRIEF COMMENTS ON THE OCCATION OF THE
COMMEMORATION OF THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UN
PROGRAMME ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, FINANCE
AND DEVELOPMENT: HON GERALDINE FRASER-
MOLEKETI**

Madam President, President of ECOSOC, Under-Secretary General, Mr Sha Zukang, distinguished participants:

It is indeed an honour to be associated with this celebratory commemoration. In human life, 60 years is associated with retirement, bringing to a close one's formal work life. However, in the processes of growing, changing and transforming public administration systems, 60 years is a very short time, although much could also change in that time.

I cannot claim involvement in 1948, nor even in 1996 when the Member States reiterated in the General Assembly the development of public administration. I was, however, present when the Group of Experts was transformed into the Committee of Experts and I have been privileged to be a member in both the first and second term of the committee. I have seen how the Committee has become confident in its work, I have seen how the work performed by the Secretariat has become more focussed and directed, how the experts engaged more directly in inputs that relate to issues impacting on the lives of people, and how the volume has picked up over this period. If any think tank has to be singled out for its contribution to globally loosening the stranglehold that neo-liberal ideas had on public administration, my vote would go to the UN CEPA specifically and the broader Programme of Public Administration, Finance and Development.

But the effect of the Programme of Public Administration, Finance and Development should be determined outside of this impressive building where we congregate every year. When I am asked to lift a memorable impact that some of the programmes have had in the environment within which I am operating, I find it hard to highlight only one. Therefore I am going to refer to only three. I will not limit myself to South Africa alone, but rather reflect on the impact on the African continent as a whole.

The first aspect I would like to highlight is the work of UNPAN. The knowledge bank which is being built up by UNPAN and its network of Regional On-line Centres (ROCs) is an immense resource that is just growing in importance. We note from the most recent six monthly figures released by UNPAN that, globally, the African region is the one where usage is growing the most rapidly. South Africans are currently the third most frequent visitors to UNPAN, and I must congratulate UNPAN for having the foresight to recognise the largest number of ROCs in the African region and for also providing additional support in some instances, for example to the CPSI, based in South Africa.

The second aspect of the work performed by this programme I wish to highlight is the recognition and celebration of Public Service Day, on 23 June every year, a day of paying tribute to public servants, and highlighting their work and the discipline that underpins their work. As Africans, we were immensely honoured that the UN decided to coincide this UN day with Africa Public Service Day, a day that has been important on the African calendar for a long time already. Our own celebrations in the region have benefited immensely. We have been able to electronically, on Public Service Day, link-up across the African region

with one another, and also with the UN celebrations itself, highlighting the global importance of the issues at hand.

The last aspect I wish to recognise, more for its potential and hard work than what has been ploughed into it thus far, than for the impact yet, is the African Governance Indicators initiative. It provides a databank that could support evidence based decision-making for a range of governance issues and could aid greater coordination and efficacy. But as is the case with such initiatives, the lead time is long, and the time for people to discover the utility thereof, and own the responsibility to keep the information up to date, is a slow process. This is particularly the case on the continent where we are still making the case for using data and statistics as a critical part of our decision-making and administrative processes. I would therefore appeal that this initiative should continue to be nurtured for some time until such time that we as Africans are ready to take full ownership.

I trust that the work of the Programme of Public Administration will go from strength to strength in the next 60 years, with emphasis on the impact of Public Administration on development.

I thank you.