

**Economic and Social Council
Management Segment
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**Briefing on the 24th session of CEPA
By Ms. Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, Chair of the Committee
via video link from Johannesburg**

Mr. Vice President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

It is my honour to brief you on the 24th session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration, which took place from 7 to 11 April in New York.

Against a backdrop of multiple, interlinked global challenges, we noted from the outset a weakening and distrust of the ability of governments to deliver public goods and services, as well as in the integrity of political leaders in many areas. This trend mirrors a decline in the perceived legitimacy and credibility of democratic institutions, fuelling instability and undermining humanitarian principles and international rule of law.

In examining the 2025 theme of ECOSOC and the HLPF, we observed that advancing sustainable, inclusive, science and evidence-informed solutions for the implementation of the SDGs could not be based solely on technical improvements in the functioning of the government machinery. Solutions for SDG implementation need to account for the evolving global context, its influence on societies, and the desire in many countries for more equitable development outcomes.

With that in mind, we draw renewed attention to five key transformative actions in the governance domain to accelerate SDG implementation. These actions include: (1) prioritization of and planning for implementation of the SDGs; (2) budgeting for the SDGs; (3) a competent and capable public sector workforce; (4) effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels; and (5) broad participation and partnerships with stakeholders.

We reaffirm the value of systems thinking and multilevel governance to achieving shared objectives. Closing the governance gaps in systematic, science-informed analysis of interactions across SDG domains will enable the identification of root causes, accelerate the implementation of effective interventions, and strengthen the ability to track progress. Strengthening the conditions for scientists to conduct high-quality, independent research and effectively engage in policy processes is pivotal.

At the same time, we stress that science and evidence-informed solutions should not be seen as the sole determinants of policy decisions. The implementation of the SDGs also demands new mindsets and transformational - not transactional - leadership. Legitimacy of elected officials and commitments to voters, considerations of coalition building, societal values, and high ethical standards are all factors that promote quality public policymaking and beneficial outcomes for all.

In a dialogue held with UN agencies on strengthening governance systems in the transformation to sustainable development, the session underscored the particular challenge in a systems approach of fostering governance arrangements to manage trade-offs when limitations in institutional capacities and fragmentation across sectors commonly hinder action.

We also observe that, to build public trust, political decisions should be communicated in a way that makes it clear to everyone whose needs are being addressed – and what those needs are.

Where **digital government** is concerned, we continued to build on our previous work by studying ways of ensuring the transparency and accountability of artificial intelligence systems in public administration. Concrete suggestions are made in our report on steering and oversight mechanisms to guide deployment, and establishment of safeguards to mitigate bias and protect fundamental rights. Supreme audit institutions can play an important role in this area by developing common approaches to auditing artificial intelligence use in public administration, among other actions.

Addressing shortcomings in **public financial management** remains an area of concern, especially in view of stronger budget pressures and the volatility and complexity of the current global context. As no single initiative is likely to be sufficient to ensure the health of public finances on its own, we recommend a comprehensive approach to public financial management reform and point to its core attributes in our report. We emphasize the need for closer attention to the proper management of emergency funding and to limit its use for non-emergency purposes given risks associated with limited transparency and accountability, as well as diversion of funds from longer-term national sustainable development priorities.

We reiterate that governments at all levels require a dedicated and skilled **public sector workforce** to perform a broad spectrum of functions and deliver public services. This in turn calls for various human resources strategies to attract and retain workers of all ages and backgrounds, including younger generations. Promotion of a wide-ranging social dialogue among all stakeholders, especially at subnational levels, could help to strengthen public sector responsiveness to the needs of society while reinforcing a core motivation of those interested in public service.

Turning to **institutions and climate action**, we observe that extreme heat and related events have become more frequent and more deadly due to rising global temperatures, and are placing increasing pressure on lives, livelihoods and infrastructure in many countries. Effective governance for extreme heat at all levels was required in response. Strategies to prepare for and respond to such events invest in energy resilience and adaptation are required in response. This includes strategies to prepare for and respond to such events, to invest in energy resilience and adaptation, and to strengthen collaboration among policymakers and regulators, as well as academia, civil society and private sector actors.

Expressing serious concern at the impact of widespread **mental health challenges in post-conflict countries** on effective governance for sustainable development and the delivery of public services, we concluded our deliberations with a recommendation that Governments enhance efforts to invest in the mental health and psychosocial support needs of individuals and communities in post-conflict settings, together with the strengthening of mental health systems to reinforce long-term recovery.

We also facilitated a peer exchange among four VNR countries on institutional aspects of Goals 16 and 17 and held an interactive consultation with a wide range of observers. These exchanges have become an established feature of the Committee's working methods and are highly valued.

Since our meeting, in April, the acceleration and scope of global developments indicate that some of our recommendations may require review.

I thank you and remain at your disposal for any questions you may have