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UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS,

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COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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Delivered by Mr. Lenni Montiel, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development

Mr. Chairperson,
Distinguished Members of CEPA,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to add my voice to that of Ambassador Barros in welcoming you to the sixteenth session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration. I am very happy to be among so many old friends, and encouraged by the many new faces in attendance. It is a great pleasure to be here.

Ambassador Barros mentioned that this is the last year of a four-year term for the CEPA members. The United Nations has benefited enormously from your contributions to the cause of development. The work of this Committee and its members is deeply appreciated. I hope that we can continue our fruitful collaboration for years to come. Later this week, it will be my distinct pleasure to honour the valuable and generous service of each individual member.

This year is the second year of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We face a long road ahead to achieve the vision and aspirations of the global Agenda, and to ensure that no one is left behind.

But we have already made significant progress. In responding to the call by Member States for action-oriented advice, CEPA is engaged in a number of important ongoing conversations about public institutions and their leaders, about engaging and supporting public servants, about the nature and mechanics of intergovernmental relations, about inclusive service delivery, public finance, oversight and other areas of concern that are all central to understanding critical government functions – the foundation of informed policy advice for ECOSOC.

During this session, the Committee will continue its discussion of institutional arrangements for implementation of the SDGs. This promises to be tremendously helpful. While CEPA conveyed vital insights on this issue last year, many governments are still grappling with, suitable institutional arrangements for implementing the SDGs in an integrated fashion. They are also pursuing ways to work with local authorities and mobilize parliaments, supreme audit institutions, civil society and the private sector.

It would be extremely useful if the Committee could provide advice on these various challenges, based on your expansive, collective expertise in public administration.

Related to the issue of institutional design of course is the notion of leadership. Here, the subject of how to engage leading thinkers at lower levels in a bureaucracy could be explored in more depth. It is encouraging to see that this question may feature in a broader reflection on institutional leadership, itself touching on ideas of whole-of-government and whole-of-society interaction. The inclusion of the SDGs in educational programmes such as the various curricula of schools and institutes of public administration is one approach that could be taken up further.

It almost goes without saying that local authorities are critical actors and have a central role to play in sustainable development. The message has come up again and again – in Rio, in Addis, in Quito and elsewhere. With this session’s attention to understanding the needs of local authorities and communities and supporting and equipping them for the implementation of the SDGs, CEPA can prepare the ground for a major contribution to the ECOSOC main theme of 2018.

In the end, governments will want to move from aspirational ideas about effective governance to pragmatic improvements in governance that address specific concerns. CEPA’s initiative to start to elaborate a set of principles of effective governance, linked to good practice, could provide a helpful reference point in many respects. It should be pursued recognizing it is important to provide options and not seek to be prescriptive. It would also be useful if you could advise on the broad lines of what such principles would look like, and how they would add to and build on existing work in the area.

The issues you are addressing at this session are at the heart of the 2030 Agenda. Their importance cannot be understated. I also welcome that you will prepare a contribution to the high-level political forum on sustainable development on the issues of poverty and prosperity. You can help inject a broad understanding of the importance and challenges of public administration into the international debate on the implementation of the SDGs.

Ambassador Barros has commented on the links between poverty eradication, sustainable development and public administration. These interdependencies, and many others, require an unprecedented level of policy integration among the various ministries, between central and local institutions and between governmental and non-governmental actors.

It is encouraging that so many of you have taken the lead in preparing the Committee’s discussions. We look forward to your analysis and recommendations. My colleagues and I are committed to providing our full support.

Thank you.
