

22nd session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration

Verbal Contribution by Centre for Public Service Innovation, South Africa

Agenda item 4: Peer exchange with voluntary national review countries and voluntary local review cities on experiences and promising practices in implementing Sustainable Development Goals 16 and 17.

The Centre for Public Service Innovation, South Africa, noted with appreciation the growing number of voluntary reviews at national and local government levels and those share with this Committee over the last three years. In particular we appreciate the lessons shared by the Africa Peer Review Mechanism in the 21st Session of Committee of Experts on Public Administration, a voluntary review mechanism that is now celebrating its 20th year.

In contributing to this exchange, we would like to make three short interventions primarily related to key targets in Goal 17 including “cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhancement of knowledge sharing”.

- 1. Leveraging and exploring existing voluntary reviews:** As is the case with the Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), many reviews were conceptualised before the adoption of the SDGs or without thoroughly considering the SDG indicators and targets. The data generated can however make valuable contributions in our assessment of progress and enrich the existing datasets. Instruments such as the Oslo Manual that measures innovation, and the Innovation Barometer that adapted the Oslo Manual for the public sector, can contribute with valuable insights. For example, the measuring of Knowledge Flows, especially related to South-South and North-South collaboration and co-innovation in National Systems of Innovation can bring new insights in our understanding of achieving Targets 17.6 to 17.9. As such we would encourage UNDESA and national and local governments to explore other surveys and assessments to enrich our reporting on SDGs 16 and 17.
- 2. Learning from failure:** At forums such as this one or the High-Level Political Forum we biased towards sharing *promising practices* but shy away from sharing *experiences* related to failed efforts. In theory we profess that we can learn from failure, that experimentation and innovation have high risks of failure, yet we are reluctant to openly explore these, thus increasing the likelihood of others repeating the same mistake. As such, this committee and observers are encouraged to contribute to the de-stigmatising of sharing, in the reviews, failures as part of our experiences.
- 3. Review of Transversal Impact:** The achievement of both Goals 16 and 17 are critical for progress towards the other 15 SDGs. For example, the cost and consequences of corruption, the locking in of scientific progress and innovation behind stringent patents, have direct negative consequences

for Health, Education, Food Security and Clean Water. As such we would like to encourage the sharing of experiences at local and national levels where the strengthening of Institutions and Partnerships have translated into positive impacts on the achievement of the other SDGs. That could assist this committee and observers to identify and share catalytical interventions that translate into positive gains towards the achievement of other goals.

As a final note: the Centre for Public Service Innovation, in partnership with our National Advisory Council on Innovation is currently conducting a comprehensive quantitative survey of Public Sector Innovation in South Africa. This would allow us to benchmark against other countries, in particular those who applied the Innovation Barometer. Importantly, it will give us a better understanding of how innovation in the public sector is contributing to the achievement of our National Priorities, our Continental Aspirations and the SDGs and how we can strengthen our policies.