

## 22<sup>nd</sup> session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration

### Statement by Eastern Regional Organization for Public Administration Inc. (EROPA)

*Agenda item 6: Application of the UN principles of effective governance for sustainable development for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals - Promoting the governance principle of participation in support of the Sustainable Development Goals*

Good morning, Madam Chair, honourable members of the CEPA, members, and colleagues present here in our session today. Respectfully introducing myself. I am Alex Brillantes, Jr. the Secretary General of the Eastern Regional Organization for Public Administration or EROPA. EROPA is a Philippine-based international organization for public administration practitioners and academicians in the Asia-Pacific region. EROPA has been granted consultative status by the UN ECOSOC and is also a member of UNPAN.

We would like to express our gratitude for the opportunity to respectfully share our insights and recommendations on **Agenda Item 6 Application of the UN principles of effective governance for sustainable development for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically Promoting the governance principle of participation in support of the Sustainable Development Goals.**

The brilliantly written expert paper points out, among other things, that participatory governance is an imperative as the world slowly recovers from the global pandemic and rapidly implements efforts to achieve the sustainable development goals. Grassroots innovations can only be acquired if we are to enable people participation, and citizen engagement in formulating solutions to the crises of our nations.

Decentralization has been identified as a major strategy that will enable and enhance participation. Decentralization has always been among the primordial governance concerns addressed EROPA over the past decades. May we respectfully advance for key points.

First, EROPA underscores the vital role that sub-national governments, as pointed out in the paper, particularly the local governments, play in the advancement of public participation and development. The pandemic has seen the crucial role of local governments as frontliners in developing innovations and implementing immediate responses to the new demands of the COVID-19. We have seen how the pandemic has hastened the process of digital transformation among local governments. We strongly support the recommendation to decentralize as a development strategy as advocated by many multilateral development agencies. It is important now more than ever to take advantage of the hard-earned gains of the LGUs and push through with local development and participation.

Second, we also would like to point out that there have been suggestions to rethink aspects of decentralization as some Latin American and Asian countries have done so over the past years. We should avoid the temptation to romanticize decentralization. We are talking about a calibrated and appropriately contextualized decentralization strategy. Indeed, a lesson learned from the past decades was that capacity building for decentralization is not top down nor unidirectional. A major lesson learned from capacity building initiatives over the past decades was that capacity building for national governments and central governments may have been overlooked. It is therefore important that while strategies to develop capacities of sub-national governments are being designed, these must be accompanied by parallel capacity building interventions for national government, especially within the context of developing a proactive decentralization mindset.

Third, for development and participatory governance to continuously prosper at the local level, the government, international development organizations, and other non-government actors shall develop continuous *capacity building* for local government officials in order to embed participatory mindsets. However, capacity building interventions should not be limited to local governments alone. They should extend to national governments within the context of the *steering rather than rowing role* framework.

Finally, taking off as well from the recommendation to increase the awareness of the civil servants of their rights, duties, and obligations, may we suggest the need to integrate *civic education* as one of the major components of the capacity building interventions for local officials and civil servants. The public as well should be informed and aware of its civic duties hence, platforms for civic education awareness, such as webinars, theatrical plays, and integration to education curriculum among others, may be explored.

These are some of the recommendations of EROPA respectfully submitted for consideration of this august body. Thank you very much and good morning!