



**23-25 June 2025**

**Samarkand, Uzbekistan**

**REPORT**

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# Message of the United Nations Secretary-General on United Nations Public Service Day 2025



*United Nations Secretary-General,  
António Guterres. UN Photo/Mark  
Garten*

Public servants are the unsung architects of a better future.

Without fanfare and often at great personal sacrifice, they safeguard communities, deliver lifesaving aid, educate children, provide health care, advance justice, drive sustainable development, and so much more.

A capable public sector depends on dedicated, skilled public servants – who, in turn, are crucial to building trust in institutions and promoting good governance.

At a time when public service is belittled or maligned, it is especially meaningful to recognize the passion and dedication of all women and men around the world striving to build stronger communities, promote human dignity, and accelerate action to realize the Sustainable Development Goals.

Public servants work for us every day. On this important day, let's take time out to celebrate and honour them.

António Guterres

United Nations Secretary-General

## Introduction to the 2025 UN Public Service Forum

The United Nations Public Service Forum was held in Samarkand, Republic of Uzbekistan from 23 to 25 June 2025, under the theme *'Five years to 2030: Accelerating public service delivery for a sustainable future'*. The Forum provided a platform for public administrators and those working in the field to come together to build capacity and share experiences in the realm of public administration and service delivery.

The Forum, which drew together close to 1,000 participants, was co-organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) through its Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) and the Ministry of Digital Technologies of Uzbekistan. High-level participants, including 14 Ministerial level participants, public servants, academics and representatives from regional and international organizations attended the event.

Over the course of three days, substantive plenary sessions and capacity development workshops provided a platform for participants to debate emerging issues and trends, and discuss good practices, strategies, accelerated actions, and innovative approaches for enhancing effective service delivery and transforming institutions.

The Forum offered a platform to advance discussions around the role of innovation and digital technology in public administration, and included an e-government recognition ceremony, honoring the achievements of 12 countries in this field.

The Forum was also an opportunity to celebrate United Nations Public Service Day<sup>1</sup>, marked annually on 23 June. In his message for United Nations Public Service Day (see page 3), United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, recognized public servants as 'unsung architects of a better future'.

## Background to the 2025 Forum theme

With five years remaining to the deadline for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the need to accelerate action is more urgent than ever. Governments globally face increasing and interconnected challenges, including rising inequality, climate change, health crises, declining trust in public institutions, and economic volatility. To address these realities and prepare for tomorrow's challenges world leaders gathered at the [Summit of the Future](#) in September 2024, to adopt the Pact for the Future and its annexes: the Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations. This agreement, the culmination of years of inclusive dialogue and collaboration aims at modernizing international cooperation and finding solutions to common concerns.

Public administration plays a pivotal role in addressing these challenges, including by translating global commitments into tangible actions at the national and local levels. By strengthening public institutions, fostering innovation, harnessing digital technology, and building strong partnerships, governments can ensure inclusive public service delivery that reaches all communities, closing the 'last mile gap'.

Focusing on critical actions required over the next five years, the 2025 United Nations Public Service Forum discussed strategies for fostering innovation and transformation in the public

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<sup>1</sup>UN Public Service Day Observance <https://www.un.org/en/observances/public-service-day>

sector to advance the SDGs before their 2030 deadline. In particular, the forum explored how to accelerate public service delivery towards a sustainable future through two subthemes: Digital Transformation and Accelerating Innovation.

Digital transformation is reshaping public administrations, allowing governments to use technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), big data, and cloud computing to improve decision-making, service delivery, and inclusivity. However, while e-government plays a key role in streamlining processes, enhancing transparency, and responding to crises, challenges such as the digital divide can significantly hinder access to the benefits of e-governance and digital transformation, particularly for vulnerable and hard to reach populations. At the same time, the rapid expansion of AI in service delivery raises ethical and privacy concerns which must be urgently addressed. Governments must ensure equitable access to online services while establishing strong privacy and data protection measures, all while promoting inclusive last-mile delivery to reach underserved communities.

Key to addressing many of these challenges and ensuring no one is left behind is the development and acceleration of innovative governance models that promote experimentation and context-specific solutions to public administration challenges. By promoting innovation, collaboration and participatory governance, governments can create flexible and responsive approaches that improve service delivery, reduce inequalities, and enhance resilience.

## Forum Overview and Structure

The Forum was comprised of high-level opening and closing segments, a Ministerial Roundtable, two substantive plenary sessions, eight thematic capacity development workshops, a reporting back session, and the e-government recognition segment.

Through its plenary sessions and thematic capacity development workshops, the Forum provided a platform to examine and enhance the capacity of public servants and leaders in key areas related to the Forum's theme, with a focus on bolstering the skills and fostering the mindsets needed to accelerate innovative action to transform public administrations. The Forum also provided the opportunity to promote enhanced cooperation and partnerships through sharing of experiences and peer-to-peer learning.

### High-level segments

#### Opening Session and Keynote Address

The Forum was opened on 23 June by **Mr. Sherzod Shermatov**, Minister of Digital Technologies of Uzbekistan, and **Mr. Navid Hanif**, United Nations Assistant-Secretary-General for Economic Development.

**Ms. Saida Mirziyoyeva**, Assistant to the President of Uzbekistan, provided a keynote address to the Forum on the opening morning of the event.

#### Ministerial Roundtable

A Ministerial Roundtable, comprising two substantive sessions, was held on the opening morning of the Forum, and brought together 14 senior officials to discuss the key themes of the Forum. A detailed overview of the Roundtable can be found on page 7.

## Samarkand Ministerial Declaration

On the opening morning of the Forum the Government of Uzbekistan, represented by Minister of Digital Technologies, Mr. Sherzod Shermatov, launched the "Samarkand Ministerial Declaration on Advancing Digital Transformation, Innovation, and Robust Data Governance in the Public Sector".

An initiative of the Government of Uzbekistan, the Declaration identifies seven key priorities: Digital information access; Responsible AI adoption; Data governance frameworks; Cybersecurity measures; Global cooperation mechanisms; North-South and South-South collaboration; and Equitable digital transformation, and was opened to all Member States of the United Nations to sign. More information on the declaration can be found here: [https://api.unpsf2025.org//storage/files/shares/2\\_R5\\_text\\_declaration\\_UNDESA\\_revised\\_Mission\\_of\\_Uzbekistan\\_to\\_the.pdf](https://api.unpsf2025.org//storage/files/shares/2_R5_text_declaration_UNDESA_revised_Mission_of_Uzbekistan_to_the.pdf)

## Recognition of Progress in E-Government

As part of the UN Public Service Forum 2025, a special E-Government Recognition Session was held to celebrate countries that have demonstrated notable progress in e-government development between 2022 and 2024. More information can be found on page 19.

## Reporting Back

The general rapporteur of the Forum was **Ms. Robyn Bennett**, Advisor, Creative Bureaucracy Festival. Ms. Bennett, who presented her report to the Forum on the final day of the event outlined the key activities, discussions, and messages arising from the Forum plenary sessions and capacity development workshops. The key messages have been distilled throughout this Report, and are set out on page 19 'Outcome Messages of the Forum'.

The full report of the Rapporteur can be watched [here](#).

## Closing Session

The Forum concluded on June 25 with remarks from **Mr. Sherzod Shermatov**, Minister of Digital Technologies of Uzbekistan, and **Mr. Navid Hanif**, United Nations Assistant-Secretary-General for Economic Development.

As co-hosts of the event, they expressed their gratitude to all participants for contributing to the Forum's success. They highlighted the significant progress made over the three days in advancing public administration and public service delivery in support of the SDGs.

Before closing, the floor was handed to the Minister of Justice of Georgia, **Mr. Paata Salia**, to announce the hosting of the 2026 UN Public Service Forum in Tbilisi, Georgia, who encouraged participants to join.

# Ministerial Roundtable

The Ministerial Roundtable took place on the opening morning of the 2025 UN Public Service Forum and served as a high-level platform for dialogue among Ministers, Vice-Ministers and Chairpersons from around the world.

Facilitated by **Ms. Elizabeth Nyamayaro**, gender expert and author, the roundtable brought together fourteen senior officials for an action-oriented exchange together with Mr. Navid Hanif, Assistant-Secretary-General for Economic Development, UN DESA.

Conducted in a dynamic question-and-answer format, the discussions were designed to elicit practical insights and policy commitments aligned with the Forum’s overarching themes. Over the course of two distinct sessions—**(1) Transforming the Public Sector for a Sustainable Future** and **(2) Five Years to 2030: Accelerating Public Service Delivery**—Ms. Nyamayaro posed targeted questions to guide reflection on key priorities, including governing in the age of AI, enhancing innovation, ensuring inclusive public service delivery, advancing digital transformation, and forging strategic partnerships for sustainable development.

The names of participating Ministers together with key messages from each of the two sessions can be found below. The Roundtables can be watched [here](#).

## Session One: Transforming the Public Sector for a Sustainable Future

Country	Participating Official
Djibouti	Mr. Kassim Haroun Ali – Minister for Decentralization
Georgia	Mr. Paata Salia – Minister of Justice & Public Administration
Mali	Mr. Fassoun Coulibaly – Minister of Labor, Civil Service & Social Dialogue
Mongolia	Mr. Amgalan Battulga – Deputy Minister of Digital Technologies
Solomon Islands	Mr. Francis Motcho Belande Sade – Minister of Public Service
Tajikistan	Mr. Ilhomiddin Valizoda – Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs
Uzbekistan	Mr. Sherzod Shermatov – Minister of Digital Technologies
Zimbabwe	Ms. Mercy Maruva Dinha – Deputy Minister of Public Service
UN DESA	Mr. Navid Hanif – Assistant Secretary General for Economic Development

## Focus of the Session

Session One focused on how governments are advancing innovation and adapting their public sectors to meet the evolving demands of the 21st century—particularly in the era of artificial intelligence.

Under the theme of Public Sector Innovation, Ministers were invited to share national strategies for fostering a culture of innovation within government. Discussions explored how innovation labs are being used to address pressing challenges such as digital inclusion and public service delivery, with a particular emphasis on ensuring that experimentation leads to scalable, high-impact policy solutions.

On the theme of Public Sector Workforce in the Age of AI, the roundtable examined how governments are responding to the digital transformation of public administration. Key topics included the integration of artificial intelligence to improve service efficiency, strategies for attracting and retaining skilled professionals, and long-term efforts to strengthen digital literacy and AI competencies within the public service. Ministers also reflected on the cultural and institutional changes needed to support more adaptive, anticipatory, and collaborative models of governance.

The session concluded with a question directed to UN DESA, inviting reflections on how it can further support developing countries in advancing public sector transformation and meeting the challenges of the Sustainable Development Goals.

## Key messages arising from the discussion

### 1. National Digital Transformation as a Strategic Priority

Digital transformation is seen as a cornerstone of innovation and sustainable development:

- **Mali, Tajikistan, Djibouti, Georgia, and Zimbabwe** described national strategies or policies dedicated to digital government or digital economy development, many of which are backed by presidential decrees or high-level institutional frameworks.
- Governments are emphasizing **online service delivery**, such as digital tax payments, e-civil registration, biometric identity systems, and remote case management.
- The importance of **interoperability** between agencies and the creation of **integrated digital platforms** was highlighted as critical for efficiency and accessibility.

### 2. Innovation for Inclusion, Equity, and Service Delivery

Ministers highlighted how digital tools are being deployed to **close service gaps**, reduce rural-urban divides, and support underserved populations:

- **Zimbabwe** and the **Solomon Islands** are building community information centers and rural broadband to bridge the digital divide.
- **Mongolia** stressed **horizontal integration** across ministries and a strong focus on **open data** for public transparency.
- **Uzbekistan** and **Tajikistan** emphasized digital identity systems and e-services as mechanisms to streamline access and reduce corruption.

### 3. Building Institutional and Human Capacity

Several speakers underlined the **importance of skilled public servants** and strong institutions:



- **Tajikistan** is digitizing its internal affairs ministry and linking government payment and identification systems.
- **Mongolia** and **Solomon Islands** discussed strategies to **attract and retain talent** in the public service, recognizing the need to compete with the private sector and invest in human capital.
- Multiple countries are developing **training programmes, upskilling strategies**, and providing incentives to public servants to support cultures of innovation.

#### 4. Policy and Regulatory Reform to Support Innovation

Several governments are actively updating regulatory and policy frameworks to enable innovation:

- **Solomon Islands** is leveraging data from an inclusive digital scorecard to guide regulatory reform.
- **Djibouti** created a dedicated **Ministry of Digital Economy** to steer policy, innovation, and entrepreneurship.
- **Georgia's** seven-pillar strategy includes open data, anti-corruption, and service delivery reforms as core enablers of innovation.

#### 5. Public-Private Partnerships and Ecosystem Development

Countries recognize that **collaboration with the private sector** and civil society is essential:

- **Zimbabwe, Djibouti, and Mongolia** are leveraging **Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models**, innovation hubs, and incubators to catalyze innovation.
- **Djibouti** established a **National Register of Physical Persons** and entrepreneurship centers to support start-ups and digital identity services.
- Innovation labs and sandboxes are being used (e.g., in **Uzbekistan** and **Mongolia**) to bridge the gap between experimentation and scalable policy change.

#### 6. Trust, Transparency, and Ethical Governance

Trust-building was a cross-cutting concern, linked to **transparency, accountability, and participatory engagement**:

- Several countries emphasized **open government data, e-procurement, online access to services**, and reduced in-person bureaucracy as pathways to public trust.
- **Georgia** and **UN DESA** referenced open data, citizen-centered services, and **audit mechanisms** as crucial for credibility.

#### 7. Political Commitment and High-Level Leadership Matter

- Many countries demonstrated **top-level political buy-in**, with presidential decrees, cabinet-level committees, and cross-ministry mandates driving digital transformation and innovation.
- **Mali, Tajikistan, and Djibouti** stressed the role of leadership in securing resources, removing barriers, and ensuring continuity.

## 8. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

UN DESA noted its commitment to:

- The **11 Principles of Effective Governance** and supporting their implementation via training, peer learning, and knowledge exchange.
- Offering countries **technical assistance** through the e-government index and tools to assess performance at the national and local levels.
- Helping evaluate progress toward the **2030 Agenda** through cooperation with audit institutions and public sector benchmarking.

## Session Two: Five years to 2030: Accelerating Public Service Delivery

Country	Participating Official
Albania	Ms. Adea Pirdeni – Minister of State for Public Administration & Anti-corruption
Azerbaijan	Mr. Jeyhun Salmanov – Deputy Chairman of State Agency for Public Service & Innovation
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Davor Bunoza – Minister of Justice & Public Administration
Bhutan	Ms. Tashi Pem – Chairperson, Royal Civil Service Commission
Namibia	Mr. Salmaan Jacobs – Chairperson, Civil Service Commission
Senegal	Mr. Olivier Bouchal – Minister of Public Service
UN DESA	Mr. Navid Hanif – Assistant Secretary General for Economic Development

## Focus of the Session

Session Two was designed to explore how governments are accelerating public service delivery to ensure inclusive and equitable outcomes—particularly for the most vulnerable—as the world approaches the final stretch toward the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The session was structured around three interrelated themes: reaching the last mile, delivering services in a time of change, and inclusive delivery, with a focus on real-world experiences, tested solutions, and scalable approaches.

Under the theme of Reaching the Last Mile, Ministers were invited to share targeted national policies and actions aimed at ensuring that the needs of the most marginalized populations are effectively addressed. The discussion sought to explore lessons learned from past SDG implementation efforts that have successfully reached vulnerable groups, and how these lessons can be adapted or scaled for broader application.

The second theme, Accelerating Public Service Delivery, focused on how governments are leveraging digital technologies in combination with traditional approaches to improve the accessibility, quality, and speed of public service delivery. Participants also reflected on how recent shifts in global aid flows are shaping national strategies and institutional capacities—particularly in ensuring service continuity for those furthest behind.

The third theme, Inclusive Delivery, examined how governments are using multi-stakeholder partnerships—including with civil society, the private sector, and international organizations—to improve last-mile service delivery. Ministers also addressed the integration of gender equality into public service strategies, including how national efforts are ensuring that the specific needs of women and girls are accounted for in equitable service delivery.

The roundtable concluded with a final question directed to UN DESA, asking it to reflect on how it can continue to support developing countries in navigating current and future challenges in public sector transformation and sustainable development.

## Key messages arising from the discussion

### 1. Prioritizing Inclusion of Vulnerable Populations

Ministers emphasized tailored policies to ensure **no one is left behind**, with a specific focus on marginalized communities:

- **Bosnia and Herzegovina** highlighted support for persons with disabilities, Roma, war victims, and internally displaced persons through legal aid, action plans, and partnerships with international organizations.
- **Namibia** implemented **comprehensive social protection strategy**—including old-age, disability, and child grants—with high coverage rates and a lifecycle approach to citizen welfare.
- **Senegal** and **Bosnia** underscored the need to embed gender equity into national frameworks, including leadership programmes and legal protections.

### 2. Blending Digital Innovation with Traditional Service Delivery

Many governments are **digitally transforming services**, while also maintaining accessibility for populations without digital access:

- **Albania** offers over 95% of public services online and uses AI-powered assistants and voice-enabled platforms to reach those with disabilities or in remote areas.
- **Bhutan** integrates digital services through blockchain-based national digital IDs and “zero pain point” delivery models, while retaining in-person support via 205 local help desks.
- **Namibia** and **Senegal** emphasized hybrid approaches—investing in rural connectivity and on-the-ground support alongside digital platforms.

### 3. Strategic Public-Private and Multilateral Partnerships

Multi-stakeholder collaboration is seen as essential to delivering last-mile services:

- **Azerbaijan's ASAN Service** model brings over 15 government agencies and private sector actors into one-stop centers with a high user satisfaction rate. The model has been exported to multiple countries.
- Partnerships are being used not just to expand reach but also to **drive interoperability**, co-develop platforms, and **share citizen data securely and efficiently**.
- Governments are calling for **global collaboration** to share tested models and scale innovations.

### 4. Investing in Gender Equality and Women's Leadership

Gender equality was a cross-cutting priority:

- **Senegal** has launched a **National Female Leadership Academy** and women-focused entrepreneurship initiatives.
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina** has implemented legal quotas, established gender agencies, and achieved historic appointments of women to high-level government positions.
- **Albania** has aimed to position women at the helm of its digital transformation, embedding gender equity approaches into tech governance

### 5. Strengthening Education and Human Capital

Education and skills development are central to sustainable service delivery:

- **Namibia** offers free education from primary through to tertiary (starting 2026), integrates youth into policy frameworks, and promotes rural skills training through women's centers.
- Upskilling civil servants for digital service delivery—especially around AI and inclusive design—was emphasized by **Albania** and **Bhutan**.

### 6. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Innovation, Openness, and Collaboration

Mr. Navid Hanif (UN DESA) concluded by capturing the unifying themes of the roundtable as:

- **Innovation** is essential for effective public service.
- **Openness** to diverse approaches and cultures fosters shared progress.
- **Collaboration**—between countries, sectors, and communities—is the path to achieving the SDGs.

# Thematic Plenary Sessions

During the Forum, two thematic plenary sessions were held, which explored the themes of: 1) Transforming Government in the era of AI and 2) Accelerating Innovation: Innovation Labs in Action. A summary and key messages of the plenaries is provided below, while video recordings of each session can be found [here](#).

## Plenary Panel on Transforming Government in the Era of AI

On the second day of the Forum, a high-level plenary session convened a panel of experts from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Oxford Insights, the United Arab Emirates, and Uzbekistan to examine how artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping governance worldwide. The session was moderated by **Mr. Vincenzo Aquaro**, Chief of the Digital Government Branch, Division for Digital Government and Public Institutions, UN DESA. The panel featured:

- **Ms. Gillian Dorner**, Deputy Director, Public Governance Directorate, OECD
- **Mr. Will Hayes**, Commercial Director, Oxford Insights, United Kingdom
- **Mr. Mohamed bin Taliah**, Chief of Government Services, Prime Minister's Office, United Arab Emirates
- **Mr. Sarvarbek Sadullaev**, Director, AI Department, Ministry of Digital Technologies, Uzbekistan

### Purpose and Context

The plenary aimed to provide an in-depth assessment of both the opportunities and challenges associated with AI in the public sector, highlighting the need for global cooperation to ensure that AI is implemented in an ethical, equitable, and inclusive manner.

### Current State of AI in Government

Ms. Dorner outlined the global landscape of AI adoption, noting that while approximately 70 per cent of OECD member countries employ AI to improve service delivery, only 30 per cent have integrated AI into policymaking processes. The use of generative AI in the public sector remains limited, with only around 5 per cent of public bodies actively deploying it. She described a prevalent pattern of fragmented initiatives—often referred to as “pilotitis”—in which governments run isolated projects but face challenges in scaling successful models. Common constraints include insufficient digital skills, outdated infrastructure, weak data governance, and institutional cultures resistant to change.

### Moving from Strategy to Implementation

Mr. Mohamed bin Taliah described the United Arab Emirates' rapid transition from strategic planning to operational deployment of AI. Since appointing the world's first Minister of AI in 2017, the UAE has introduced multilingual AI chatbots, facial recognition systems, and digital identity platforms to expand access to public services. A key enabling mechanism has been the establishment of regulatory sandboxes—controlled environments that facilitate experimentation while mitigating risk. This approach has notably accelerated adoption, including a tenfold increase in the use of facial recognition for digital identification within six months.

Mr. Sadullaev highlighted Uzbekistan's view of AI as an immediate necessity rather than a distant aspiration. Current initiatives include AI-powered legal aid services, voice-based government assistants, and digital identification tools. A central feature of the national approach is the large-scale upskilling of over one million individuals—beginning with civil servants—to build institutional capacity for AI adoption. Uzbekistan has also prioritized the creation of a national AI ethics framework and, like the UAE, employs regulatory sandboxes to promote safe and responsible innovation.

### Responsible AI and Public Trust

Mr. Hayes underscored that responsible AI governance must be embedded into public sector systems from the outset, rather than relying solely on policy documents. International examples of good practice include Canada's Algorithmic Impact Assessment, which obliges public agencies to evaluate and disclose the risks of AI tools, and the United Kingdom's AI playbook for civil servants, supplemented by public algorithm registries. Such measures are essential to ensuring transparency, accountability, and public confidence in AI systems.

Ms. Dorner emphasised that effective AI implementation depends on strong foundations: high-quality data, robust infrastructure, and skilled personnel. Without these elements, technological solutions risk becoming superficial rather than transformative.

### International Cooperation and Knowledge Sharing

In the closing portion of the discussion, panelists highlighted the risk that uneven AI adoption could exacerbate global inequalities. Countries lacking the infrastructure, expertise, or partnerships required for responsible AI deployment may fall further behind. To address this, the UAE and Uzbekistan advocated for deeper international collaboration, including the joint development of tools and coordinated investment in human capital.

### Concluding Observations

In their final remarks, panelists stressed that governments must lead AI adoption to safeguard the public interest, acting with integrity, adaptability, and a commitment to shared learning. It was stressed that AI has the potential to transform public service delivery, but success will depend on grounding implementation in ethics, focusing on the needs of all citizens, and fostering an environment of continuous collaboration.

## Plenary Panel on Accelerating Innovation: Innovation Labs in Action

The plenary session "*Accelerating Innovation: Innovation Labs in Action*" examined how public sector innovation laboratories can operate effectively within government systems to foster institutional transformation. The session was moderated by **Mr. Derek Alton**, Community Insights Lead at Apolitical, and featured:

- **Ms. Luana Silveira de Faria**, Coordinator, LABORA! Gov, Department of Innovation, Government of Brazil
- **Dr. Almero Oosthuizen**, Clinical Service Improvement and Innovation Specialist, South Africa
- **Ms. Alejandra Rodas**, Deputy Director for Institutional Strengthening, Mayor's Office, Bogotá, Colombia

## Purpose and Context

The session explored the role of innovation laboratories as mechanisms to strengthen the capacity of governments to adapt, respond, and deliver services more effectively. While operating in different national and institutional contexts, the panelists shared a common objective: to embed adaptive, human-centred approaches within the culture of public administration.

## Experiences from Colombia, Brazil, and South Africa

Dr. Oosthuizen described the establishment of an innovation unit embedded directly within the Western Cape Department of Health in South Africa. His approach arose from first-hand experience of systemic bottlenecks in healthcare delivery. The unit's mandate is to address such challenges through collaborative problem-solving at the frontline, thereby complementing existing systems rather than working in isolation.

In Brazil, Ms. Silveira de Faria presented LABORA! Gov as a long-standing initiative designed to foster 'psychological safety' within the public service, enabling officials to test new ideas, learn from failure, and design more citizen-responsive services. Over nearly a decade, LABORA! Gov has focused on combining structured methods with a culture of empathy, experimentation, and inclusion.

In Colombia, Ms. Rodas outlined the creation of Bogotá's innovation laboratory, *Evo*, which was established to address both public mistrust and fragmentation across the city's administration, employing over 100,000 public servants. *Evo* positions itself not as a centralised innovation hub but as a facilitation and capacity-building entity, supporting other departments to develop their own innovation capabilities.

## From Pilot Initiatives to Systemic Change

A shared priority among the panelists was the transition from isolated pilot projects to sustainable, system-wide change. For example, *Evo* enhanced its institutional credibility by providing rapid and practical solutions during Bogotá's water crisis—solutions that could be replicated in other departments. Similarly, Dr. Oosthuizen described how the Western Cape unit was intentionally integrated into departmental structures to ensure that innovation efforts strengthen existing systems rather than operate as stand-alone programmes.

In Brazil, LABORA! Gov cultivated a broad network of innovation champions through its "Frilas" network, which engaged over 2,000 volunteer public servants in co-creation projects. This approach ensured momentum could be sustained beyond individual administrations or leadership changes.

## Leadership, Culture, and Sustainability

The panelists noted that sustainable innovation requires a shift from leader-dependent initiatives to distributed ownership across the public sector. Ms. Silveira de Faria emphasised that true leadership sometimes means creating the space for others to lead, thereby embedding innovation within the broader institutional culture. All three panelists agreed that building trust, fostering relationships, and preserving institutional memory are essential for enabling long-term change.

## Concluding Observations

In their closing remarks, panelists advised governments seeking to strengthen innovation capacity to:



- Prioritize people-centred approaches that balance quantitative evidence with empathy for service users.
- Build networks and communities of practice to support knowledge exchange and collaboration.
- Leverage the constraints of bureaucracy as opportunities for creative problem-solving.

The session concluded with the observation that innovation laboratories should be seen as catalysts rather than endpoints for reform. Their ultimate purpose is to contribute to a culture of continuous improvement—grounded in collaboration, inclusivity, and resilience—that enables public institutions to respond effectively to evolving societal needs.

## Capacity Development Workshops

A series of eight thematic capacity development workshops were held during the Forum, providing participants with practical tools, peer-learning opportunities, and strategies to address key aspects of the Forum's theme. Each workshop aligned with the overall objective of strengthening institutional capacity, fostering innovation, and advancing inclusive public service delivery. A summary of each workshop is provided below, while a detailed report for the DESA run workshops can be found [here](#), under the heading '[workshop reports](#)'

### Workshop 1: Creating an Enabling Environment for Public Sector Innovation

This workshop aimed to discuss some of the key barriers that public institutions and public servants face in creating an enabling environment for innovation from the institutional level down to the day-to-day work of the public servant, and how those barriers can be addressed. In doing so, it explored the pressing challenges governments face, including improving service delivery, navigating limited resources, and responding to demands for greater transparency. Participants examined the barriers to innovation within public institutions, such as rigid bureaucracies, risk aversion, and siloed working methods. The workshop addressed how leadership, institutional structures, funding mechanisms, human resource practices, and legal frameworks could enable innovation. Participants gained practical insights on fostering creativity, empowering public servants as change agents, and building more agile and responsive institutions through systemic innovation strategies.

### Workshop 2: Digital Government Advancing Inclusive Public Service

This session focused on leveraging digital government to promote equitable and inclusive public service delivery. Participants examined strategies to bridge digital divides based on findings from the 2024 UN E-Government Survey. The workshop showcased successful country examples in online service delivery and featured recognized countries from the UN Public Service Forum. Attendees learned how to assess national and local e-government progress using dedicated toolkits and participated in discussions on refining the Survey's methodology for the 2026 assessment. The workshop highlighted the role of digital innovation in advancing the SDGs while ensuring no one is left behind.



### **Workshop 3: Leading Change: New Mindsets and Approaches for Resilient, Forward-Looking Governance**

This workshop addressed the need for mindset shifts in public governance to navigate complexity and uncertainty. Participants engaged with practical tools such as systems thinking and strategic foresight to enhance coordination, planning, and budgeting processes. Through interactive exercises, peer exchange, and action planning, the workshop supported participants in identifying institutional capacity needs and implementing steps for transformational governance. The session emphasized the importance of anticipatory, inclusive, and forward-looking leadership aligned with global agendas like the Pact for the Future.

### **Workshop 4: Skilling and Upskilling the Public Sector Workforce – What’s Next after GenAI?**

This workshop addressed the transformative impact of generative AI and emerging technologies on the public sector workforce. Participants explored strategies for identifying skills gaps, improving digital and data literacy, and preparing for future waves of technological advancement. The workshop emphasized the need for coordinated workforce development and provided practical tools to support AI readiness. Discussions centered on building resilient, future-ready public servants equipped to enhance service delivery and align with the goals of the Global Digital Compact.

### **Workshop 5: Foresight and Creativity in Public Service**

In partnership with the School of International Futures and the Creative Bureaucracy Festival, this workshop focused on inspiring public servants to embed creativity and long-term thinking into public service reform. Participants engaged in dynamic sessions that championed foresight and innovation as essential to achieving the SDGs. The workshop focused on peer learning, encouraged future-oriented leadership, and promoted international collaboration to build governance systems that are more adaptive, inclusive, and resilient.

### **Workshop 6: Motivating the Public Servant: Challenges in the Digital Age**

This workshop focused on strategies for motivating and empowering public servants amid ongoing digital transformation. Participants discussed challenges related to employee engagement, leadership, and skills development in a technology-driven environment. Through experience-sharing and interactive dialogue, the workshop explored approaches to fostering a resilient workforce, improving organizational culture, and ensuring public sector adaptability in the face of digital disruption.

### **Workshop 7: Data Governance for Digital Transformation**

This session emphasized the importance of strong data governance in enabling effective digital transformation in the public sector. Participants explored key components such as cross-agency data sharing, quality standards, and the critical role of statistical agencies. The workshop highlighted how to balance ethical concerns, privacy, and transparency with the operational need to utilize data effectively. Drawing from case studies and regional experiences, the session provided tools and strategies for implementing robust and ethical data governance frameworks.

## Workshop 8: The Next Generation of Public Service: Innovation, Technology, and Citizen-Centric Solutions

This workshop provided a platform to explore how emerging technologies—like AI, blockchain, and big data—can transform public service delivery. Participants discussed the importance of citizen-centric design, inclusive digital ecosystems, and ethical governance. The session emphasized the need for agile institutions and collaborative innovation to meet the evolving needs of citizens. Best practices and transformative initiatives from around the world were shared to inspire future-ready public service reform.

### Recognition of Progress in E-Government

As part of the UN Public Service Forum 2025, a special E-Government Recognition Session was held to celebrate countries that have demonstrated notable progress in e-government development between 2022 and 2024.

#### Background

The United Nations E-Government Survey is a biennial publication produced by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). It serves as a key instrument for assessing global progress in digital government and evaluates how effectively e-government is being leveraged to foster public sector innovation, enhance public service delivery, and strengthen transparency, accountability, and citizen participation.

The survey ranks all 193 UN Member States using the E-Government Development Index (EGDI), which comprises three core components: the Online Service Index (OSI), Telecommunication Infrastructure Index (TII), and Human Capital Index (HCI). Together, these indicators reflect the breadth and maturity of a country's digital government landscape.

The 13th edition of the E-Government Survey, launched in September 2024, highlights a significant global upward trend in digital government development. The report underscores increased investments in resilient digital infrastructure, the expansion of inclusive online services, and the growing use of emerging technologies to improve governance outcomes.

#### Recognition

During the Forum, twelve countries were recognized for their advancements in digital government. Their achievements exemplify the growing momentum behind digital transformation in public administration and underscore the role of e-government in accelerating progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Their recognition was based on meeting one or more of the following criteria:

- Entry into the **“Very High EGDl”** group
- A rise of **15 or more positions** in the global EGDl ranking
- A **15% or greater increase** in the Online Service Index (OSI)

In addition to meeting these thresholds, all twelve countries surpassed the **global average EGDl score (~0.64)** and attained an **OSI score above 0.75**, indicating significant improvements in the availability and quality of online public services.

The countries recognized were: Albania; Armenia; Colombia; Ecuador; Jordan; Mexico; Mongolia; Philippines; South Africa; Türkiye; Ukraine; and Uzbekistan.

## Central Asia Digital Governance Forum (CADGov)

Day two of the Forum saw the launch of the Central Asia Digital Governance Forum (CADGov), a new regional initiative aimed at strengthening digital governance and citizen empowerment across Central Asia. Supported by the United Nations University (UNU-EGOV) in partnership with the Ministry of Digital Technologies of Uzbekistan and the International Academy of CIO, CADGov will serve as a platform for regional cooperation, knowledge exchange, and strategic alignment in the digital public sector. More information can be found here: <https://unu.edu/egov/cadgov>

## Outcome Messages of the Forum

An overview of the key messages arising from the forum plenary sessions, Ministerial Roundtable and Workshops can be found below grouped into four thematic subthemes: AI and the public sector; Innovation in the public sector; Upskilling in the public service in the era of AI; and Changing mindsets and strategic foresight.

### AI and the Public Sector

Artificial Intelligence (AI) holds significant transformative potential for public service delivery, offering opportunities to enhance efficiency, decision-making, and citizen engagement. However, discussions revealed that progress remains fragmented, with most countries still in the early stages of implementation. While many governments are piloting AI solutions, few have succeeded in scaling AI for complex policymaking or decision-support tasks. Participants emphasized that foundational challenges continue to hinder broader adoption. These include limited data literacy, outdated digital infrastructure, and a lack of coherent strategies across government institutions. Moreover, the responsible use of AI hinges on transparent and inclusive governance. Ensuring diverse regulatory approaches, engaging multiple stakeholders, and building trust through ethical and transparent AI systems were identified as essential pillars for sustainable implementation.

### Key Messages

- **Uneven adoption:** Most countries are still in pilot phases, with few scaling AI for complex policymaking tasks
- **Success stories:** Countries like Uzbekistan and the UAE show progress in specific areas such as justice system automation and e-services
- **Foundational gaps:** Data literacy, outdated infrastructure, and lack of strategic alignment are barriers to scaling
- **Governance and trust:** Transparent tools, regulatory diversity, and stakeholder engagement are crucial for responsible AI use

### Innovation in the Public Sector

Innovation in the public sector must be intentional, inclusive, and grounded in collaboration and trust. The Forum underscored that innovation should not be driven by technology alone but should aim to solve real societal problems, particularly those affecting marginalized communities. Embedding a people-centered approach means engaging diverse voices from design to delivery.

Empowering public servants emerged as a cornerstone for institutional innovation. Public servants must be equipped not only with training and tools but also with the authority and support to lead change from within their organizations. Participants also highlighted the role of enabling environments—including adaptive legal frameworks, open data policies, and effective feedback mechanisms—in fostering scalable and sustainable innovation.

Cross-sector collaboration was presented as a key success factor showing how integrated, co-designed services can drive better outcomes. When innovation is shared across sectors and rooted in citizen needs, public institutions become more agile, inclusive, and responsive.

### Key Messages

- **Meaningful outcomes:** Innovation should solve real problems and include all voices – especially marginalized groups
- **Empowered public servants:** Public servants need the tools, training, and authority to lead change from within
- **Institutional enablers:** Legal frameworks, open data, and feedback mechanisms foster scalability and sustainability
- **Cross-sector collaboration:** Partnerships like Azerbaijan’s 4P model show that integrated services are stronger when co-designed across government, private sector, and citizens

### Upskilling the Public Service in the Era of AI

Successful digital transformation depends not just on the deployment of technology but on the readiness and capacity of the civil service. A strategic, system-wide approach to workforce development is critical. Countries such as Mali and Georgia illustrated how national-level strategies help align reform efforts and ensure coherence across institutions.

Participants stressed the urgency of upskilling initiatives, citing examples like Uzbekistan’s goal to train one million individuals in digital competencies. Training must go beyond technical proficiency to include an understanding of AI’s ethical, regulatory, and operational dimensions. This broader perspective ensures public servants can not only use AI tools but will do so responsibly and effectively.

Institutional resilience was also discussed as a critical enabler. Centralized digital platforms, improved personnel management systems, and long-term investments in digital infrastructure were seen as foundational to a capable and future-ready public sector.

### Key Messages

- **Strategic commitment:** Countries like Mali and Georgia show that national-level strategies are essential to align reform efforts
- **Public service readiness:** Training programmes and digital literacy are central to implementation
- **AI competencies:** Beyond technical skills, public servants need to understand the ethical, regulatory, and operational implications of AI
- **Institutional resilience:** Centralizing digital platforms, improving personnel management, and investing in systems drive long-term gains

## Changing Mindsets and Strategic Foresight

Long-term transformation in the public sector requires more than structural reforms—it demands a fundamental shift in culture and mindset. Innovation was widely recognized as essential, especially in an era of rapid change. Leaders must be prepared to embrace uncertainty, support experimentation, and foster environments where learning from failure is not penalized but encouraged.

Strategic foresight and institutional flexibility were highlighted as key capabilities for good governance. Participants advocated for the integration of anticipatory approaches and the use of legal and regulatory frameworks that can adapt in real time to emerging challenges.

Trust-based leadership emerged as another critical theme. As governments introduce more digital tools and AI systems, maintaining public trust requires transparent communication and clear articulation of the purposes and values guiding these transformations. Finally, shared ownership—through the co-creation of policies and services with public servants, citizens, and partners—was emphasized as essential to building more resilient, grounded, and broadly supported innovations.

## Key Messages

- **Mindset shift:** Innovation is not optional—it's a necessity. Leaders must embrace uncertainty and foster a culture of safe experimentation
- **Strategic foresight and flexibility:** Institutions need to anticipate change and adapt strategies in real-time, supported by legal and regulatory flexibility
- **Trust-based leadership:** Building citizen trust requires transparency, responsiveness, and communication on how and why digital tools are used
- **Shared ownership:** Co-creating solutions with public servants, citizens, and partners ensures more grounded, resilient, and widely accepted innovations.

## Conclusion

The 2025 UN Public Service Forum emphasized that governments must keep pace with technological advances such as AI, while maintaining a strong commitment to inclusion, ethics, transparency, trust, and institutional preparedness.

From initial AI adoption to the latest innovations in the public sector, the Forum highlighted ongoing challenges—including fragmented strategies, infrastructure limitations, and uneven capabilities—yet underscored a growing momentum toward building more agile, transparent, and responsive public institutions.

Equally important was the focus on ensuring that innovation efforts go beyond technology itself and address real-world problems so as to improve outcomes for all, particularly the most vulnerable and the furthest behind.

The Forum highlighted that transformation in the public sector depends as much on people and organizational culture as on policies and technology. Empowering public servants, enhancing workforce skills, fostering collaboration, and cultivating leadership based on trust are essential drivers of change. Institutions that embrace forward-looking strategies, encourage experimentation, and prioritize working alongside partners will be better equipped to navigate uncertainty and reap the benefits of digital transformation.