

16th Session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA)

24 to 28 April 2017

Written Statement by Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM)

Agenda item 3: Ensuring effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals through leadership, action and means, (a) understanding the needs of local authorities and communities and supporting and equipping them for the implementation of the SDGs; (d) development of principles of effective governance; and (e) strategies for integrated action to achieve poverty eradication: implications for public institutions.

The Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management, known as CAPAM, takes a leading role as a centre of excellence in public administration, good governance knowledge and leading practices among Commonwealth member states. Due to CAPAM's position as a practitioner-focused organisation, CAPAM recognizes, alongside the Committee of Experts on Public Administration, the role of public administration and effective governance in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). CAPAM thanks the Committee for its continued commitment to strengthening the engagement of the actors, such as CAPAM and its members, in supporting the achievement of the SDGs.

The SDG agenda is ambitious and sprawling, and justifiably so, as governments and development actors recognize and are responding to the multi-sectoral and inter-related nature of the majority of these goals. The majority of SDGs can be tied to the role of public administration, whether it is increasing women's participation in political decision-making, policy coordination and coherence, access to justice, or sustainable public procurement practices, or many other issues. The SDGs therefore call for an approach of "integrated action" which emphasises the central role of government, as noted in the background document on successfully achieving the SDGs (E/C.16/2017/2). If states are to make great strides in successfully delivering on the SDGs, implementing bodies can no longer operate in a vacuum. CAPAM supports that "government remains the most important enabling institution of any society" (E/C.16/2017/2). CAPAM subscribes to the One UN approach in that it agrees public service and its experts need to pursue a transformative approach in a coordinated way that brings all relevant actors together to positively and coherently impact on effective governance and public administration.

After more than 20 years working across the public service, CAPAM is cognizant of and monitoring the issues and trends in public administration transformation in the context of the rise of social media; managing the increasing politicisation of the public service; maximizing the use of audits as a tool for transformation; understanding the shifting roles within levels of government in relation to the private and non-profit sectors; and restoring confidence in public institutions given the climate of scepticism and trust. CAPAM remains committed to sharing its experiences and expert base through global consultative fora and engaging its roster of public service experts to encourage national efforts which support coherence with international imperatives.

The success of the SDGs is directly influenced by government capacity and the effectiveness of a country's public sector (E/C.16/2017/2). CAPAM's intent has been and remains to enhance service delivery and management practices, and improve capacity for public sector reform and innovation. To this end, CAPAM's value lies in its facilitative role in delivering social and technical innovations for collaborative governance. Through CAPAM's event canvas and learning programmes, the organisation supports tremendous opportunities in transforming governance and unlocking human potential. Through its publication, the Commonwealth Innovations Review, as well as through CAPAM's International Innovations Awards, CAPAM endeavours to provide its membership with cutting-edge research and leading practices in public administration. Large numbers of public servants from around the world attend CAPAM's biennial conferences and there is great demand for its custom learning programs and country-specific learning activities. Currently, CAPAM is preparing knowledge exchange and training programmes for 2017 and welcomes any indications of interest from member states on these initiatives going forward.

CAPAM's strengths lie with its existing network of senior leaders from the public service. Valued key features of this network include the convening power associated with CAPAM's international events; facilitating peer-to-peer connection and knowledge exchange, and sharing Commonwealth resources and expertise. Public sector jobs around the world are "devalued as a first career choice and there is a need to create an improved incentivising and attractive framework without sacrificing the requirements of ethical conduct in the public sector" (E/C.16/2017/3). For succession planning and sustainability, CAPAM recognises the pressing need for engaging emerging leaders and mid-level managers, and warmly extends the invitation to collaborate with public servants at all levels.

Aligning with the 2015 UN World Public Sector Report, CAPAM supports the fundamental principles of public administration, namely responsiveness and accountability, serving as a forum and centre of excellence for citizen-centred service delivery, among others. This demonstrates the harkening of a new era where a proactive state exercises democratic governance through active and dynamic public administration. This, in turn, requires a highly-skilled and competent professional public service workforce. Noting the recommendation to "upgrade, professionalize, motivate, train and build the capacity of human resources at the local level" (E/C.16/2017/3), CAPAM agrees that the time is now to support upgrading and building the capacity of human resources at all levels of government. CAPAM remains committed to addressing the needs of Commonwealth public servants in terms of global positioning, expertise, skills and professionalisation.

Referring to the Committee's outcome document from the 15th session, CAPAM is actively pursuing avenues in information and communication technology (ICT) which enable transparency and accountability in order to ensure that government is open, inclusive and participatory. CAPAM notes its potential to foster collaborative and integrated approaches towards public sector services and its beneficiaries. CAPAM stands ready to facilitate the requirements of an accountable government by harnessing the benefits of open and big data to strengthen policy planning and optimize public service analytical tools. These measures will directly inform and impact upon meeting the SDG targets. Therefore, CAPAM is leveraging the strategic value of ICTs as the Commonwealth states implement the 2030 Agenda. CAPAM wants to encourage innovation and risk-taking in public administration through its International Innovation Awards and the development of a forthcoming platform of connectivity to serve Commonwealth countries through a network-based model. CAPAM understands that to make significant inroads in knowledge exchange and networking in the

public service, it must employ more innovative mechanisms that continuously learn from user interactions and searches to capture, curate and disseminate information and data, ensure relevancy and deliver knowledge to users in timely and meaningful ways.

CAPAM supports the recommendation to promote ownership of the various sustainable development agendas by public servants at all levels (E/C.16/2017/3). Knowledge sharing, awareness-raising, adaptation of leading practices, and participatory dialogues can be facilitated across the globe through ICTs, and above all, the phenomenon of big data. Realising the far-reaching potential of such waves of change, CAPAM's technological priorities are to provide access to a much broader scope of data and information to support practitioners with evidence-based decision-making and strengthened knowledge flows. CAPAM's intended platform would allow users to quickly process and leverage patterns and links, make connections between different types of research, establish collaboration, equip public servants to be more effective and assist in evidence-based decision-making. In support of the Committee's 15th session outcome document, CAPAM already has begun the initial phases of such an intuitive and intelligent internet-enabled platform. However, CAPAM is also sensitive to the impediments that technology innovations can encounter, leading to different rates of adoption, adaptation, and success. CAPAM remains committed to supporting Commonwealth countries in delivering appropriate and context-relevant knowledge products and services, and welcomes feedback regarding potential technical constraints.

As a leading organisation in public administration and management, CAPAM is at the juncture of maximizing its resources and networks to convene public servants to network and exchange knowledge, as well as explore digital platforms to encourage user-focused research and learning. CAPAM commits to supporting good governance through access to this resource so that governments are better able to fulfil their mandates, serve their citizens transparently, and catalyse progress towards the SDGs.