

UNITED NATIONS



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**Remarks**  
**COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, 19TH SESSION**

**Virtual Format**  
**Wednesday, 27 May 2020, 10:15 AM**

Madame Chairperson (*Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi of South Africa*),  
Distinguished CEPA Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee. The United Nations has continued its business amidst the Covid-19 crisis, and in many ways has intensified its schedule.

I understand that many of you also have been contending with extremely busy calendars. I am deeply grateful to the Bureau and the Committee Members for your dedication and commitment, and for convening the CEPA 19<sup>th</sup> session in virtual format.

Let me take this opportunity to welcome new Members – Mr. Devon Rowe (*Jamaica*) and Mr. Henry Sardaryan (*Russian Federation*).

I am sure you, along with the other Members, will contribute your wisdom and insights to the work of the Economic and Social Council and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Indeed, CEPA plays a key role in supporting the work of these important bodies in strengthening public institutions and effective governance for sustainable development.

I also use this occasion to extend my appreciation to Cristina Duarte for serving on DESA's High-level Advisory Board on Economic and Social Affairs. And I thank CEPA Members for supporting the Department's normative, analytical and capacity building work in recent years, as well as the contributions by CEPA Observers. Their written contributions have been posted on the CEPA website.

This Committee and its Observers are making multiple contributions to the work of the United Nations.

The Committee has before it a forward-looking agenda, well aligned with the United Nations Decade of Action for Delivering the SDGs. Your focus on promoting effective governance and institutional reform – and on building Government institutions and public-sector workforce of the future – is at the heart of efforts to accelerate delivery of the SDGs.

Recent experience indicates that progress in advancing the SDGs has slowed because of a general undervaluing of the public sector. This has impeded effective public administration and essential service delivery that are key to leaving no one behind.

Now is the time to double down and expedite the implementation of the 11 Principles of Effective Governance for Sustainable Development, elaborated by this Committee and endorsed by the ECOSOC in 2018.

We need to work together to assist Member States in putting these Principles into practice and reviewing outcomes. In this regard, I want to thank CEPA Chairperson Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi for your leadership in driving the implementation of these Principles in Africa, in close partnership with the African Union.

DESA will continue working with the Committee in developing national and regional capacities to integrate these Principles with delivery of the SDGs. This will include enhancing training and awareness- raising for the SDGs.

Strong institutions are the bedrock for the success of SDG implementation strategies, including in post-conflict peace-building. This was demonstrated by the Committee's thought-provoking deliberations last week. Indeed, public institutions are critical in promoting integrated approaches to achieve long-term peace and development, as well as short-term requirements for security, and access to basic services.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed weaknesses in institutional responses. Yet, the Committee has rightly pointed to the ability of Governments to take extraordinary steps in response, underlining their renewed commitment to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

In this regard, I note with appreciation the Committee's emphasis on action, to:

- recognize essential service workers in the public sector,
- strengthen public sector capabilities for the SDGs,
- invest in the future public-sector workforce,
- expand use of digital technologies,
- address digital divides, and
- strengthen local government finance and financial management.

A key lesson from the current fight against the pandemic is the important role of sub-national and local governments in delivering the SDGs. State, provincial and municipal governments are often the first-level providers for delivering essential services that are targets of the SDGs.

In this context, the Committee's work on emerging issues in public financial management and budgeting for the SDGs is timely.

As pointed out by the Committee, unbalanced budgeting – with underspending in sectors critical to sustainable development and overspending in others – continues to affect public financial management. These challenges are exacerbated by limited opportunities for citizens to participate in budgeting, and limited capacities of oversight institutions to effectively audit budget performance.

Better budgeting within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is therefore critical. As stressed in several voluntary national reviews (VNRs), the mapping of

budgetary contributions to each SDG can also improve budget performance evaluation. Strengthened fiscal transparency is essential to ensure accountability and deliver on the Decade of Action.

DESA's 2019 World Public Sector Report also stressed that budgeting is critical to sustainable development objectives, public spending, and outcomes.

Distinguished CEPA Members,

The COVID-19 pandemic may set back progress in the attainment of the SDGs in the near term. But how its long-term consequences will shape up, depends on us human beings. Many Governments are taking actions to 'fast-track' reform measures to address institutional weaknesses and re-energize the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. As the Committee's own deliberations have demonstrated, the pandemic presents a unique opportunity to rethink the role of public institutions and the public sector in achieving the SDGs.

The challenges and risks posed by the pandemic to the public sector have put to test the 11 Principles of Effective Governance. These Principles have proven highly relevant in all contexts, including in the current crisis. They should guide future efforts to invest in capacities for:

- planning,
- risk management,
- integrated policymaking,
- digital government and
- service delivery.

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs stands ready to support the Committee in its important work. I look forward to a fruitful outcome of the 19th session of CEPA.

Thank you.

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