

# Observers' Consultations: 20<sup>th</sup> Session of CEPA

## Remarks from South Asian Network for Public Administration (SANPA)

### Mr. Chair and colleagues

Thank you very much for allowing us to share the South Asian Network for Public Administration (SANPA) observations in the observers' consultations of the 20th session of CEPA. SANPA is a network of academics and practitioners from countries of the South Asia region or research interest in development and governance in South Asia. For details, please visit <https://southasianetwork.org/>. In the beginning, we appreciate the CEPA and its secretariat allowing us to discuss the importance of institutions for realizing the SDGs.

SANPA is deeply committed to realizing the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development, and thus, it focuses on its research and advocacy of efficiency and inclusivity in the civil service. We make our observations from the civil service's point of view.

SANPA strongly believes that the CEPA has profound roles in advancing the professional civil service agenda across the world. However, we note that the roles and contributions of CEPA have not been as visible as they should have been. It is only limited to the domain of academics and experts and even though it is on a limited scale. So is the case with the World Public Sector Report. We strongly urge the UN-CEPA to make its works more visible and influential by reaching out to different stakeholders such as the government, non-government organizations, civil society organizations, and research communities. The World Public Sector Report is not released regularly; instead, it is an irregular exercise. SANPA underlines that the Public Sector Report should be one of the flagship tasks of UN-CEPA, and it should get currency as the HDR of the UNDP.

The experience of the rapid development of the Southeast Asian countries underlines that without a professional civil service, accelerated growth in social and economic domains cannot happen. By professional civil service, we mean that it must be politically insulated. The UNDP HDR 2013 rightly emphasized the importance of a professional civil service.

In our view, the politicization of the civil service in many developing countries is the big elephant in the room. Unfortunately, there is a deliberate attempt at the global level in our assessment, particularly at the UN, that there is no discussion on the politicization of bureaucracy. The essence of SDGs is inclusivity. Therefore, the state institutions should also be inclusive and apolitical; otherwise general public cannot benefit from public services and systems. Except some advanced countries, in all cases now the bureaucracy is exploited for the interest of the ruling coteries. In some instances, bureaucracy is used to curb people's rights and civil liberty. Because of the over politicization of bureaucracy, individual bureaucrats cannot do anything but are compelled to follow the dictates of the ruling elites. Therefore, we strongly appeal to the CEPA to develop a framework for all countries of the world to ensure political

insulation of the bureaucracy to make it inclusive and make governance and public policies beneficial for the general people.

The 11 points of effective governance adopted by CEPA cannot be realized without the political neutrality of the bureaucracy and autonomous work environment. Finally, we formally request the UN CEPA to make **ensuring the civil service's political neutrality an international agenda for realizing the SDGs**. The CEPA in its next meeting should discuss this important issue to feed in the background materials of UNHLPF.

We again thank the CEPA Secretariat for inviting us to make this note. We remain committed to supporting the activities of UN CEPA. We look forward to a strengthened partnership in the future.

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Secretary-General, SANPA