

**18th Session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA)
8 to 12 April 2019**

Written statement by the Hellenic Association of Political Scientists

Agenda item 6. Building institutions to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and provide access to justice for all

Fostering Inclusiveness and Equality through Public Administration and Cooperative Governance

Contemporary discussions about development are inevitably linked to the 2030 Agenda. Zooming into Goal No.16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, the Hellenic Association of Political Scientists believes that institutions have rightfully earned their place in the post 2015 development agenda. Making use of its special consultative status in the United Nations Economic and Social Council, the Hellenic Association of Political Scientists submits the present statement on building strong institutions for equal and inclusive societies, addressing the 18th session of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration.

With Goal No.16 emphasizing inclusionary politics, insights should focus on what inclusion entails. Thinking governance both in terms of legal and constitutional arrangements but also as those forces that promote security, coherence and effectiveness enables its understanding as something wider than public administration. Managing development and inclusiveness through institutional agents requires going beyond purely governmental institutions, proposing diverse and cooperative capacity building initiatives characterized by partnerships between the public and the private sector as well as the civil society. Cooperative governance can constitute a crucial first step towards the aim of inclusion, covering a wide enough spectrum of the social stratification of each society and establishing discursive processes on the basis of communicative action. At the same time, perceiving the process of governance as one that should be conducted by the people for the people with the people, greater emphasis should be placed on the extent to which political processes can be characterized as democratic on the basis of their legitimacy. Examining the evaluation of the deliberative character of decision making should go beyond citizens' acceptance. It should be also conducted on the basis of various legitimate means including accountability, transparency, openness and efficacy. Therefore, institutional legitimacy should be enforced, on the one hand, by giving a direct influence to organized groups in policy making. However, this step towards inclusiveness should not come without limitations, especially when taking into account how easily privileged organized groups can monopolize lobbying due to their considerable organizational and financial resources. In short, the process of deliberation should be guided by equitable allocation of political power.

On the other hand, actions regarding the empowerment of the poor and the disadvantaged should be further fostered in the context of inclusive and legitimate governance. Although many democratic orders in theory safeguard the inclusion of marginalized groups in society, they tend to violate this norm of inclusion through both external and internal exclusion in political will-formation processes. What arises out of it, is that often those who are in need to make claims about injustice are already excluded from direct participation. Polity-centered opportunities of political deliberations should be a

priority ensuring that whose basic interests are affected by public policies should be included in the process of making them. The Hellenic Association of Political Scientists believes that this objective can become more attainable through digital governance. In general, designing formal channels for people to express their views on draft laws and policies should become broadly available formulated in plain language. This, of course, encompasses the obligation of the governmental bodies to enforce their ability to productively take into account these forms of popular deliberation.

Empowerment of the disadvantaged groups should be also built on the basis of knowledge, self-confidence and enrichment. Ensuring the provision of educational and knowledge enriching opportunities for the socially and politically marginalized groups sets the foundation for their representation and ultimately their participation at the governmental level. Here is where public administration should play an active role, given that it is national councils for sustainable development and national parliaments that are supposed to promote inclusiveness as a key factor for sustainable development. Parliaments function as specialists who can actually target and tackle specific problems of underdevelopment and exclusion that manifest themselves in each country. Partnerships between the public sector and organizations representing civil society's needs can make this target more doable. The indicators published by the United Nations should be used as guidelines for this purpose. However, governmental bodies should be in the position of assessing what institutional combinations and which institutional characteristics are effectively dealing with certain goals, including the one about inclusiveness as precondition for development, making sure that cohesion is present.

Looking at issues more directly linked to public administration, governments should be more critical about privatization schemes, preventing patterns of exclusion from fundamental welfare mechanisms. Weakened monitoring of administrative mechanisms should be reformed, eliminating bureaucracy and curbing corruption. A more critical approach should be also attempted when discussing and applying decentralization processes. The widespread perception that decentralization can boost inclusive governance, is usually expressed without enough attention being paid to the social composition and the political situation of any region in question. Employing decentralization should always come with concerns related to elite capture especially when decentralization policies target societies with significant discrepancies. Therefore, implementing decentralization as a means of distributing political power and creating more channels for citizens to access the political system, should not be regarded as one size fits all model. It should be rather enforced as a policy in those societies which possess the socio-political arrangements to make something out of it and under central intervention as a way of ensuring pro-poor policies at the local level.

Moving into the field of fiscal management, cultivating understanding of governmental financial priorities through publicly accessed and comprehensible documentation promotes open government both in general and in relation to the use of various resources for the SDGs. As with decentralization, the one size fits all model should be also avoided at the international level as long as financial founding is concerned. Discussing financial management in the context of development, developmental assistance should move away from broadly implemented program that usually promote the interests of the provider at the expense of the receiver in need.

Institutions set the basis for the articulation of each country's development objectives, translate them into action and are held accountable for the results. The Hellenic Association of Political Scientists believes that setting cooperative institutional frameworks based on integrity, participation, representation, accessibility for all and effectiveness is a mobilizing force in the process of building inclusive, peaceful and secure societies.

The Hellenic Association of Political Scientist is grateful for having had the opportunity to express its views regarding the primary role that institutions have to play in enhancing and ensuring the well-being of citizens.

* Responsible for the editing of the statement: Eva Karamichail