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Written statement by Administrative Staff College of India

Agenda item 3: Enhancing the capacity of the public sector in core functional areas of administration

Capacity Building of Civil Servants for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals

Civil services are the lynchpin for implementing public policy in most of the nations. Though their composition, influence and structures may vary as per local legacies, laws and power relationships, they have an undeniable imprint on the destiny of nations and societies since the first formal bureaucratic structures were put in place in China during Qing dynasty in 221-207 BCE and even before. Modern bureaucracies can be traced to 18th-century colonisation in which British and French took the lead and were philosophically influenced by the Chinese example to create administrative structures. Bureaucracies are purposefully resistant to change and are mainly focused on providing continuity through peaceful and tumultuous times to maintaining a semblance of stability and cohesion.

In the context of Sustainable Development Goals, one can argue that they are ambitious, but not a radical idea. They have been developed through a collaborative process involving all the stakeholders, and most of the people would agree with the broad vision behind the global efforts to help the people build a better life for themselves and future generations in a sustainable manner.

Though, in a sense, it is not difficult for the civil servants to adapt existing national programmes and goals in line with Sustainable Development Goals, bureaucratic inertia and political priorities can play a spoilsport in achieving the desired objectives. According to UNDP, Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) depends on the civil servants in developing and transitioning countries; they are a crucial variable in the performance of governments and the outcomes they can deliver. Therefore, any effective planning, implementation and monitoring strategy for SDGs has to focus on making public servants, its key champions and stakeholders.

For this, the role of diverse civil services structures is to be aligned. Every country has its peculiarities regarding civil services and they have put in place various institutional arrangements to deliver on 2030 agenda. Indonesia and Brazil, have put in place a separate structure to administer the planning and implementation of SDGs. Some other countries, including India, have entrusted existing highest policy advisory body NITI Aayog (Headed by the Prime Minister) with the task of coordination for implementing SDGs. However, report prepared by it and presented in High Level Political Forum 2018 was merely superficial filling of existing schemes and programmes in SDG format. Practically, it would be difficult for any country to create an entirely separate administrative structure for achieving SDGs. A workable solution is to fine-tune existing structures and sensitise the civil servants on the need for

implementation and equip them with the knowledge and skills to interpret these goals in their local environment. Administrative roadblocks to these efforts need to be removed by higher level political and policy interventions.

To address this challenge, it is essential to understand what drives a civil servant. It is crucial that the right incentives and levers be used to motivate civil servants. This issue can be tackled by high-level commitment, communication and right kind of incentives. Capacity building initiatives also have to play a seminal role in this endeavour, and this will require a different approach in different countries.

The way a public servant is trained, is different in different countries. However, a basic structure of three layers of training, i.e. **induction, mid-career and specialist** is mostly familiar to all. It is imperative that at all levels SDGs are introduced for all level of officials.

Creating a curriculum for these initiatives and creating a hard and soft infrastructure requires top-level commitment and interventions. These initiatives also are to be delivered through innovative methods. In India, online interventions, case studies, street plays and exposure visits are found to be quite useful for capacity building in the social sector.

Schools of Government and training academies have to play an important role in this endeavour. These academies are the window of civil servants to the outside world especially the parts to which they are not directly exposed to in their day to day work.

These training institutions have different administrative and working structures. Some are directly under ministries like Lal Bahadur Shastri Academy in India or The Bangladesh Civil Service Administration Academy in Bangladesh or The National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN) in Malaysia. Some are autonomous with a close link to Government Like INAP Mexico, Administrative Staff College of India, Indian Institute of Public Administration etc. Many academies are service specific like police or foreign service (e.g. Foreign Service Institute in the USA), and others have more varied agenda like ENAP Brazil. Moreover, there are multiple state and local level academies, like in India almost every state has its own Regional Training Institute.

As these schools/academies or training institutions are at the forefront of providing latest knowledge to the civil servants and also play an important role in moulding their thought process, practical strategies for achieving SDGs needs buy-in from these institutions. They have to not only get motivated to develop new curriculums and methods of delivery but also need adequate human and other resources for developing relevant training programmes. Developing a model curriculum with the specific input and resources can go a long way in helping these institutions to make SDG an essential part of their capacity building offerings.