

United Nations  
Committee of Experts on Public Administration  
Sixteenth session

**Readying institutions and policies for integrated approaches to implementation of the 2030 Agenda - remarks on the expert meeting held from 14 to 16 December 2016 in Vienna by Mrs. Pontso Sekatle**

24 April 2017, 11:30 a.m., Conference Room 1

**Context and objectives of the meeting**

An expert meeting on readying institutions and policies for integrated approaches to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda was held in Vienna from 14 to 16 December 2016. José Castelazo and I participated as CEPA members.

The expert meeting aimed to reflect on how Governments can be best organized and work so as to develop and implement integrated policies to realize the SDGs. Such policies are necessary to reflect interrelations among the SDGs, build on synergies and address trade-offs.

The meeting could be seen as part of the continuing efforts of CEPA to explore and advise on institutional arrangements and work flows in support of policy coherence and integrated approaches to implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

An increasing number of countries have been putting in place inter-ministerial structures and other arrangements to ensure integrated implementation of the SDGs across the Government and with various actors. These are sometimes chaired by the highest level of Government.

But, this may not be enough. It is also important to find ways to ensure cooperation and integrated approaches among institutions dealing with closely interrelated targets under the SDGs.

A vivid illustration of the magnitude of the challenge was given by Sri Lanka where there are 425 line agencies in 51 ministries dealing with some aspect of the SDGs. Zooming in, “only” 63 agencies in 27 ministries were reportedly linked to the SDG 1 targets on poverty eradication.

**Understanding important linkages among SDGs**

Since the 2030 Agenda was adopted, a multitude of actors have built methodologies and developed empirical work to identify interrelationships, synergies and trade-offs among the SDGs.

It will be important to assess how these methodologies can be adapted to different country contexts, and in particular contexts where government capacity is limited, such as in LDCs and countries emerging from conflicts.

In Vienna, we focused on the group of SDGs to be reviewed by the HLPF in July 2017, namely the SDGs on eradicating poverty, ending hunger, ensuring healthy lives, achieving gender equality, building resilient infrastructure and promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and oceans (Goals 1, 2, 3, 5, 9 and 14) as well as SDG 17 on means of implementation.

A study of the interactions among these SDGs, and all other SDGs, was commissioned by the Secretariat for the meeting and prepared by Professor Måns Nilsson of the Stockholm Environment Institute drawing on insights from the International Council for Science and in-depth studies of SDG interactions by expert teams around the world. Other mapping efforts were shared.

### **Challenges for institutions of integrated strategies for poverty eradication**

Poverty eradication is a main theme of the 2017 HLPF and current ECOSOC cycle, so by way of illustration I will make some remarks about the discussion on “eradicating poverty as a cross cutting objective of institutions and SDG policies” – i.e. on our reflections on SDG 1.

We observed that poverty is a multi-dimensional concept, going beyond income alone to include elements such as jobs, health, education, housing and other living standards. Solutions need to address these other dimensions, which interact with each other in dynamic ways.

Solutions therefore need to be designed and implemented across sectors. Since it is not feasible to have ‘more of everything’, synergies and trade-offs must be recognized, and leveraged.

Once the interlinkages, synergies and trade-offs in a particular context are understood, institutional challenges arise relating to the development of a policy and legal framework for inter-sectoral cooperation.

And, integrated strategies for poverty eradication need to be underpinned by reasonably effective public financial management and mobilization of domestic resources.

In other SDG areas – food security, health, gender equality, sustainable industrialization, oceans – the linkages and the actors are different. So the institutional challenges will be different as well as being related to the cultures, societies, histories and politics within which these institutions exist.

### **Key messages and conclusions for public administration**

Several countries provided examples of how institutional coordination has been enhanced to address the SDGs – such as National Councils, inter-ministerial committees, clustering of agencies and ministries to work on specific themes, parliamentary commissions on SDGs, national sustainable development strategies, and systematic mappings of institutional mandates in relation to the SDG targets.

At the end of the day, successful approaches will be those that provide clear guidance for political processes to set priorities that balance long-term objectives with short-term needs, and reflect those priorities and needs in budget decisions.

Decades of attempts at enhancing integration remind us of the need to address incentive structures in institutions and government – there should be incentives for collaboration and for the adoption of holistic approaches at both the political and working levels.

Understanding the important interrelations among the SDGs is critical to accelerate their implementation. But this has to go beyond complex mappings to the formulation of simple and straightforward messages which illustrate the policy implications of these interrelations and can be used by decision makers.

Several participants pointed to the crucial role of parliaments to interpret the SDGs and guide national implementation, which goes beyond a mere role in monitoring progress.

It will be critical to consider all levels, including subnational levels. The national level is of primary importance, but the local and municipal level is where much of the practical decision-making is made.

Civil society and the private sector must also be involved in decision-making – not least so that stakeholders understand the linkages and can actively contribute to leveraging synergies and help determine how to resolve trade-offs.

*The full report of the expert meeting is available online at*

<http://workspace.unpan.org/sites/Internet/Documents/Report%20Vienna%20meeting%20FINAL.docx.pdf>.

*The background paper on understanding interlinkages is available online at*

<http://workspace.unpan.org/sites/Internet/Documents/UNPAN96735.pdf>