Symposium on

"Strengthening the Capacities of Public Institutions & Developing Effective Partnerships to Realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development"

24-26 October 2018

Incheon, Republic of Korea

Aide-Mémoire

Organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)
Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG)
in collaboration with the Ministry of the Interior and Safety of the Republic of Korea

I.   Context

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the need to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies that provide equal access to justice and that are based on respect for human rights (including the right to development), on effective rule of law and good governance at all levels and on transparent, effective and accountable institutions" (A/RES/70/1, para. 35). Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda specifically calls for effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

The 2030 Agenda also encourages all United Nations Member States to "develop as soon as practicable ambitious national responses to the overall implementation of this Agenda". The SDGs and the commitments contained in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the SAMOA Pathway, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and other agreements adopted by UN member states are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. They need to be implemented in a complementary and synergistic way. Institutions need new capacities and knowledge to provide integrated support to implementation and to "leave no one behind".

Many governments in Asia and the Pacific have made good progress in implementing the SDGs since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. They have been adapting the SDG targets to their national circumstances and priorities and incorporating them in their policies and development plans where applicable. They are adapting their institutions, engaging local governments, parliaments and other actors in some cases; and identifying follow-up and review structures. The SDGs, as an integrated framework, call for the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches, and this exercise informs implementation efforts.

Good practices, lessons and challenges are already emerging. These were discussed at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in July 2016 when 22 countries from all regions carried out the first voluntary national reviews. The discussions continued at the HLPF in July 2017 for which 43 countries presented their national follow-up and review. 46 countries presented their national review during the 2018 HLPF, which concluded with a Ministerial Declaration in which Member States reiterated their commitments to eradicating poverty, expressing concerns that poverty remains a principle cause of hunger, and stressed the importance of taking collective measures to make an impact, among other goals. An increasing number of countries in the Asia and the Pacific region, including some countries in special situations such as Afghanistan, Bhutan, Fiji, and Laos, presented their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) during the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. They shared good practices, lessons learned and challenges in their efforts to implement the SDGs. In 2019, the HLPF will review SDG 16 which aims to "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels."

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) has organized several regional Symposiums on the theme of equipping public institutions for implementing the 2030 Agenda, including in Bolivia, Bahamas, Ethiopia and the Republic of Korea.

Against this backdrop, UN DESA's Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government, in collaboration with its Project Office on Governance (UNPOG), is organizing the second Regional Asia-Pacific Symposium in Incheon, Republic of Korea, with support from the Ministry of the Interior and Safety and Incheon City Government of the Republic of Korea.

II.   Background

The first Regional Symposium in Asia and the Pacific organized by DPIDG/UNDESA, in collaboration with its Project Office on Governance (UNPOG), and with the support of the Government of the Republic of Korea was held from 5 to 8 December 2017 in Incheon, Republic of Korea, on "*Building Effective, Accountable and Inclusive Institutions and Public Administration for Advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*". The Symposium was attended by 169 participants and key messages emerged as follows:

- *A paradigm shift is needed in governance. Institutions need a much greater focus on people, innovation, partnerships and data, and leadership is needed at all levels of government and within public administrations.*
- *Whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches have been highlighted as crucial due to the integrated nature and multi-disciplinary challenges of the SDGs.*

- *Public servants are essential to transform the vision of the 2030 Agenda into reality and need to be sensitized to the SDGs and to learn new skills and competencies. Ultimately, we need to promote a change of mindsets in the public service– which requires much more reflection and innovation.*
- *It is important to sensitize local leaders to the 2030 Agenda, to keep them engaged and to identify champions, as the implementation of the SDGs is taking place largely at local level. The resource allocation should reflect local governments' responsibilities in public services.*
- *Complex and large challenges exist for countries to identify or define vulnerable groups, which may require concerted efforts by different institutions such as the ministry of planning, national statistical office and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) management. This is critical to ensure that government support and aid packages can be channeled to the "real" poor people and reduce corruption.*
- *Information technology and e-Government are important enabling tools to support the transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies.*
- *Tracking and reviewing progress at national level is key for reaching the SDGs. National oversight bodies such as parliaments and supreme audit institutions are already working together across countries to boost their capacity and elaborate methods to oversee government implementation of the SDGs.*

The second Asia-Pacific Symposium on "*Strengthening Capacities of Public Institutions & Developing Effective Partnerships to Realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*" will provide the opportunity to have a more in-depth discussion of some of the issues addressed during the first Symposium and explore new emerging trends affecting public institutions.

III.   Objective

The Symposium will provide a platform for decision-makers to discuss challenges and share knowledge on how to strengthen public governance and bolster capacities of public institutions to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Asia and the Pacific. Selected Eastern Africa countries will also benefit from the discussions. It will be the opportunity to take stock and learn from many innovative approaches to public service delivery that aim to leave no one behind, engage all stakeholders in decision-making processes, and leverage new technologies for good. It will also focus on the key role that partnerships can play in achieving the SDGs, including partnerships between developed and developing countries. The Symposium is expected to contribute to the 2019 High Level Political Forum (HLPF), which will review SDG 4 (quality education), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 13 (climate action), SDG 16 (pubic institutions) and SDG 17 (building global partnership). It will help strengthen partnerships through North-South, South-South, and triangular cooperation.

IV.   Themes for discussion

The Symposium will focus on strengthening capacities of public institutions and developing effective partnerships to realize the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through five thematic plenary sessions and several parallel working groups.

Session I - "Taking stock of the implementation of SDG 16 on effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions in Asia and the Pacific – Lessons Learned and Good Practices".
Public institutions have a lead role in implementing the SDGs through the policies they make and public services they deliver. Yet, public institutions in many developing countries are not well equipped to address the SDG challenges as the Agenda 2030 puts in place an ambitious integrated framework, which requires whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches. The Capacity Needs Assessment of Government Institutions to Implement the 2030 Agenda, which was conducted by DPIDG/UNPOG from July 2017 to April 2018, shows that developing countries in the region need to make institutions more effective by ensuring institutional coordination and policy coherence, as well as utilizing ICT and advancing digital government.

In this session, selected countries will present lessons learned and good practices in setting up or fine-tuning institutional arrangements for the implementation of the SDGs. They will also take stock of their progress in making institutions more effective, inclusive and accountable. DPIDG/UNPOG will share the findings of the above-mentioned survey.

Session II - "Effective public institutions and digital government for advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)" Multiple linkages of e-government to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are highlighted in delivering key services across Goals and targets, such as health, education, social protection, gender equality, decent work and employment, and public security. Advancing digital government is not just about improving institutional processes and workflows for greater effectiveness of public service delivery. It is also about ensuring inclusion, participation and accountability to leave no one behind. New opportunities and challenges for public institutions will arise with the Fourth industrial revolution, which will have a far-reaching impact on public governance and the way institutions and people interact and collaborate. The Fourth Industrial Revolution characterized by robotics, Artificial Intelligence, the Internet of Things has the potential to make service delivery more inclusive and enhance the participation of all people in public decision-making processes, especially vulnerable groups. It will also pose many challenges and risks that will need to be addressed, including loss of jobs as we know them today and cyber-security related issues. At present, only a few countries are exploiting the use of frontier technologies in government and are preparing to embrace the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Many developing countries are concerned that the pace and evolution of technological innovation could surpass the capacity of governments to cope with large-scale changes in society and the economy.

This session will focus on how digital government can address the SDGs to be reviewed by 2019 HLPF. Specifically, the session will explore how digital government can be leveraged for building resilience (smart and resilient cities – SDG 11), addressing climate risks (SDG 13), improving inclusive education (SDG 4) and promoting decent work and economic growth (SDG 8). It will also analyze the impact of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and frontier technologies on public governance and public institutions. It will look at how collaboration among all stakeholders can be fostered to reap the benefits of the Fourth industrial revolution. This session will explore how to address the challenges and social inequalities that may emerge with the Fourth industrial revolution. Discussion will revolve around how to establish adaptive ethical and legal frameworks, promote transformative leadership and strengthen capacities of public institutions for future governance.

Session III - "Inclusive institutions for SDG implementation: Ensuring Inclusion and Participation in Decision Making of the Poorest and Most Vulnerable Groups" This session will address issues related to the inclusion and participation of vulnerable groups in the implementation of SDGs 4, 5, 10, and 13. The challenges of an ageing society will also be discussed, considering the special needs, the poverty levels and marginalization of older persons in society. How to engage the youth in education as well as how to increase the participation of women in policy-making will be explored through presentations and group discussions.

Session IV - "Accountable institutions for SDG implementation: Data, Statistics and Analytics for Monitoring, Review and Follow-up" The implications of Agenda 2030 for the accompanying monitoring framework are enormous. The global indicator framework contains 232 indicators, addressing each of the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda. The full implementation of the indicator framework to monitor the SDGs, especially in social and environmental spheres, presents a significant challenge for all countries. The lack of statistical capacity in many developing countries is hindering their understanding of whether they are moving in the right direction and whether they are making sufficient progress. The lack of statistical capacity, especially the inability to use new data sources and technologies for producing short term indicators and making rapid assessments, significantly reduces the chances of the public to track the progress of government efforts in pursuing the 2030 Agenda. Open government data and government innovation also hinge on the strengthening of statistical capacity, not just of national statistical offices but also of other government departments and relevant stakeholders as well. This session will focus on how to strengthen statistical capacity to enhance pubic institutions' accountability through producing reliable and timely indicators for monitoring, review and follow-up of the SDG implementation.

Session V - "Public Governance Innovations to Strengthen Resilience" Finite borders and finite resources require Island States to address sustainable development and resilience strategies in tandem. Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change and the increasing intensity and frequency of natural disasters. There have been persistent calls from SIDS for greater capacity development on finance and technology transfer for risk-informed development policy and decision-making. This session will provide an opportunity to exchange ideas on how to address the special needs of island states in strengthening resilience. Group discussions

will focus on strengthening resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters; leveraging digital government for strengthening resilience including through open data and other frontier technologies; and building partnerships for promoting mechanisms able to raise capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in LDCs and SIDS. Particular attention will be given to policy measures and areas of particular concern to women, youth and local and marginalized communities.

Session VI - "Partnership-Building Session" Goal 17 of the 2030 Agenda underscores the importance of partnerships as a means of implementation. Target 9 of Goal 17 focuses on the importance of capacity-building. Member States have committed to enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the sustainable development goals, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation. This session will explore new models of partnerships and highlight the importance of developing innovative partnerships among governments, civil society and the private sector for SDG implementation. It will also look at how to strengthen North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation to advance SDG implementation. Lessons learned from this session will help to inform the activities of DPIDG/UNPOG on how to better support developing countries' efforts to build capacities of public institutions and to promote effective partnerships.

Parallel Training Workshop on "Mobilizing and equipping public servants to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals"

The training workshop on "Mobilizing and equipping public servants to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals" is organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) through its Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG). The purpose of the training workshop is to engage with the task force of schools of public administration from Asia and the Pacific to develop and update curricula to reflect the SDGs. This includes updating training offers to integrate the key principles and objectives of the 2030 Agenda and developing the relevant competences that public-sector leaders and public servants require to effectively support the achievement of the SDGs. The meeting will also discuss what it takes to transform mindsets, what has worked and what has not worked and what new methodologies are helping to change mindsets in the public sector.

V. Structure

The 3-day Regional Symposium will consist of a half-day study visit, two and half-day substantive sessions, and one parallel training workshop for schools of public administration. Group discussions and special sessions on thematic issues will also be organized. The symposium will be conducted in English.

VI. Participants

The Symposium will bring together participants from the Asia and the Pacific region and selected countries from Eastern Africa, including senior government officials from various ministries, public administration schools and training institutes, as well as participants from regional and international organizations, the private sector, civil society organizations, and academia.

VII. Expected Outcomes

The event is expected to result in the following outcomes:

• Enhanced capacities of public servants to design and establish effective, accountable and inclusive institutions in support of Agenda 2030.

- Enhanced capacity of public servants to engage in North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation among Asian and African countries.

Based on the findings and material collected during the Symposium, DPIDG/UNPOG will support a process among interested countries to adapt good practices and further build partnerships for peer-to-peer knowledge exchange. During the Symposium, a task force to work on possible peer-to-peer exchange activities will be set up and it will include representatives from five to six countries. A training course will also be developed taking into account the lessons learned and insights from the Symposium. A brief Report documenting the key discussions and outcomes of the proceedings will be produced and shared online with Symposium participants, stakeholders, and the wider public.

VIII. Contact Information

Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG)
UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA)

Adriana Alberti
Chief, Capacity Development Unit
DPIDG/UNDESA
Email: alberti@un.org

Maria Stefania Senese
Governance and Public Administration Officer
DPIDG/UNDESA
E-mail: senese@un.org

Chae Gun Chung
Head, UN Project Office on Governance (UNPOG)
DPIDG/UNDESA
Email: chaegun.chung@un.org

Keping Yao
Governance and Public Administration Expert
UNPOG/DPIDG/UN DESA
Email: yaok@un.org

Mi Kyoung Park
Associate Research and Policy Analysis Expert
UNPOG/DPIDG/UN DESA
Email: mikyoung.park@un.org