



Opening Remarks

**Haiyan Qian, Chief, Knowledge Management Branch, DPADM, UNDESA
Workshop on the Capacity-Building Programme for Government Procurement Reform**

19 December 2006

Mr. Lee,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to be here at this workshop on the Capacity-Building Programme for Government Procurement Reform, which is the first training activity of the UNGC in collaboration with the Public Procurement Service of the Republic of Korea since its launching less than three months ago. On behalf of Mr. Guido Bertucci, Director of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management, UNDESA, which is the parent of UNGC, I would like to join Mr. Lee in extending our warmest welcome to the speakers and the government officials from 12 countries in the Asia and Pacific region. I also would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to the team from UNGC, led by Mr. Lee, for the excellent preparation and generous hospitality offered to all the participants, which have made this important event possible and pleasant. Our heartfelt thanks should go to co-sponsors from the host country as well, especially the Public Procurement Service, the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs, and Samsung SDS for providing the participants with the site tours and other substantive and logistic support, which have added special value and interesting flavor to this workshop.

As we have witnessed during the past decades, public trust in government has continued to diminish due to administrative, political, socio-cultural, economic, and other causes. If we concentrate on the public administration dimension, the factors leading to the decline of this trust include public perception of administrative corruption, such as lack of transparency and accountability; inefficiency, such as wastefulness; and ineffectiveness, such as enlarging the gap between the haves and have-nots. Being a secretariat within the United Nations system responsible for the Programme on Public Administration for Development, our Division has been working, together with the Member States, to provide analytical research, policy options and ways and means that help develop and strengthen trust in government as well as trust among socio-economic stakeholders. A specific example is our next Global Forum on Reinventing Government to be held in Vienna next year that will devote its main theme on building trust in government. All of you are welcome to attend.

One of the key areas related to the trust issue that we have been focusing is the area of improving public service delivery. And as the world has moved into the information age, we firmly believe that information and communication technology (ICT) can offer additional and useful tools to governments to help them restore public trust by enhancing their public service deliveries through making the processes more efficient, effective, transparent and accountable, and the services more convenient and access easier to the citizens in need.

In fact, when we address the issue of using ICT to improve public service delivery, we cannot avoid giving our attention to the issue of government procurement reform as it aims at achieving savings throughout government, obtaining better procurement outcomes for agencies, improving planning processes and risk management, and making more effective use of resources. In this reform process, electronic or mobile procurement has been recognized as and proven to be one of the innovative ways to enhance government efficiency and transparency in purchasing management.

Nevertheless, one has to remember that ICT is neither a “turnkey” solution which is supposed to resolve everything automatically, nor a panacea which claims “one size fits all.” ICT tools can only become useful if a number of preconditions are provided, which include long-term leadership support, review of the existing legislative framework, strategic plans, institutional structure, and human and financial resources, and making adjustments and building capacity in response to the new requirements. In other words, governments must be willing and ready to take advantage of the ICT tools with the above-referred preconditions put in place in order to make “e” or “m” procurement meaningful to the attainment of the ultimate goal of rebuilding the citizens’ trust in government.

In recognition of its complexity and the need for knowledge-sharing and experience-exchange around the world, I would like to commend UNGC for this very necessary and timely organized initiative. We find it especially befitting to have this training on e-procurement conducted in Seoul, as its Metropolitan Government is one of the few pioneers in the world to have developed an Internet-based tool in 1999 known as the OPEN system, which has opened up its procurement procedures to the public, and

allowed the citizens to monitor the process at any time and from anywhere. Also, as you may know, the Public Procurement Service of the Republic of Korea has won the first UN Public Service Award of 2003 for Innovations in the Public Service. Being responsible for the Knowledge Management Branch of the Division, I take great interest in the emerging trends and development of ICT for better governance, particularly in innovative practices and lessons learnt at the national and local levels. I believe this training workshop will provide a great opportunity for all participants, including myself, not only to gain further knowledge and expertise from distinguished speakers and on-site visits, which hopefully will facilitate the work in your own situation, but also to share your part of the stories and experiences in your respective countries, and by doing so, all of us present here can contribute to developing an e-governance knowledgebase for the Asia-Pacific region. In this connection, I am pleased to highlight the fact that this type of training will become one of many to be organized by UNGC in the years ahead. The innovative country cases to be presented at such workshops will be included in the UN Compendium on E-government Innovative Practices. All the related training materials and papers presented will not remain only within each workshop, but be stored in the Knowledgebase and permanently displayed on both the UNGC Website at www.ungc.org, and the United Nations Online Network in Public Administration - UNPAN portal at www.unpan.org for the benefit of the UNPAN users from all over the world.

In closing, I extend to all the participants my hope that this will be a rewarding and productive experience for all of us, and I look forward to the prolific outcome of the next three days of training. Thank you.