Symposium on

"Leveraging Public Governance to Accelerate the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals – Transformation, Innovation & Inclusion"

Aide-Mémoire

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Venue: Songdo Convensia Conference Center
Incheon, Republic of Korea

Organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)
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 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a global plan of action to drive economic prosperity and social well-being while protecting the environment. The 2030 Agenda 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). The Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda specifically calls for effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

The SDGs and the commitments contained in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action (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. As they need to be implemented in a complementary and synergistic way, institutions need new capacities and knowledge to provide integrated support to implementation of these global agendas. Current governance models and capacities need to be transformed to embrace the holistic, universal and inclusive principles of the 2030 Agenda, such as leaving no one behind, while effectively addressing the risks and obstacles to the SDG achievement.

While building transformative leadership and changing mindsets of public servants, the public sector must innovate to respond to increasing demands from citizens for quality public services and build citizen trust in government. Public sector innovation can be defined as the implementation by a public-sector organization of new or significantly improved products, services or ways of doing things, either within the structure of the public sector itself or in the way in which public services are provided (OECD, 2005). The typology of innovations in the public sector could include service innovations, service delivery innovations, administrative and organizational innovations, conceptual innovations, policy innovations and systematic innovations. Much of the discussions on public sector innovations have focused on innovative approaches in service delivery which has been driven by ICTs and digital government coupled with better partnerships with citizens, civil society and the private sector. It is important that government expands its focus to other dimensions of innovations, beyond the currently predominating discussions on innovative public service delivery via ICT. Government should attempt to fully apply and foster different innovations in public sector in a multi-dimensional approach, as an essential endeavour to build effective, accountable and inclusive public institutions at all levels and achieve SDG implementation.

At the same time, it is imperative that government promotes inclusion and ensures leaving no one behind to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs. While fostering transformation and innovation for SDG implementation, public institutions shall take into full consideration inclusion of vulnerable groups such as women, youth, persons with disabilities, older persons, and migrants and refugees. Despite the widely agreed and recognized importance of inclusion, however, countries often remain vague on how to implement leaving no one behind in practice.[1] Promoting inclusive governance through multi-stakeholder engagement and participation is therefore of significant concern when the process and impact of pursuing transformation and innovation may entail further marginalization of these vulnerable groups due to their lack of financial resources, technical capacities, and information. World leaders gathered at UN Headquarters on 24–25 September 2019 for the SDG Summit to review progress and identify measures to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The SDG Summit, which brought together political and thought leaders from governments, private sector, civil society and international organizations, resulted in the adoption of the Political Declaration "Gearing up for a decade of action

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[1] https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/CDP-bp-2019-49.pdf

and delivery for sustainable development" (A/HLPF/2019/L.1). World leaders called for a decade of action to deliver the SDGs by 2030, and more than 100 acceleration actions have been announced.

The Summit featured six "leaders dialogues" on: megatrends impacting the achievement of the SDGs; accelerating the achievement of the SDGs: critical entry points; measures to leverage progress across the SDGs; localizing the SDGs; partnerships for sustainable development; and the 2020-2030 vision. Among the critical entry points, strengthening public administration systems and improved access to justice are singled out as critical. And, among measures to leverage progress across the SDGs, there includes "systematic change in thinking," particularly in finance ministries, changing mindsets and stimulating action by governments.

During the SDG Summit, there was also a review on the progress made in addressing the priorities of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) through the implementation of the SAMOA Pathway with expressed frustration at the slow pace of progress in addressing the concerns of SIDS, despite exponentially rising threats from climate change. The SIDS in the Pacific are even more susceptible to the potential damage of climate change due to its remote geographical location and weak infrastructure.

Despite uneven progress in the region and gaps and challenges for the Pacific SIDS, 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 into 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 systems. The importance of accountability and multi-stakeholder dialogue and access to basic services, education and health care was emphasized by governments. Good practices, lessons and challenges are already emerging in the region.

Against this backdrop, UN DESA's Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG), through its Project Office on Governance (UNPOG) and in collaboration with the Ministry of the Interior and Safety (MOIS) of the Government of the Republic of Korea, is organizing a symposium on "Leveraging Public Governance to Accelerate the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals – Transformation, Innovation & Inclusion". The Symposium aims to equip public institutions with the capacities to lead national transformation in public governance and integrate the values and principles that are embedded in the 2030 Agenda into practice.

II.   Objective

The main objective of the Symposium is to strengthen the capacities of government officials to transform their own public institutions and accelerate achievement of the 2030 Agenda. The Symposium aims to reflect on how best to mobilize, organize and equip institutions and rally whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches to promote sustainable development by stock of progress made in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

It will provide an opportunity to discuss how to promote government innovation for social inclusion of vulnerable groups, with a focus on youth, gender equality and persons with disabilities. It will actively engage with the civil society organizations and the private sector to discuss innovative partnership.

The Symposium is expected to have a special session on SIDS to discuss institutional arrangements and public service delivery, building resilience and effective resource management, which are the critical elements/means for accelerating SDG implementation.

III. Thematic Focus

The 2030 Agenda will not be realized unless public institutions become more effective, accountable and inclusive and unless services are delivered in a more equitable manner, considering the needs of the most vulnerable groups in society. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, progress has been made towards some SDGs in Asia and the Pacific, but the rate of progress is insufficient which calls for accelerated actions towards all SDGs. On its current trajectory, Asia and the Pacific will not achieve any of the 17 SDGs by 2030[2].

The SDGs, as an integrated framework, call for the whole-of-society approach, and many countries have been moving in this direction. National mainstreaming of the SDGs through the whole-of-government approach that ensures policy coherence and coordination across government is critical to foster national ownership and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Promoting Governance Transformation, Public Sector Innovation, and Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups in Service Delivery

There is a need to take stock of what lessons have emerged in building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions and to deepen the understanding and knowledge of what it takes to promote transformation, innovation and leadership in the public sector to realize the SDGs. The transformation that will lead the region to achieve sustainable development will depend on several factors. These include transforming institutions, organizations, and mindsets to embrace the values and principles that are embedded in the 2030 Agenda, such as equity, integration, leaving no one behind, innovation, collaboration, among others.

Good governance, strong and effective institutions, availability of financial resources, the right policy mix, the efficient use of resources, access to environmentally-friendly technology and innovations, human and institutional capacity development as well as strengthened and sustained international partnerships will together help ensure that the region will transform effectively and achieve sustainable development.

Strengthening public institutions for transformation must be coupled with public sector innovation. The latter is required to respond to increasing demands from people for quality public services while developing and maintaining trust in government.

Promoting Transformational Leadership and Strengthening Public Servants' Capacities to Realize the SDGs

It is widely recognized among government officials that transformational leadership can spearhead the implementation and steer development. Leadership matters for engaging stakeholders in development priorities and policy actions, developing plans and policies in line with the SDGs, coordinating implementation and monitoring progress.

Transformational leadership for achieving sustainable development begins with good governance. Implementation requires a sustained, exemplary leadership that is transparent, inclusive and attentive to people's needs. In fact, implementation should be framed based on the needs voiced directly by the people. Leadership is key to transforming government institutions and internalizing new values or behaviors to achieve the SDGs. Transformational leadership, especially at high-levels, is key to transforming government institutions and to promoting the internalization of new values and beliefs to achieve the SDGs. To achieve the SDGs and the principle of leaving no one behind, public servants must change their beliefs, attitudes and behaviours to align them with the new and/or revamped institutions being set up.

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[2] UN ESCAP (2019). Asia and the Pacific SDG Progress Report 2019.

Governance transformation and public sector innovation cannot happen without competent and motivated public servants. It is necessary to equip public servants with the capacities to bolster cooperation between levels of government and across government departments.

The 2030 Agenda depends on reversing the collapse of motivation, commitment and job satisfaction in public service as organizations are made up of people and the state of public service motivation enables government capacity to deliver the SDGs (UN, 2016). Many countries in the region have started to reshape civil service with a series of reforms that are aimed at integrating sustainable development into public administration. Strengthening the capacities of public servants is key to the success of any institutional reform. The United Nations Development Group (UNDG) defines capacity as "the ability of people, organizations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully," and capacity development as "the process whereby people, organizations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt, and maintain capacity over time" to achieve their own development objectives.

In 2018, DPIDG/UN DESA conducted the survey on the status of training public administration officials on the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific. The outcome of the research shows that there are regional preferences for SDG training and civil service curricula and needs for support to better equip public service to achieve the SDGs. Specifically, it was highlighted that there is a substantive recognition in the region on the importance of transforming public mindsets for SDG implementation, indicated as the training topic with top priority.[3]

Inclusive Services Delivery – The Critical Role of Gender Equality, Youth and Persons with Disabilities

Achieving the global Agenda on sustainable development is unlikely to occur if women, youth, and persons living with disabilities are not part of the process of change. It is significant to note that the valuable role of women, youth and the persons with disability is openly recognized and accepted, as they are known to suffer immensely from poverty, war, crime and climate change, among other difficulties. It is therefore important to identify practical and tangible solutions for ensuring the inclusion of women, youth and persons with disabilities in public service delivery.

Gender Equality. Gender equality is recognized as not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Women have a right to equality in all areas. The 2030 Agenda will be within reach only when women's political participation and leadership and economic empowerment are advanced.

While impressive progress in social and economic development in recent years was made in Asia and the Pacific, especially with many recent advances driven by women in civil society, government, business and academia, many women in the region remain left behind.[4] Women are disproportionately affected by the region's most prominent challenges, such as climate-related disasters and human trafficking, while they are also agents of change in addressing all these challenges, which require comprehensive and gender-responsive solutions to be successful.[5]

Youth. According to the 8th Annual Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum 2019, failure to foster youth development in an inclusive manner or fulfil young people's rights can lead to inequalities with long-term economic and social consequences. The creation of decent jobs through multi-stakeholder partnerships, including public-private partnerships, is critical to achieving empowerment and promoting inclusivity and engagement for young people in the region. Critical to

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[3] Shaping Public Service Mindsets for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Asia-Pacific Region: Report of Survey Results Mapping Regional Civil Service Curricula for the SDGs at
http://unpog.org/page/sub5_1_view.asp?sn=244&page=1&Gubun=1&BoardID=0007.
[4] UN Women (2019). UN Women Asia and the Pacific Annual Report 2017-2018, p. 4.
[5] Ibid.

the success of the 2030 Agenda is the role of youth in engaging with local and national government in delivering on policies and programmes.

The Asia-Pacific region is home to about 700 million youth, or 60 percent of the global population aged 15 to 24 years, and it is estimated that the region will remain as home to more youth than any other regions in the world until around 2080.[6] Thus, empowering and engaging youth in the region and harnessing their potential for innovation and transformation is critical to achieving global sustainable development. Youth are at the forefront of Internet adoption and possess higher ICT skills than other age groups of population,[7] with high potential to contribute to SDG achievement by driving innovation and raising awareness.

Persons with Disabilities*.* Disability inclusion is not only a fundamental human right, it is "central to the promise" of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. Main barriers to disability inclusion entail discrimination and stigma on the ground of disability, lack of accessibility to physical and virtual environments, lack of access to assistive technology, essential services, rehabilitation and support for independent living that are critical for the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities as agents of change and beneficiaries of development.

In Asia and the Pacific, 690 million men, women and children, accounting for 15 per cent of the total population in the region, live with some forms of disability, and the number is expected to rise over the next decades.[8] Engagement of persons with disabilities in the processes of policy designing, implementation, and follow-up and review is essential to achieve inclusive development, by reflecting the special difficulties they possess and transforming the conventional public service delivery via leveraging frontier technologies and fostering multi-stakeholder partnerships.

IV.   Structure and Methodology

The Regional Symposium will include high-level session, plenary sessions and one special session on SIDS where participants will identify next steps to strengthen capacities to transform governance, innovate public administration and integrate institutional approaches for accelerated implementation of the SDGs.

The Regional Symposium will consist of six plenary sessions and one special session on SIDS to discuss special thematic issues and one Study Visit. The thematic issues focus on the expressed challenges of target countries in previous Voluntary National Reviews regarding the implementation of the SDGs and the areas of transformational leadership, institutional strengthening, government innovation for social inclusion.

Plenary Session I will provide an overview of the progress of 2030 Agenda and SDG implementation at the regional level and the crosscutting roles of public institutions and transformational leadership. Plenary Session II will examine how to transform leadership and strengthen national to local institutional coordination. Plenary Session III will look into innovations in public service delivery, financing, monitoring and evaluation for SDG implementation. Plenary Session IV will examine government innovation to leave no one behind through institutionalized engagement with focus on youth, gender equality and persons with disabilities. Plenary Session V will review the challenges and capacity gaps in SIDS. Finally, Plenary Session IV will look into partnership-building.

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[6] UN ESCAP (2017). UN and SDGs: A Handbook for Youth (2017), p.31.
[7] ITU (2018). Measuring the Information Society Report.
[8] https://www.unescap.org/our-work/social-development/disability.

An evaluation of the regional meeting will be carried out in accordance with the co-organizers' monitoring and evaluation frameworks. This will help to determine the impact that participating in such an event had on the participants' knowledge, skills and attitudes.

The Symposium will be conducted in English.

V.   Target Audience and Beneficiaries

The Symposium will bring together participants from 27 countries in the Asia and the Pacific region including the Republic of Korea as the host country. These target countries are: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nauru, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Vanuatu, Vietnam and Republic of Korea [host country].

Representatives will be composed of mixed delegations of government officials of senior rank from the target, in particular SDG focal points, ministries or other entities in charge of public administration and/or overseeing public service management, and ministries and agencies in charge of ICT and innovation as well as social inclusion will be invited as well.

The ultimate beneficiaries are the citizens in those countries who will benefit from a more competent and inclusive public service and transformational leadership for implementation of necessary reforms to accelerate SDG implementation.

VI.   Expected Outcomes

The Symposium is expected to contribute to the 2020 High Level Political Forum (HLPF) to be held in July 2020. In this vein, it will also place a special focus on key targets of the 2030 Agenda to be achieved by 2020. Lastly, it will also strengthen partnerships through North-South, South-South, and triangular cooperation.

It is expected that by the end of the workshop participants will have:

- Enhanced understanding of the role of public institutions and transformational leadership to accelerate SDG achievement in target countries;

- Built networks with critical ministries for SDG implementation from their countries and other countries;

- Enhanced their skills to mainstream transformational leadership, the principles of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in their public sector performance policies, and strategies;

- Assessed current training and other capacity development programs and their effectiveness in changing public service values and behaviors in line with the 2030 Agenda;

- Developed follow-up actions to ensure integrated institutional approaches for accelerated implementation of the SDGs;

- Increased number of partnerships and networks developed to strengthen the capacities of public institutions to implement the SDGs in an integrated, effective, transparent and accountable way; and

- Enhanced transfer and adoption of innovative cases and best practices among participating Member States in designing, delivering and implementing policies for realizing the SDGs.

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.

VII. Follow-up Actions

- Commitments to further promote and integrate key lessons and outcomes of the Symposium into national policies and programmes to accelerate the achievement of the 2030 Agenda;

- Expression of commitment to integrate strategies and methodologies into policies, programmes and legislative/ institutional frameworks;

- Increased number of domestic capacity development training activities, policy initiatives and actions induced by the Symposium to support the SDG implementation; and

- Number of partnerships between participating countries through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation.

VIII. Co-organizers

The Symposium will be co-organized by UN DESA and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety of the Government of the Republic of Korea.

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)

Based at UN Headquarters in New York, UN DESA holds up the development pillar of the UN Secretariat. Its Divisions and Offices work together towards a common goal to promote the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. UN DESA collaborates closely with its partners at regional and country levels in helping countries to translate policies into formulation and implementation of national sustainable development strategies and preparation of roadmaps for national implementation.

UN DESA's work promotes and supports international cooperation for sustainable development. It addresses a range of cross-cutting issues that affect peoples' lives and livelihoods, especially the most vulnerable. We are fundamentally concerned, not only with global prosperity today, but also tomorrow, having as a foundation the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) supported by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

In providing a broad range of top-quality analytical products, policy advice and technical assistance, UN DESA effectively translates global commitments in the economic, social and environmental spheres into national policies and actions and plays a key role in monitoring progress towards the SDGs and the SAMOA Pathway.

UN DESA's mission, to promote development for all, underscores the need for all stakeholders – governments, UN and other international organizations, civil society and the private sector – to do their part to improve economic and social well-being and prevent environmental degradation and leave no one behind.

The Ministry of the Interior and Safety of the Government of the Republic of Korea

The Ministry of the Interior and Safety (MOIS) is responsible for general affairs of the State Council, promulgation of Acts and subordinate statutes and treaties, government organization and prescribed number of public officials, awards and decorations, government innovation, administrative efficiency, e-government, personal information protection, management of government buildings and support for elections and referendums.

Furthermore, the MOIS actively promotes local autonomy and decentralization by supporting business, finance and taxation of local governments and mediating disputes among local governments. In addition, the MOIS takes charge of establishing, supervising and adjusting policies related to safety and disaster management such as emergency countermeasure, civil defence and disaster prevention.

IX. Contact Information

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