REPORT ON THE FINDINGS OF THE REGIONAL FORUM ON REINVENTING GOVERNMENT IN ASIA

6 - 8 September 2006
Seoul, Republic of Korea

**Organized by: the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)
in partnership with the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs (MOGAHA)
of the Republic of Korea, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the
United Nations Governance Centre (UNGC)**

Hosted by: the Government of the Republic of Korea

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OVERVIEW

Organization

The Regional Forum on Reinventing Government in Asia was held in Seoul, Republic of Korea from 6 to 8 September 2006. The Forum received over 100 participants from 21 countries across Asia, as well as representatives from international organizations. Senior participants included Ministers and Vice Ministers from Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, many executive-level public officials, parliamentarians, researchers, academics, and relevant experts from various institutions. The Regional Forum was organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) in partnership with the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs (MOGAHA) of the Republic of Korea, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Governance Centre (UNGC), which was launched in Seoul on 6 September 2006.

Themes

The Regional Forum in Asia is an ongoing effort designed to highlight the innovations and best practices of governments so that they may be shared and adapted to enhance the quality and effectiveness of governance region-wide. This investment in strengthening state capacity and transparent governance aims to directly contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

As a preparatory activity for the 7th Global Forum, the Regional Forum in Asia focused on "Building Trust in Government: Innovations to Improve Governance." The thematic focus of the Regional Forum highlighted four strategic areas or sub-themes that are relevant to improvements in governance, within the political and administrative context of the region:

- Public Sector Capacity and Innovations;
- Building Trust for Service Delivery and Access;
- Accountability, Transparency and E-Government;
- Decentralization and Local Governance.

The results and conclusions which emerged from discussions on these sub-themes will be presented to general participants at the 7th Global Forum on Reinventing Government, which the United Nations will host on the theme of "Building Trust in Government" from 26 to 29 June 2007 in Vienna. Every two years, the Global Forum offers senior public officials the opportunity to meet experts, receive training, and exchange strategies to improve public administration and governance.

Format

The 2006 Regional Forum in Asia took place over the course of three days. Following the opening ceremony, four plenary sessions took place over the first two days of the event. On the third day, participants broke up into three sub-regional working groups for discussions, followed by their presentations in the wrap-up session to all participants, discussions, and the closing ceremony. These agenda items were complemented by a series of tours and side events offered by the Government of the Republic of Korea, designed to provide participants with greater familiarity with the domestic innovation process.

Opening Ceremony: Statements by the hosts of the Regional Forum opened the event with an overview of the issue of trust in government, its relationship with governance, and the impact on the ability of Member States to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Opening speakers included Mr. Kim Ho-young, Acting Director of the United Nations Governance Centre (UNGC), H.E. Mr. Lee Yongsup, Minister of Government Administration and Home Affairs of the Republic of Korea (MOGAHA), and Mr. Guido Bertucci, Director of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DPADM/UNDESA).

Plenary Sessions: The plenary sessions included an introductory statement on recent global and regional trends related to trust in government, a brief discussion of the key governance dimensions which lead to the development of trust, and an explanation of the cross-cutting nature of the themes selected for each plenary session. Mr. G. Shabbir Cheema, Principal Advisor of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management of UNDESA, introduced the main theme and the four strategic areas for the plenary sessions: Public Sector Capacity and Innovations; Building Trust for Service Delivery and Access; Accountability, Transparency, and E-Government; and Decentralization and Local Governance: Bringing Government Closer to People. Each plenary session included one or two context presentations, five to six case presentations by senior country officials, and allotted discussion time.

Working Group Sessions: Following the plenary sessions, participants broke up into three sub-regional working groups on the final day of the workshop to discuss selected topics in greater depth. Representing South Asia, South-East Asia, and North and East Asia, these working groups each received slightly under three hours for internal group discussions led by a facilitator, following a brief orientation by the Principal Advisor of DPADM/UNDESA. The conclusions and key areas of consensus reached by each working group were then presented to all participants of the Regional Forum in plenary, followed by additional discussions.

Closing Ceremony: Concluding remarks and reference to some of the key recurring issues within the region which emerged from both the plenary sessions and sub-regional working groups were presented by Mr. Guido Bertucci, Director of DPADM/UNDESA, and Mr. Kim Ho-young, Acting Director of the UNGC.

Side Events: Among the series of side events offered to participants were the official launch of the United Nations Governance Centre, open to senior delegates, a tour of the Government Innovation Hall of the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs (MOGAHA), a tour of the "Ubiquitous Dream Hall" of the Ministry of Information and Communication (MIC) of the Republic of Korea, and other related activities designed to inspire the further sharing of innovations between participating Member States.

INNOVATIONS TO IMPROVE GOVERNANCE: ISSUES, CHALLENGES, AND STRATEGIES

This section of the report summarizes the key findings of the four plenary sessions, which took place on the first two days of the Regional Forum on Reinventing Government in Asia. The summary of the four plenary sessions is organized by the four strategic areas, which served as sub-themes for these sessions. As mentioned previously, each plenary session included one to two presentations by participating resource people, designed to set the context for discussion by highlighting major regional issues within each given sub-theme, approximately six country presentations by senior officials, and open discussion, followed by summarizing remarks.

Plenary Session I: Public Sector Capacity and Innovations

Increased Expectations of Citizens: Globalization, the spread of information and communication technologies, market liberalization, and the trend toward democratization have led to an upsurge in citizen expectations for the role of the state and what it should be capable of delivering. This increase in expectations has not always been met by a corresponding improvement in service provision, increase in access to services, or the empowerment of civil society. As a result, expectations have not always matched up with realities, leading to declines of trust in government. Trust in government tends to be cyclical; it generally has risen in times of crisis, but has been on the decline in peacetime since the 1960s.

Capacity Deficits: In recent years, many governments within the region have embarked upon a series of reforms, such as decentralization and privatization. While the benefits of these reforms have been well-noted, their costs have been less emphasized. For the most part, these reforms have been insufficiently accompanied by the strengthening of capacities. Although the degree of reform is very high within the region, the degree of capacity to carry out the reforms is low in many cases, leading to the "hollowing-out of the state." This situation has led to greater fragmentation, complexity, and inter-dependence, while weakening the power of the executive branch. Most countries within the region are therefore not fully capable of responding to citizen demands. As a result, it is essential that policy makers and governance practitioners take the capacity deficit problem more seriously. Capacity development must take place alongside reform processes to ensure that the public sector is ready and able to embark upon a more collaborative approach, based on the contributions of all governance partners.

Recruitment and Human Resource Management: One critical element of strengthening public sector capacities is the human resources component. In many countries within the region, qualified and high performing personnel still prefer the private to the public sector. Approaches that can be used to rectify this situation include a better compensation system, the recruitment of more women or minorities in cases where they may be under-represented within public service, the fostering of pride in public service, merit-based promotions, and the use of incentive systems to recognize and reward good performance. Once personnel is hired, human resource capacities can be strengthened in part by the allocation of a certain number of hours per year for training purposes. This training can focus on several areas, such as the use of information and communication technologies, maintaining and building links with citizens, using a citizen and service-oriented approach, workplace training to enable the adoption of suggestions for improvement, and the systematic review of regulations to determine their continuing usefulness and relevancy.

However, civil service reform alone is insufficient, since there is also the need for transformative, persuasive, and collaborative leadership. This implies the need for a cultural shift and better training programs for medium to high level officials. In general, more time, money, and effort must be devoted to capacity development. Education and training of the leadership can help to distill a greater recognition of the pivotal role that they play in helping to increase transparency and encourage better public sector performance.

Governance Infrastructure: Capacity development also depends on the existence of a good governance infrastructure. This can include the appropriate legal systems and legislation to clearly delineate the responsibilities of government entities and rights of citizens; judicial systems which re-inforce rule of law; and collaboration mechanisms which facilitate cooperation and coordination both between governmental entities themselves, such as inter-ministerial collaboration mechanisms, and those which enable citizen participation in the governance process, in terms of policy formation, implementation, and evaluation.

The Role of Innovation: If innovations are undertaken in a compartmentalized fashion, in isolation from efforts to strengthen capacities across the board, this can lead to a lack of sufficient monitoring, a lack of emphasis on public service values, and micromanagement. Therefore, efforts to build capacities must be undertaken alongside innovations that seek to improve governance. All "core values," such as participation and transparency, depend on public sector capacity.

Equity: Some participants suggested that part of the problem may lie in an implementation deficit, as opposed to a capacity deficit, per say. In their view, a low level of trust could be attributed to the failure of governments to facilitate equitable growth, considering that many others have successfully played a proactive role in the promotion of economic development and infrastructure building.

International Cooperation: The identification and targeting of the needs of the population often requires institutional training, which in turn depends upon the ability of governments to mobilize resources. The lack of financial resources faced by many developing countries can be partly overcome through regional and international partnerships for development, as well as collaboration with international organizations. The newly established United Nations Governance Centre (UNGC), which helped to organize the Regional Forum in collaboration with its partners, was mentioned on several occasions as an important outlet for helping to foster and coordinate regional and bilateral efforts to share knowledge on successful governance strategies.

Comparative Considerations: Given the above, participants and speakers emphasized that a successful reform strategy, which is coordinated with the strengthening of capacities, must be compatible with the context of each country. Therefore, when exchanging and transferring innovations that have successfully improved governance in any one particular country, these innovations must be re-formulated to fit into and be compatible with the existing socio-economic, cultural, and historical conditions within the adopting country. As such, particular implementation strategies and time schedules must also be based on the administrative experience of the recipient.

Plenary Session II: Building Trust for Service Delivery and Access

Redefining Trust: In reference to service delivery, speakers began by noting the distinction between "personalized trust" and "generalized trust." In the former case, citizens perceive governmental policies and actions to be highly unpredictable. Since the future is considered to be relatively uncertain, citizens do not participate as productively or actively in the governance process as they might otherwise. One example provided of a situation where personalized trust dominates might be that where a citizen is willing to spend a certain sum of money to pay a bribe for a telephone line, but is unwilling to spend that same sum in taxes to ensure improvement of the line system, because they have more certainty that actions taken from outside the system will effectively improve their circumstances.

On the other hand, citizens have generalized trust when they believe that (i) the future is relatively stable and improving; and that (ii) they themselves can positively influence their own circumstances. In other words, generalized trust is more desirable and implies citizen empowerment and control within the governance structure. As the government faces new challenges and demands, the social and political contexts of trust building and the dynamics of public perception must also be understood. It may be necessary to redefine trust from the viewpoint of citizens and investigate new communication strategies to earn public trust.

Change in Service Provision and the Role of the State: Even though the mix of services being provided by governments has changed significantly in recent years, there are still high expectations for service delivery. Currently, there is the expectation within the region that government will help to establish a level playing field (in terms of access to justice, education, food, employment, basic services, etc) and will also be responsible for sending the right "signals" to domestic markets and socio-economic actors to establish a dynamic comparative advantage, when necessary. Recent declines in trust raise the question of whether or not there has been a failure in the political market.

Regional Review: Although outsourcing elements of service provision and delivery has become increasingly common, the public sector still continues to play a central role in many basic services such as primary education, health, water, sanitation, roads, transportation and the supply of power within the region. However, a lack of fiscal resources and institutional capacities continue to inhibit the public sector from delivering these items effectively. Furthermore, large fiscal deficits, which constrain the public sector's capacity for investment in infrastructure, are also responsible for holding back better performance.

Building Trust: Not withstanding the above, good intentions, adequate funds, and a competent government are not enough in themselves to improve service delivery and access. There must also be trust between the target population and the government to lower costs and improve the quality of services. However, trust can be particularly difficult to build, especially when there has been a historical lack of trust, as is often the case in developing countries. Building trust must begin with a foundation for mutual understanding. Unfortunately, there is often a vicious cycle between trust and service delivery; trust is needed to improve services, but better service provision is also needed to improve trust.

Two ways to strengthen trust can be through (i) strengthening partnerships between government and civil society; and (ii) efforts by government to seriously address and resolve citizen concerns when these are first presented, both at the central and local levels, as well as efforts to speed processing times. With regard to partnerships, the use of volunteerism and community participation can help to ensure the sustainability of social action programmes, which might not otherwise be accepted or supported by the population.

Partnerships: In light of the above, governments within the region should seek to promote more mutually beneficial collaboration with the private sector and civil society organizations. Partnerships can help to alleviate the public sector capacity deficit by enabling each partner to contribute the best of their strengths to the governance process. Partnerships with the private sector can enable service provision and delivery to benefit from private sector efficiency gains, as well as high quality human resources, while enabling public officials to learn from private sector experiences. Similarly, privatization can be a cost-effective way of improving the quality and reach of services, which can then play a role in building higher trust.

Furthermore, successful public-private partnerships can help to bring about better understanding about how government works, thereby contributing to the development of greater trust between the public and the private partners. However, since social costs and benefits frequently differ from private costs and benefits, good regulation and oversight is critical to ensure that private sector management and participation is in line with public interest. Civil society organizations can play an essential role in bridging the gap between governments and their citizens by (i) joining partnerships to improve the quality and access of service delivery; (ii) mobilizing citizen support for development initiatives; (iii) helping to inform citizens and local constituencies about the objectives of programmes and policies; and (iv) helping to monitor and ensure the good use of limited fiscal resources.

Topics for Additional Research: Several participants expressed interest in learning more about different approaches that countries within the region had successfully taken to improve service delivery and access. Additional preference was shown for research on different viable options that might be available, taking into consideration a country's developmental stage vis à vis socio-economic, political and administrative conditions.

Plenary Session III: Accountability, Transparency, and E-Government

Overview: Reforms measures geared toward improving transparency and accountability began in the 1950s, as many countries within the region departed from colonialism. The emphasis on these core values was then re-emphasized in the 1980s, gaining momentum in the 1990s. In order to achieve real accountability and transparency, systemic changes are needed within the region, including a change in the behavior of both leaders and public servants.

Transparency: When examining different principles of public sector behavior which build trust and improve governance, participants generally agreed that performance, capacity, and ability are positive contributing factors. However, participants also emphasized that the issue of a lack of trust often originates from a corresponding lack of transparency, further noting that there has been insufficient commitment to transparency by governments within the region.

E-Government as an Enabler: Within this context, e-government can be viewed as an enabling technology for innovation and government reinvention, as it has the potential to lead to positive social change. E-government plays an active role in transforming the way the government works, while promoting transparency. First, it can significantly promote citizen involvement in the policy process. It enhances the ability of governments to request, receive, and incorporate feedback from constituents, enabling more participatory and potentially more democratic governance. Policy objectives and measures can be better tailored to meet the needs and priorities of citizens, promoting greater efficiency and lowering costs, with positive implications for service delivery and community development. Second, e-government promotes transparency, which can strengthen community oversight of resource allocation, reduce corruption, and increase the competitiveness of the procurement process. Third, it can facilitate communication and improve the coordination of authorities at different levels of government. Fourth, by increasing publicly available information, e-government lowers the uncertainty of socio-economic actors, enhances decision making, and improves information on government services and programmes. Fifth, lower application processing and wait-time can reduce the cost of complying with government regulations, encouraging the movement of resources into the formal sector. Finally, e-government can enhance the speed and efficiency of operations, lower costs, improve research capabilities, and improve documentation and record-keeping. However, it must be noted that although ICT has the potential to enhance transparency and accountability, technology is only a means to the end of achieving accountability and transparency.

The Need for Strategic Management and Leadership: A number of country-level initiatives presented at the Regional Forum underscored the tremendous potential for incorporating information and communication technology in the public sector. However, speakers also voiced concern that e-government may not yield the desired results without medium to long term planning and effective strategies in the course of implementation. They emphasized that e-government represents an evolutionary process that must be managed. While the driving force should come from the bottom, there must also be central coordination – the higher the better. In the long term, the success of e-government efforts and its ability to improve governance depends on the extent to which there is leadership from the government and a national development strategy. Generally speaking, there tends to be a predominating emphasis on the efficiency gains achieved from the use of e-government. In order to perceive its other multiple benefits, this depends on leadership.

E-Government and Development: In developing countries, the issue of the digital divide is a serious one. The expansion of e-government is limited in many cases due to insufficient financial resources needed to build the necessary physical infrastructure. Thus, several pertinent questions were raised by Member States in attendance for further consideration by those present. One question inquired what kind of major role there can be for e-government in cases where infrastructure is significantly lacking and poverty is still the major problem. It was further queried whether or not there could be a conflict between investments in technology infrastructure and training and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). A group discussion ensued, where some of the points raised included the following: (i) e-government is a neutral tool, however rural communities in some developing countries have found it empowering; (ii) other, more traditional mediums, such as television and radio, could be used to better improve communications, transparency, and accountability in developing countries; and (ii) the request for more studies on the actual impact that these tools are having within developing countries, since there are some many competing needs.

Sequencing: Several countries expressed interest in learning more about whether or not there were "preconditions" in terms of the infrastructure needed in developing countries to embark toward the greater use of information and communication technologies and an e-government strategy. It was specifically queried whether there was any kind of sequencing recommended in terms of the order of steps that a country should consider under different conditions.

Training: Participants suggested that international organizations, such as UNGC, work to collaborate with developing countries so that the latter can investigate the best options for their own needs, come up with a workable plan, and work out the problems together in the course of implementation. It was further recommended that executive-level public officials should receive access to education which emphasizes their role in promoting accountability and responsibility for results.

Plenary IV: Decentralization and Local Governance

Objectives and Context: Participants agreed that decentralization should not be implemented as a goal in and of itself, but specifically as a means to improve local governance. The form and speed of decentralization vary depending on each country's historical context, particularly its existing policy making system. In the same way that there is no one model of decentralization for all countries within the region, there are also different models of decentralization that can be employed within different regions of the same country. Several different concepts of decentralization were also discussed: administrative (including deconcentration, delegation, and the principle of subsidiary); political (involving the interplay between regional and locally elected bodies); fiscal (the power to levy taxes and incur expenses); socio-economic (involving infrastructure, education, health and water); and juridical (the ability to settle disputes at the local level).

Lack of Implementation: Participants noted that a great deal has been written about decentralization and what needs to be done, but in practice, limited implementation has occurred within the region. To ensure that decentralization initiatives will be effective, reform should be undertaken in an incremental and sustainable manner. However, this often does not take into account political issues which can slow decentralization efforts. In some cases, political opposition to decentralization is not vocalized, but nonetheless exists. As a result, decentralization policies are publicly announced, but action is then taken to undermine their effective implementation. This can lead to a loss of confidence in policy announcements and a corresponding decline in trust, since government is then perceived as not fulfilling its own, announced policy goals. Another related issue mentioned by participants as a relevant factor was the need to enable systems that would allow democracy to prevail within local and cultural-historical contexts, while marking paths distinct from those left by colonial legacies.

Political Tension: Country officials remarked upon the tension which seemed to emerge between central and local governments once a decentralization process had been undertaken. Participants agreed that decentralization can be an intensely political act.   Tensions between national representatives and devolved representatives can emerge in several situations: (i) when there is a constituency overlap between parliamentary and local level representatives; (ii) when there is the need to exert disciplinary control of local government, and neither national bureaus nor local elected representatives are willing to accept responsibility, due to unclear authority and support; and (iii) when a country has a long history of centralized power or a strong national party. In the latter case, the degree of political polarization within the country will have a big impact. If it is high, the dominant, central party may seek to gain hegemony over resources for its own purposes. These factors can subvert formal systems, leading to a big gap between the theory and practice of decentralization, as well as its potential for meeting the needs of citizens.

Acceptable Levels of Tension:.   In response to the discussion on the tension that sometimes emerges during decentralization processes, participants noted that in some countries, a certain level of tension between the local and national levels can be seen as a sign of administrative or democratic health.   However, it was also noted that in developing countries that have grown more accustomed to more structure, this tension is often viewed negatively.

Post-Conflict Situations: Tension between central and local government can be most noticeable in nations that have recently experienced or are still emerging from conflict situations. Due to the existence of a weak central government, strengthening central government often becomes the priority in recovery efforts. Moreover, donor countries often prefer to work with centralized governments. However, speakers at the Regional Forum recommended that reconstruction and recovery efforts also aim to strengthen local institutions and capacities, to the degree possible. Although this does not always occur in practice, local capacity development will help to strengthen the legitimacy of new governments in the medium to long term.

The Importance of Civil Society and Civic Empowerment. Decentralization and local autonomy are crucial in fostering more participatory governance and reducing poverty. Governments should seek to find ways for citizens to voice their concerns and priorities in a meaningful and productive way, which enables them to become active players in all stages of policy making, including policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. Efforts to increase participatory governance will enhance trust in government. Decentralization without democracy is meaningless. Effective decentralization and democratic governance at the local level require an active civil society. Governments must therefore seek to empower people and non-governmental organizations to achieve these goals, by encouraging citizen participation mechanisms, such as participatory budgeting. Some of the problems with decentralization processes within the region have occurred when these processes have not been demand-driven. In practice, decentralization initiatives are often undertaken before local populations and civil society have gained sufficient strength to hold local governments to account. In response to this problem, governments within the region have sometimes tried to respond by using money to fill the gap caused by insufficient participation. This raised the question within the workshop of whether civil society capacity development should precede decentralization initiatives, particularly in the case of devolution.

Capacity Development. In order to have effective local governance, local government reform and capacity development is needed. Improvement efforts should include the up-scaling of best practices, building networks, establishing good databases and monitoring, shifting staff loyalty to local bodies, and integration between rural and urban planning. In some countries, it can be the wealthiest provinces which have implemented the least amount of decentralization and therefore have the lowest indicators in certain areas. Last, effective coordination between the national government and the local governments becomes more critical as decentralization progresses.

Finance: At the practical level, one of the main threats to decentralization can be a fiscal deficit and fiscal disparity among localities. If central government is truly in support of decentralization and recognizes its potential benefits for society as a whole, financing issues should be taken into consideration to enable local government to effectively implement policy. If necessary, the central government should consider revamping and/or reformulating its funding mechanism to provide local governments with the ability to generate and receive access to the required financial resources.

Corruption. At the local level, corruption is often more noticeable than when it occurs within central government. Consequentially, decentralization is often associated with greater levels of corruption, when in fact corruption tends to become more noticeable, not necessarily more prevalent. Participants therefore expressed the concern that corruption could be wrongly used as an argument against decentralization, while over the medium to long term, decentralization can in fact aid in the fight against corruption, by making the latter more apparent where it does exist, so then it can then be better addressed. In some countries within the region, decentralization has acted as a check to autocratic provinces.

Topics for Additional Research: Participants expressed interest in additional research to assess the net effects of decentralization and its outcomes. This research should determine the medium and long term impact of decentralization on the quality of service provision, trust in government, and other factors; i.e., whether decentralization improves the quality of service provision and to what degree decentralization contributes to improving trust in government.

SUB-REGIONAL
WORKING GROUP DISCUSSIONS

On 8 September 2006, the last day of the Regional Forum on Reinventing Government in Asia, participants were divided into South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Northeast Asia sub-regional groups for within-group discussions. The working groups were formed and designed to allow participants to devote more attention to the issues and strategies that may be of particular importance and relevancy within the sub-region.

Working Group I: South Asia

The sub-regional working group for South Asia raised a series of issues, questions, and responses to address topics within each of the four plenary themes. Chaired by Mr. Rehman Sobhan of Bangladesh, participants and contributors to discussion included representatives from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Theme 1: Public Sector Capacity and Innovation

Challenges/Issues
1.   Is there sufficient autonomy for public sector institutions, including the civil service, to be efficient and innovative?
2.   How much capacity is there for any innovations to be institutionalized and replicated?
3.   Can the innovation process be integrated within the democratic framework?
       Lack of political commitment, unwillingness to take risk in terms of electoral success, technical capacity, mindset, appropriate human resources, and performance linked career progression are critical constraints.

Strategies
1.   Increase awareness of successes – for example:
       A. women's self-help groups (India),
       B. computerization of land records (India, Pakistan),
       C. rural employment guarantee act (India),
       D. mid-day meals scheme for school children (India),
       E. schemes to help and empower vulnerable groups through information and food provision in times of crisis (Bangladesh),
       F. stipends for enrollment of girls in schools (Bangladesh), and
       G. the SAMURDHI scheme (Sri Lanka).
2.   Organize regular meetings across regions among the concerned sectoral experts

Theme 2: Service Delivery

Challenges/Issues
1. How to democratize service delivery such that it reaches the poorest population?
2. How to depoliticize service delivery, i.e., how to prevent service delivery becoming a source of political patronage?
3. How to enhance the quality of service delivery? Should one allow for marketization of service delivery?

Strategies
1. Draw on successful experiences and build on them. Consider, for example:
   A. Build management information systems on payments and human resources to monitor delivery
   B. Explore cost-minimization in service delivery
   C. Create service infrastructure where it is lacking.
   D. Create incentives to retain good human resources in rural areas for service delivery
   E. Explore the opportunities for choice and voice in effecting service delivery
   F. Draw on the examples of successful deregulation (e.g.: telecommunications in India, Pakistan, Nepal for replication elsewhere)
   G. Raise direct taxes for local bodies to enhance their resources for service delivery

Theme 3: Accountability and Transparency

Challenges/Issues
1. How does one improve the accountability of public institutions to parliament?
2. How does one improve transparency in the government and public sector?
3. How can one improve the efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery?

Strategies
1. Consider identifying and replicating successful examples:

   A. Making parliamentary committees more effective
   B. While protecting the autonomy of civil service, explore scope for prosecution of indicted civil servants who fail or are malfeasant in delivery of services.
   C. Reduce the backlog in the judicial system, and introduce speedier procedures for delivery of justice
   D. Enhancing the capacity of civil society to know how the public system works
   E. Consider introducing right to information acts
   F. Explore E-governance technology to achieve better accountability and transparency

Theme 4: Decentralization

Challenges/Issues
1. How does one resolve the tensions that exist between different tiers of government at political, administrative, and fiscal levels?
2. How does one provide for adequate career advancement opportunities for civil servants working at different levels of government?
3. How does one build adequate human, fiscal, and infrastructure capacities for efficient delivery of local government?

Strategies
1. Explore opportunities for sharing of experiences in regard to:
   A. Successful decentralization, for example:
      a. Kerala and Kernataka in India,
      b. devolution experience in Pakistan and its experience with district monitoring committees, and
      c. Nepal's forestry programme.
   B. Citizen participation in local government
   C. Monitoring and evaluation of outcomes

Working Group II: South-East Asia

The sub-regional working group for South-East Asia followed a slightly different format in terms of their discussion and presentation of results, preparing a concise summary of the main issues and trends occurring within each thematic area. Chaired by Dr. Syed Ahmad Bin Hussin of Malaysia, the group included representatives from Brunei, Myanmar, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand.

Theme 1: Public Sector Capacity and Innovation

1. A huge sum of money has been invested in capacity building with not much to show. Capacity building needs time to show real and tangible results. Need for better measures and monitoring of outcomes.

2. Structure of government agencies are not in line with good governance and reforms. The pace of change and reforms fail to catch up with increasing global and citizen demands. Poor interagency coordination, old and out-dated rules and regulations, ingrained habits, fear of change, the vested interest of certain groups, lack of risk taking behavior: all these call for serious and structural institutional reforms of the public sector.

3. Poverty remains an obstacle to change. Capacity building requires big and long-term investment. Poverty, too, contributes to ignorance and fear. It also leads to public sector brain drain to other better paying sectors. Priority on poverty reduction calls for public sector capacity building and innovation be directed substantially to poverty reduction and eradication.

Theme 2: Service Delivery and Access

1. Knowing what citizens want. Need for good and working mechanism for citizen feedback on their needs.

2. Prioritizing public services to rural areas, especially health and education related services. Need to balance between the immediate need of the poor and long-term sustainable needs of development. Need for high pro-poor public spending. Need to facilitate access to facilities. Need to move services nearer to the community, which calls for infrastructure and communication support.

3. Who gets what? Who benefits most? Political interference in service delivery where funds are directed to serve selected constituencies and groups. Free public service and its delivery from partisan and political interference.

Theme 3: Accountability, Transparency, and E-Government

1. Lack of and the need for transformational leadership at the highest level. Real and sustainable action to eradicate corruption. A serious and dedicated emphasis on ethics for politicians and public servants.

2. Citizens are in the dark and don't know what is happening around them. Need for active citizenship programs and mechanism alongside a Freedom of Information Act.

3. E-costs. There must be a need to prioritize areas/sectors in e-government and to put serious attention to procurement and distribution to check corruption and abuse.

Theme 4:   Decentralization, Local Governance: Bringing Government Closer to People

1. Resistance of central agencies to decentralizing. Need for political will and commitment.

2. Capacity and ability to implement is constrained by limited resources of local authorities. Central government's physical and financial support is crucial, especially in non-cost recovery projects at the local level.

3. Decentralization must be directed to benefiting citizens, not selected individuals and groups with vested interest. If post-decentralization is no better for the citizen compared to pre-decentralization, the exercise is a disservice.

Working Group III: North and East Asia

The sub-regional working group for North and East Asia identified a series of questions and challenges which are currently facing its members. It then developed a series of responses or strategies which have enabled nations to address and overcome these. Chaired by Dr. Dongsung Kong of the Republic of Korea, participating countries included China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Vietnam and Mongolia.

Theme 1: Public Sector Capacity and Innovation

Challenges/Issues
1.   People demand not only a smaller government, but also more and new services.
2.   People expect more than what the government can actually do.
3.   Responsiveness to new demands and management efficiency in the public sector are more crucial than ever in a rapidly changing era.
4.   Governance capacity is more problematic at the local level.
5.   What is the best way to improve public sector capacity, particularly at the local level?

Strategies
1.   Mobilize the international communities, including the UN Governance Center, to help developing countries (Vietnam and Mongolia) find a viable option for transforming their command economy to a market economy.
2.   Provide training and education to local civil servants on a regular basis. Training/education programs should cover not only knowledge/skills but the innovative mindsets of the civil servants.
3.   Government should communicate with the people so that people can understand what their government can do and cannot.
4.   Performance management and program budgeting could facilitate effective communication between the people and the government.

Theme 2: Service Delivery and Access

Challenges/Issues
1. The division of work/function between the central and the local governments is not clear and not well understood by the people.
2. People and the media blame the central government even for the service that is delivered by the local government. As a result, accountability and trust in government does not go together. And the local government is not highly motivated in providing quality services in a cost-effective way.
3. In the countries of Vietnam and Mongolia some services cannot be delivered simply because of poor infra-structure in the remote areas. Some local governments have no financial resources to meet the local needs.
4. How do we divide the decision making power, resources and functions for service delivery between the central and the local governments?

Strategies
1. The role of the government and the division of work between the central and local governments should be re-defined, clarified and shared with the people through education.
2. The role of the media is critical in educating the public.
3. The priority should be given to improving the infra-structure so that basic services can be delivered to everyone in a country.

Theme 3: Accountability, Transparency and E-Government

Challenges/Issues
1. Public officials are accountable to the top, rather than to the people.
2. Results-based accountability undermines the importance of policy making process, values of democracy, rule of law, etc.

Strategies
1. E-government would promote transparency and accountability.
2. An integrated complaint management system would promote transparency and accountability. Transparency and e-government would enable the public to participate in the policy making process in a meaningful way.
3. More attention should be given to policy-making process and anti-corruption measures.

Theme 4: Decentralization and Local Governance

Challenges/Issues
1. Local governments lack the ownership because decision making power remains in the central government.
2. National politics overshadows local politics.
3. Many local governments have very limited financial resources.
4. Inequity in service delivery and migration from rural to urban become more problematic in local governance.

Strategies
1. The speed and approach of decentralization should be re-considered taking into account fiscal disparity among local governments, political reality, and the national standard of service delivery (say, "uniform services").
2. Decentralization should consider efficiency and equity as well.
3. Reorganize/restructure the local governance system (say, from a three-tier to a two-tier) so that the central and local governments can effectively collaborate and respond to newly emerging needs.

CONCLUSION

Several conclusions were reached as part of the Regional Forum on Reinventing Government in Asia, through both the plenary sessions and discussions within the sub-regional working groups. The following is a summary of key areas of consensus, discussion topics, and suggested areas for further attention both by governments within the region and the international community.

The first recurring theme to emerge throughout the plenary sessions relates to the nature of trust and why a lack of confidence in government can emerge. Although trust can be defined in many different ways, participants agreed that a lack of trust effectively represents a gap between reality and expectations. While strengthening trust between social actors and in the government itself has been an ongoing challenge in developing countries for many years, it has become a newly prominent issue for many developed countries, as well, as citizen expectations and demands have increased in recent years.

Another cause for the divergence between expectations and public sector performance has been the recent change in the role of the state. In the past, policy formation, implementation, and evaluation was conducted by the state alone. However, it has now been increasingly recognized within the region that the state is incapable of shouldering this burden without support from both civil society and the private sector, which must act as full governance partners. In many cases and particularly when there has been a history of a strongly centralized and patriarchal state, citizens still expect government to address their needs, but there may be limited recognition of the roles that citizens themselves must play and the responsibility that they also hold. Similarly, central government can often be held accountable by citizens for failures which occur at the local level.

In general, these problems are often due to information asymmetry; it is not always clear who is responsible for what, to what extent these functions may overlap, and what role there may be for each actor and governance partner to play a more productive role. This problem can be addressed through several cross cutting and complementary measures which were discussed at the workshop; namely, increased transparency, accountability, and e-government; greater use of tri-sectoral partnerships between government, civil society organizations, and the private sector; citizen empowerment within the governance structure; and decentralization.

Greater transparency can be useful to increase publicly available information on public sector management, how government works, and some of the constraints that it faces. In some cases, citizens may be more critical of government, because there is insufficient familiarity and awareness of the issues and constraints faced by public officials and civil servants. Moreover, the reverse may be true, as well: there can also be insufficient information with regard to citizen preferences. Citizens may call for government to address and successfully resolve many different issues. However, if these requests are not all possible within the short term, then the question becomes: which of these issues are citizen priorities?

Given that building trust depends upon meeting expectations, governments need to determine what the expectations of citizens are. In many cases, socio-economic actors may have widely differing perspectives on what policy priorities should be. Therefore, one of the first steps in building trust should be fostering those activities which help citizens to build consenses on areas of mutual concern and benefit. The process of building consenses, in general and particularly on the role of the state, is important to determine what is it exactly that citizens want the state to do. The state cannot meet citizen expectations unless public officials are clear on what these are. At the same token, there must also be some basic awareness by citizens of what the state does, how its role has changed, what the responsibilities of different actors and citizens are, what methods citizens and businesses can use to contribute to development and other national objectives, and what outlets or mechanisms are available for this participation to unfold.

Once a consensus has been achieved on the role of the state, the next step might be to look at institutional structures and management capacity, and whether or not these are adequate to meet expectations for fulfilling the agreed upon role. Following these two essential elements – consensus building and institutional development, a series of considerations can help to build trust in government.   These include (i) increasing participation of socio-economic actors in all stages of the policy process; (ii) the full utilization of partnerships to achieve socio-economic objectives; (iii) determination of policy objectives which are sustainable in the medium to long term; (iv) identification of steps to achieve these policy objectives which have a realistic chance of success for ongoing and consistent implementation, given the political and economic environment within each country; (v) consenses within government to ensure commitment to expressed objectives; (vi) coordination between governmental authorities to ensure consistent implementation and policy declarations; and (vii) immediate and consistent responses to citizen concerns. By increasing policy and institutional credibility, these actions jointly work to improve trust in government.

Trust is the cumulative effect of the government interface with citizens at many levels. The more control there is of the political architecture, the less likely it is that legitimacy is high. If policy packages are discriminatory toward specific regions or people, this will also have a negative impact on trust. It is also important to recognize that trust building takes place at both the macro and micro levels. At the micro level, day-to-day interactions between governments and citizens can have a negative impact when service is not perceived as citizen-centred and geared toward meeting the needs of the individual. However, the responsibility for improving trust stays with the government, not the individuals, which is why service delivery is important, as one of the few variables that governments can influence and which impact citizens directly. In summary, trust acts as both the cause and the consequence of democratic governance. On the one hand, if there are higher levels of trusts, it is more likely that democratic institutions will work more effectively. At the same time, more effective democratic institutions will bring about greater trust in society.

Recommendations and Follow-up Measures

Participants contributed a number of suggestions for issues that they would like to see addressed in the future, as well as actions that could be taken by governments within the region and international organizations. These recommendations fell into the following categories: (i) research; (ii) training in capacity development; and (iii) partnerships.

In terms of research, a great deal of emphasis was placed by participants on the need to analyze outcomes and provide appropriate strategies for action by countries and governments in different socio-economic, political, and administrative situations. Areas recommended for additional research specifically included the following: (i) dissemination of strategies and steps for improving governance, which specifically takes into account how accessible these strategies are for countries in different stages of development and conflict resolution stages; (ii) research on different approaches that countries within the region have successfully undertaken to improve service delivery; (iii) additional studies on the impact that information and communication technologies are having within developing countries and whether their outcomes are justifying the diversion of resources from other priorities; (iv) investigation of whether there is a conflict between investments in technology infrastructure and training and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); (v) research on the sequence of steps that countries in different circumstances should undertake, if they are considering embarking on a e-government strategy; and (vi) research on the medium to long term effect of decentralization on the quality of service provision and trust in government.

In terms of capacity development, participants also expressed that they would like to see (i) targeted workshops which enable participating developing countries to investigate their own particular needs and devise their own strategies; and (ii) additional education for senior public officials, which emphasizes their role in promoting accountability and responsibility for results. Last, but not least, delegates also highlighted the tremendous importance of both regional and international partnerships for development, while not discounting the contributions of bilateral relationships.

As a follow-up measure, organizers recommended that participating Member States, their delegates, and other interested parties within the region maintain contact with the United Nations Governance Centre (UNGC) in the period following the event. One of the principal activities of the UNGC is currently the establishment of a governance knowledge base and the creation of a community of innovators. The UNGC will therefore act to facilitate the ongoing exchange of innovations and best practices between Member States. It is also in the process of embarking upon several research projects and hopes to incorporate some of the research and training suggestions made by participants for development of its future research activities. Organizers further recommended that participants keep apraised of developments regarding the 7th Global Forum, which will be hosted by the United Nations between 26 to 29 June 2007 in Vienna on the theme of "Building Trust in Government." All United Nations Member States are encouraged to participate in this event. Research, presentations, official statements and other related materials which emerge from the Global Forum will be placed online at the official forum website at www.7thglobalforum.org and also on the United Nations Public Administration Network (UNPAN) at www.unpan.org.

ANNEX I: FORUM AGENDA

WEDNESDAY, 6 SEPTEMBER 2006	
9:00~09:30	**Opening Ceremony** ▪ Mr. Kim Ho-young, Acting Director, United Nations Governance Centre ▪ H.E. Dr. Lee Yong-sup, Minister of Government Administration and Home Affairs, Republic of Korea ▪ Mr. Guido Bertucci, Director, Division for Public Administration and Development Management, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs ▪ Mr. G. Shabbir Cheema, Principal Advisor, Division for Public Administration and Development Management, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
09:45~10:00	Group Photo and Coffee Break
10:00~11:30	**Session I: Public Sector Capacity and Innovations** ▪ Introduction by Chair: H.E. Dr. Sarath Amunugama, Minister of Public Administration and Home Affairs of Sri Lanka ▪ Context Presentation: - *Dr. Pan-suk Kim, Associate Dean and Professor of Public Administration, Yonsei University, Republic of Korea* ▪ Country Experiences: *Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand*
11:30~11:45	Coffee Break
11:45~13:00	Continuation of Session I, Session Summary,
13:00~14:30	Lunch

14:30~16:00	**Session II: Building Trust for Service Delivery and Access**
	▪ Introduction by Chair: Dato' Haji Yaacob Hussin, Director General Malaysian Administrative Modernization and Manpower Planning Unit (MAMPU), Malaysia
	▪ Context Presentations:
	   - *Dr. M. Ramesh, Lee Kwan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore*
	   - *Mr. Rehman Sobhan, Chairman, Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh*
	▪ Country Experiences:
	▪ *Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Japan, Myanmar, Pakistan*

16:00~16:15	Coffee Break
16:15~17:30	Continuation of Session II, Session Summary
19:00~	Dinner hosted by Minister of Government Administration and Home Affairs, Republic of Korea
THURSDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2006	

09:00~10:30	**Session III: Accountability, Transparency, and E-Government**
	▪ Introduction by Chair: Dr. Kuk-Hwan Jeong, Senior Research Fellow, Korea Information Society Development Institute, Korea
	▪ Context Presentations:
	   - *Mr. Jak Jabes, Practice Team Leader & Regional Coordinator, Governance Team, UNDP Regional Centre in Bangkok, Thailand*
	   - *Dr. Gerald Zhiyong Lan, Professor, School of Public Affairs, Arizona State University, USA*
	▪ Country Experiences:
	Brunei, Cambodia, China, Philippines, Republic of Korea

10:30~10:45	Coffee Break
10:45~12:00	Continuation of Session III, Session Summary

12:00~13:30	Lunch hosted by Chairman of Presidential Committee on Government Innovation & Decentralization, Republic of Korea

13:30~15:00	**Session Ⅳ: Decentralization and Local Governance: Bringing Government Closer to People**
	▪ Introduction by Chair: Mr. Hassan Mehmood Yousufzai, Chief Economist, Planning and Development Department Government of North West Frontier Province (NWFP), Pakistan
	▪ Context Presentations:
	  - *Mr. Tatsuro Niikawa, Doshisha University, Kyoto, Japan*
	  - *Dr. Siripurapu Kesava Rao, Principal, Administrative Staff College of India*
	▪ Country Experiences:
	  - *Republic of Korea, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam*

15:00~15:15	Coffee Break
15:15~16:30	Continuation of Session IV, Session Summary
17:00~19:00	Tour of the Korean Government Innovation Hall Central Government Complex, Seoul
19:00~	Dinner hosted by Minister of Information and Communications, Republic of Korea
FRIDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER 2006	
09:00~09:20	Introduction to the Working Groups: Mr. G. Shabbir Cheema, Principal Advisor, Division for Public Administration and Development Management, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

09:20~10:30	**Initiation of the Working Groups**
	
	▪ Group Ⅰ South Asia
	  - *Resource Person: Mr. Rehman Sobhan, Chairman, Centre for Policy Dialogue, Bangladesh*
	
	▪ Group Ⅰ: South-East Asia
	  - *Resource Person: Dr. Syed Ahmad Bin Hussin, Director, Center for International Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia*
	
	▪ Group III: North and East Asia
	  - *Resource Person: Dr. Kong Dongsung, Professor of Sungkyunkwan University, Republic of Korea*

10:30~10:45	Coffee Break
10:45~12:00	Continuation of Working Group Discussions
12:00~13:00	Lunch hosted by Administrator of Public Procurement Service, Republic of Korea
13:00~14:30	**Working Group Presentations and Discussion of Results** ▪ Chairperson: Mr. Guido Bertucci, Director, Division for Public Administration and Development Management, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs ▪ Working Groups I, II & III: Presentation and Discussion Results
14:30~15:00	**Wrap-up Session & Closing Remarks** ▪ Mr. Kim Ho-young, Acting Director, United Nations Governance Centre
18:30~	Farewell Reception

ANNEX II
LIST OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE REGIONAL FORUM IN ASIA

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AIDE MEMOIRE
THE REGIONAL FORUM ON REINVENTING GOVERNMENT IN ASIA
Building Trust in Government:
Innovations to Improve Governance

6-8 September 2006, Seoul, Republic of Korea

PURPOSE & SPONSORSHIP

The Regional Forum on Reinventing Government in Asia is an ongoing effort designed to highlight innovations and best practices of governments so that they may be shared and adapted to enhance the quality and effectiveness of governance region-wide. This investment in strengthening State capacity and transparent governance aims to directly contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It will be organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) in partnership with the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs (MOGAHA) of the Republic of Korea, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Governance Centre. The Regional Forum will be held from 6 to 8 September 2006 in Seoul on the topic of "Building Trust in Government: Innovations to Improve Governance."

BACKGROUND

Improvements in governance and public administration have become increasingly recognized by the international community as central pillars to the successful implementation of a wide range of policy objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Since its origin in 1999, the Global Forum has emerged as one of the most significant global events to deal with government reinvention. Previous host governments have included the United States of America, Brazil, Italy, Morocco, and Mexico. In May 2006, the Government of the Republic of Korea hosted the 6th Global Forum in Seoul. During the 6th Global Forum, the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations invited participants to the 7th Global Forum to be held at the UN Headquarters in Vienna, Austria. Participants endorsed the recommendation of the Government of the Republic of Korea to accept the invitation of the United Nations.

Through Resolution A/RES/57/277, the General Assembly asked the United Nations Secretariat to provide support to the Global Forum on Reinventing Government. In view of the significance of the Global Forum for ministers, senior government officials, civil society organizations, and the private sector, the Secretary-General of the United Nations endorsed continued support, if requested, for the Global Forum in his 2002 report to the General Assembly.

A series of preparatory Regional Forums on Reinventing Government take place in the year prior to the Global Forum to identify region-specific issues, challenges, and responses within the area of governance and public administration. The conclusions that emerge from these meetings influence the trajectory of the Global Forum and are presented in plenary to its participants. In 2006, six Regional Forums will be held, including the Regional Forum on Reinventing Government in Asia on "Building Trust in Government: Innovations to Improve Governance."

CONTEXT

Building trust in Government presents one of the major challenges for the early part of the century. Tremendous global changes over the past few years have resulted in a better informed, more diverse, and more demanding citizenry. The breadth of challenges facing the State within the new globalized environment means that governments must explore new ways of incorporating the voices of their citizens into the policy process, while earning the trust of many people and groups which did not always participate actively. There are different ways of meeting this challenge, although commonalities are also present. Integrity, accountability, and transparency are core values that can help build trust in government.

Credible and sustainable policy measures also work to enhance trust in government, while lowering the uncertainty of socio-economic actors. Tri-sectoral partnerships between Government, the private sector, and civil society can help to improve the quality and reach of service delivery, while ensuring that citizen priorities are reflected in policy decisions. The quality of leadership represents an additional key variable, as governments and organizations aim to introduce innovations into existing structures, improve public sector performance, and enhance the development of human resources.

OBJECTIVES

Building on the results of the 6th Global Forum on Reinventing Government: Toward Participatory and Transparent Governance held from 24 to 27 May 2005 in Seoul, the Regional Forum in Asia is designed to ensure that the valuable analytical insights and lessons learned are expanded upon, transferred, and adapted to meet the needs of governments within the region. The Regional Forum will focus on the transfer and exchange of public sector innovations and best practices in governance, with a view toward measures that help to improve the trust of citizens in their governments. The practical experience of senior level government officials will be used to devise strategies for implementation. A small core group of resource persons will facilitate the dialogue among the senior government officials from the region.

The objective of the Regional Forum on Reinventing Government in Asia is to assist governments to strengthen their public sector and governance capacities, take greater advantage of the potential of globalization, and achieve development objectives, such as the Millennium Development Goals. This entails, first of all, an assessment of ongoing reform efforts and practices within the various countries in the region, with a view to analyzing best practices and innovative approaches and learning from past efforts in furthering their development agenda. The innovations and good practices to be presented and explored at the Regional Forum will focus different measures that work to build trust in Government, as a means to improve governance and conditions for citizens. The Regional Forum on Reinventing Government in Asia will further provide participants with the opportunity to meet several complementary objectives:

- Establishment of a platform for senior government officials to present their recent experiences in government reinvention;
- Discussion and exchange of different methods of building trust in Government for the purpose of improving governance and public administration;
- Summary review of best practices and innovative approaches for a range of governance activities within the region;
- Examination of central factors that have enabled the successful implementation or adoption of enhanced practices;
- Provision of a venue for senior officials, who are in a position to improve the quality of governance and public administration through Government reinvention efforts, to strategize on methods that enable the implementation and replication of innovations that further these goals; and
- Preparation of a foundation for a "Regional Reinvention Network" that interconnects key partners for improved governance; i.e., governments, the private sector, and civil society.

SUB-THEMES

Within this context, the presentations and discussions at the Regional Forum on Reinventing Government in Asia will refer to one or more of the following four themes:

1. Public Sector Capacity and Innovations

To build trust and achieve development objectives, governments must have the capacity to effectively select and implement public policy with broad based support. Government reinvention thus refers to innovations that strengthen the credibility of policies and institutions, improve coordination between governmental authorities, increase the sustainability of policy measures, enhance the consistency and transparency of public communications, as well as improvements in human resource development, training, and incentive structures.

Building public sector capacity requires the reorientation and training of public servants to ensure a service orientation and responsiveness to the needs of citizens. Moreover, public administrations often suffer from a lack of a clear mission and institutional structure, as well as weak management systems. If the MDGs are to be achieved by 2015, and the challenge of globalization turned to advantage, the machinery of government will need to become more efficient, transparent and accountable. These and related issues will be explored during the session.

2. Building Trust for Service Delivery and Access

Reforming public administration and ensuring that central agencies operate in an effective and transparent manner are key ingredients for effective service delivery and access. In turn, this facilitates trust in Government and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). With this in view, the Road Map for the MDGs underscores the relationship between public sector management and the goal of poverty reduction.

Tri-sectoral partnerships between the three institutions of governance foster increased participation of citizens in the development process and improved access to services, thereby creating the necessary conditions for enhanced trust between citizens and Government. The State, private sector, and civil society each have different knowledge resources, and skill sets that can be used to complement each other. An effective partnership, which takes advantage of the relative strengths of each member, can result in greater combined capacities that enhance existing information about the needs of customers and clients, ensure that policy measures and objectives reflect citizen priorities, improve the quality and coverage of service provision, lower costs, and strengthen democratic governance.

3. Accountability, Transparency, and E-Government

Trust in Government depends on the integrity of public officials and the policy process itself. Accountable and transparent governance helps to ensure this integrity by allowing citizens to remain informed about policy, providing greater opportunities for participation, increasing the efficient allocation of resources in both the public and private sectors, and minimizing corruption and unethical practices.

E-government can help support these objectives by promoting accountability through greater transparency. By facilitating communication between citizens and Government, e-government increases publicly available information, improves information on Government services and programmes, lowers the uncertainty of socio-economic actors, and enhances decision making. This can help to strengthen community oversight of resource allocation, through media and civil society organizations, reduce corruption, and increase the competitiveness of the procurement process. Lower application processing and wait time can also reduce the cost of complying with government regulations, encouraging the movement of resources into the formal sector. Moreover, by enhancing the speed and efficiency of operations, e-government can also lead to lower costs,

improved research capabilities, and better documentation and record keeping. Finally, e-government can also help to improve the coordination between governmental authorities, by increasing knowledge of one another's policies and activities, and supporting the balance of power.

4. Decentralization and Local Governance: Bringing Government Closer to People

Decentralization initiatives have the potential to help build trust in Government, by making the policy process more accessible to the governed. When citizens are empowered to become active and effective partners in policy decisions, implementation, and evaluation, this enhances trust between actors, as well as their joint ability to achieve mutually beneficial objectives, such as development.

Within the framework of democratic governance, decentralization and local autonomy are crucial in fostering more participatory governance and reducing poverty. They allow citizens to "voice" their demands in a more effective way and become active partners in all stages of policy decision, implementation, and evaluation – thereby enhancing trust among actors from Government, civil society, and the private sector, as well as their joint ability to achieve mutually beneficial objectives, such as development. Possible topics to be examined are legal frameworks for decentralized governance; the redistribution of functions and resources between central and local governments; relationships between local governments and NGOs; the enhancement of local autonomy capacity; local autonomy and checks and balances between central and local governments; the role of community based organizations; decentralization and citizen participation; and decentralization and service delivery.

THEMATIC FOCUS & METHOD

Previous forums on government reinvention have been based on the premise that far too little is known or understood about the ways in which innovations, best practices, and reinvention have already worked to the benefit of local populations. The presentations made in Seoul during the 6th Global Forum illuminated numerous positive experiences within the region at both the national and sub-national levels.

The Regional Forum on Reinventing Government in Asia will deal with innovations and good practices in governance; methods of building trust in government through accountability and transparency; institutional mechanisms that promote better upstream and downstream flows of information from the local to the central government levels; participatory approaches to designing and implementing public policies; new frameworks and tools for political, administrative, and financial transparency including institutions to combat domestic corruption.

The substantive focus of the Regional Forum is on the exchange and transfer of these experiences, especially those that have worked to build trust in government. In sum, the experiences of the invited senior officials, the resulting knowledge generated, and the transfer of this knowledge to ensure broader reach would be discussed. Topics for analysis by senior officials and a core group of academic practitioners will include, for example, bureaucratic reorientation, cultural adaptations, structural incentive systems, and transparency. Approximately thirty senior officials from Asia will actively participate, as well as five senior scholars of government and public administration. While reading materials designed to prepare and orient participants will be distributed as background documents, the forum will provide an opportunity for senior government officials to identify strategies and approaches that facilitate the implementation and replication of these innovations. Presentations will introduce country-level innovations that aim to strengthen the quality of governance and trust in Government. Senior government officials will be requested to present one innovation from their country, while addressing the following questions:

1. What are the main characteristics of the reform and how has it worked to build trust in government? To what problems/issues dealing with improvement in governance does it aim to respond?
2. Who were the stakeholders involved in designing, implementing, and assessing the innovation?
3. What are the tangible results of the innovation and which groups did it benefit the most?
4. What challenges were encountered in designing and implementing the innovation and how were they overcome? Or what factors account for its success?
5. Is the innovation an isolated reform effort or has it created a positive environment for reforms in other areas leading to the attainment of national long-term development goals?
6. What makes this innovation adaptable to other countries in the region?

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Based on the discussions and deliberations that emerge from the analysis of key themes, regional cooperation strategies will be developed. The senior officials participating in the Regional Forum will form an ongoing working group that will be responsible for broader dissemination of innovations and experience sharing. Further support for implementation will be made possible through the incorporation of project results into the work plan of the United Nations Governance Centre in Seoul. Conclusions and recommendations of the Regional Forum will also be presented to international delegations and participants at the 7th Global Forum on Reinventing Government, which will be hosted by the United Nations in June 2007.

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