

**UN DESA / ACSH / NISPAcee Joint Capacity Development Workshop
“Innovations and e-government to build a resilient public administration”**

**30th NISPAcee Annual Conference
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CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WAY FORWARD

A. Overall conclusions

The pandemic-induced crisis created major disruptions to the proper functioning of government, in policy making processes, provision of public services, law enforcement, and in the justice system. It also challenged the state of key dimensions of national institutions, highlighted in SD16. The crisis limited transparency and access to information, eroded accountability safeguards, increased the probability of fraud and corruption, and restricted citizen participation and engagement.

The ongoing health crisis proved that there is no country in the world that can singlehandedly withstand a catastrophe of this magnitude.

Most of the dire challenges that humanity faces, including those related to climate change and environmental degradation, are self-inflicted and require mindset change at societal level to be averted.

Nevertheless, the pandemic-induced crisis also provided incentives to improve work and deliver interesting solutions for public service development.

Hence,

- A resilient and sustainable recovery from any crisis demands robust governance and strategies to deal with the multifaceted effects of crises that affect human life across many dimensions. It also requires transformative public administrations that are capable to support an integrated governance system that can successfully cope with crises.
- Innovation in, and digital transformation of, public administration are essential factors nowadays, as they contribute to creating new opportunities for increasing the quality of policy formulation and implementation but also enhance transparency, accountability, and openness. They also facilitate simplification of bureaucratic procedures and contribute to delivering public services equitably. Adoption of innovation and digital transformation not only helps to cope with crises more effectively, but it also improves the quality of life for citizens thus positively impacting their trust in government.
- Governance is the engine that drives solutions to challenges and issues with uncertainty and ambiguity. Digital transformation, as a game-changer, is a powerful tool for diagnosing and solving challenges. However, only about 10% of the digital transformation process can be attributed to technology, 90% of it includes human efforts and affected by human factor.

- To be successful, digital transformation must be conceptualized, analysed and adapted to the particular needs and environment of each country.
- In the context of effective governance, digital transformation should be people-centered and based on trust and partnership between all stakeholders.
- Adoption of new leadership styles and mindset are needed to engender a sense of shared responsibility toward the attainment of the SDGs. A transformational leadership should focus on long-term sustainable development to establish systems that persistently ensure the pursuance of strategic goals in the future. It has to understand the need for mindset change on the path to sustainable development and is able to effectively contribute to the achievement of this objective. It should comprehend the need for collective effort (at all levels, the national and organisational levels, but also on international level) toward the achievement of the SDGs. Transformational leaders have to be willing to learn and be ethical by themselves, in order to be able to impress upon followers the need to behave in a like-minded manner.
- Transparent, ubiquitous, unfettered partnerships, at all levels, are a must to better coordinate global responses, share experiences and lessons learnt, and support countries to tailor responses to their own circumstances.
- The Astana Civil Service Hub is a multilateral platform that could be utilised to establish various partnerships that would contribute to the implementation of development initiatives.

B. Conclusions by discussion theme

1. Contribution of innovative practices and ICT to public administration dealing with challenges

- The recent crisis demonstrated that adoption of innovative practices and effective use of ICT play a critical role in delivering public services uninterruptedly and effectively during abnormal times.
- Advances in digital technologies and their incorporation into government – citizen interaction as well as for delivering public services may potentially have a negative impact on inequality and digital divides. Thus, government innovation should support social inclusion.
- Leveraging digital government, and frontier technologies including data governance has become an essential part of people lives because it fosters efficient, transparent, accountable, and inclusive service delivery. It has been a key tool in addressing the COVID-19 crisis and building resilient public administration.
- E-government and ICTs are effective tools but not a panacea. While using them human and social aspects should prevail.
- Innovative mindsets are needed to create a resilient government.
- Co-creation is a necessary condition for improving public governance.

2. Resilience of public administration institutions is critical for addressing future external shocks

- Increasing the resilience of national institutions is critical in addressing external shocks associated with the VUCA world¹. Also, resilience of public administration system and structures is quintessential for surviving and advancing in challenging environment affected by various pandemics, environmental degradation, climate change, etc.
- Emergency responses and policy measures aimed at limiting negative economic and social consequences of a crisis, such as stimulus and social assistance packages, may increase risks to accountability and integrity, including through greater opportunities for fraud and corruption.
- Effective and nimble law making is especially crucial in crisis situations to balance power and ensure independent oversight, represent people’s real needs, and demands, and pass legislation to deploy public resources adequately, equitably, and fairly.
- Lack of effective management of crises may widen and exacerbate divisions and inequalities in society, especially among the poor and more vulnerable segments of society.
- Citizens trust in government is hinged on institutional resilience, thus accountability and transparency in government policy making and implementation must be preserved at all stages of the process.
- The role of government protection should not only be invoked during a crisis. The modality of social protection and social security needs to be set forth strategically to make life predictably assured for such vulnerable sections of society both during normal times and during crisis.

3. Reshaping and refocusing public administration training to promote the appropriate corporate culture

- There is an apparent need to reshape and refocus training in public administration with an eye to developing and maintaining the most relevant organisational behaviour and culture in public institutions.
- In addition to requisite knowledge and skillsets, PA training schools and institutes should include training conducive to the development of relevant mindset and values, including those of coexistence, cooperation, and partnership.
- Training on ethics should be more vividly integrated into training curricula and programmes.
- Focus on SDGs, their importance, and their integration into national policies. Responses to the pandemic-induced crisis highlighted the need to deploy quick thinking, creativity, and innovation to counter the upheaval caused by the pandemic in service delivery, particularly in critical areas such as healthcare. The old routine and predictable approaches fail to address the new imperatives of service delivery.
- The transformational nature of the 2030 Agenda and the negative impact of the pandemic on its implementation require ethical, visionary, transformational and professional LEADERSHIP that possesses a VISION about how to minimise the impact of the on-going disruption on the state; how to integrate global SDGs with national

¹ VUCA stands for vulnerability, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. The **VUCA world** is synonymous with the increasing dynamics in digitalization and needs to be taken into account in the formulation and implementation of public policies.

development agenda and how to spearhead the society on the way to sustainable development.

- Adopting a citizen-centered whole-of-society approach with stakeholder engagement is important to build trust and ensure citizen buy-in in tackling the climate change impact and other crises.

4. Need for strong partnerships and cooperation as a tool necessary for a resilient public administration

- Strong and effective partnerships and cooperation at all levels, within and between countries, is necessary for sustaining a resilient public administration.
- As governments have been challenged to respond to the coronavirus emergency risks, collaboration with all stakeholder groups and citizen engagement has generated much needed innovative responses to COVID-19 and helped maintain and, in some countries, even enhance public trust.
- Civil society should be mobilised and self-organised to play active role in response to the pandemic.
- Partnerships are needed to generate and replicate innovations and support effective use of innovative practices in public service delivery that may assist public administration to overcoming outstanding challenges it is confronted with.
- Partnerships should focus on supporting actions that alleviate the effects of crises on inequality, inequity, and impoverishment.
- Strategies and programmes should be devised that are sufficiently flexible and adjustable to address any emerging crises.
- On the understanding that there is not a single country in the world that may concur the crisis of the COVID magnitude alone, the participants agreed that ubiquitous partnerships and unequivocal cooperation and consultation (at all levels) are critical components towards the achievement of SDGs.
- Building and promoting national, regional and global partnerships is very important for exchange of technology, innovations, good practices and other resources for current and future crisis response.

C. Overall Recommendations

- Cooperation of UNDESA and ACSH with NISPAcee should be invigorated as the Network is well positioned to disseminate practical advice, including on requisite changes to the curricula of schools and institutes of PA comprising it.
- To address potential negative impact of digitalisation, the attention of decision makers and practitioners should not focus only on the “technology side”. Important demographic and social aspects of the growing digital divide should be taken into close consideration.
- The workshop confirmed that the cooperation between UNDESA and the ACSH increases the impact, reach, and substantive content of capacity development activities that are jointly organised. It is recommended that the two organisations consider widening the substantive scope of their respective contributions by undertaking a joint research project

in an area of mutual interest. Details of the institutional cooperation could be reflected in an MoU should UNDESA and the ACSH choose to sign.

D. Recommendations by discussion theme

1. Innovation and ICT

- Familiarise public servants with contemporary leadership methodology and skills; develop and strengthen skills sets in transformative and adaptive leadership systems.
- When applying innovative and ICT solutions always take into consideration the context and the situation in a particular area of application.
- Focus on development of innovative and creative skills in public servants through the development of adequate incentives.
- Develop strategies and approaches that will help neutralize negative effects of digitalisation in public service on division and inequality in delivery of public services.
- Innovation and digitalization in government typically require a holistic approach, systems-thinking in policymaking and service delivery, intensive use of ICTs, re-organized institution, and enhanced capacities in data management and ICT infrastructure to succeed.

2. Resilience of public administration

- For citizens to trust institutional responses to crises, they must know what governments are doing and have access to reliable information, including: the facts; the data on trends and potential impacts; and the public policies to be deployed in response to the crisis, as well as the assumptions and scenarios on which they are based.
- Integrate strategies, lessons learned and methodologies into policies, programmes, and legislative/institutional frameworks.
- Introduction of compliance officers in the public sector will enhance the conditions for integrity behaviour of public servants and public organisations interaction with the population.
- New mindsets for innovation and digital government are required for a resilient public administration for the SDGs. Hence, the criticality of developing such mindsets and related competencies in public administration.

3. Refocus and reshape PA training

- Integrate SDG learning in learning modules and curricula in secondary and high schools.
- Integrate SDG learning into public servants' training through online training modules offered to all public servants and in all public administration schools and institutes.
- Integrate training modules on ethical behaviour and the effects of corruption into public servants' training through off- and on-line training courses offered to all public servants and in all public administration schools and institutes.
- Incorporate the 11 CEPA principles of Effective Governance for Sustainable Development in the curricula of public administration training schools and institutes.

- Much broader multi-disciplinary education is needed in modern public administration, that will enable public sector decision makers and practitioners to avoid repeating old mistakes.
- Focus on practical skills rather than theoretical concepts.
- Academies for public servants, offering MPA degrees to incorporate modules on SDGs.
- Aim at increasing the number of domestic capacity development training activities, policy initiatives and actions inspired by this workshop to support the SDGs implementation.
- Follow-up training and advisory services, facilitated by the UN and partners on government innovation for social inclusion and other courses, upon request of government officials.
- Address the LEADERSHIP capacity deficit in public sector as a critical precondition for successful implementation of the Agenda 2030, public administration training schools and institutes must adjust their curricula to include training focusing on specific skills, professional values, characteristics, and mindset that are needed by current TRANSFORMATIONAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION LEADERS.
- Introduce digital approaches to teaching public administration-related subjects.
- Include training for individuals who will work in integrity related matters throughout public administration, in order to increase trust of citizens in government.

4. Partnerships and cooperation

- Advocate for new innovative partnership models that will unite all Member States on the path to sustainable development and enable humanity to survive in the face of daunting challenges, most of which have been self-inflicted.
- Develop participatory response strategies, through the development and use of new digital platforms and tools to enable engagement, including in the collective development of digital tools and solutions (e.g., through crowdsourcing, hackathons) and the use of social media to connect with people, since they have been proven effective and were used in different countries.
- Work in collaboration with the national level SDG working groups / platforms, including governments, civil society, the private sector, and academia in order to create a comprehensive platform to share resources, ideas, and knowledge.
- Consolidate existing knowledge in the field of SDGs and develop evidence-based research studies.
- Encourage and strengthen collaboration with the private sector, civil society, and academia to share knowledge and lessons learned in the field of SDGs implementation.
- Involve inter-governmental organisations, including regional ones; increase cooperation with business centres.
- Central Asia-Central Asia working group (inspired by the South-South cooperation model) is a realistic modality to ensure the follow-up to the workshop and to strengthen the cooperation among public servants.

The participants expressed their strong intention to expand their collaboration and emphasised that organising an annual event in one of the Central Asian countries will be a great opportunity for public servants in the NISPAcee region.

UNDESA drew the attention of participants to the fact that, considering the magnitude and variety of challenges, mostly self-inflicted, the only way for humanity to survive and achieve sustainable development is thru ubiquitous, unfettered, unconditional cooperation at all levels within and between countries. NISPAcee agreed to look into a possibility, to invite to its next conference representatives from other regional PA associations and networks in the world (AAPAM, CARICAD, AAPA, etc). UN DESA agreed to facilitate the process of communications.