

## *Summary*

The Committee of Experts on Public Administration held its nineteenth session through a combination of written consultations and informal meetings convened on 13, 15, 18, 21, 27 and 28 May 2020, using a virtual platform. The overall theme was “Promoting effective governance and institutional reform to accelerate delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals”. with particular reference to the Covid-19 pandemic response and recovery.

A key message of the Committee is that many countries may not be prepared to implement the SDGs at the desired scale and speed because of a general undervaluing of the public sector in economic theories of the past decades and disregard of its public value when equipped with adequate capacity and the appropriate skills and mind sets. Combatting corruption also remains a crucial precondition of effective governance for the acceleration of implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The Committee underscored that achievement of the SDGs could be accelerated if the Goals were embedded in national and subnational budgets and these are effectively executed. However, budgeting for the SDGs is still in its infancy in most countries. These challenges are exacerbated by limited opportunities for citizens to participate in budgeting and limited capacities of oversight institutions to effectively audit budget performance.

The Committee observed that the pandemic has exposed risks and vulnerabilities of governments, for example in their unpreparedness for crisis, inadequacies of public infrastructure and investment, including in health systems, and imbalances in economic and social development. The pandemic could impede implementation of the SDGs, particularly where awareness of them is lacking, and has further exposed social inequalities, with vulnerable groups and those left furthest behind being the most impacted, including in relation to employment and social protection.

The Committee recommended action to recognize essential service workers in the public sector, strengthen public sector capabilities for the SDGs, invest in the future public sector workforce, expand use of digital technologies and address digital divides. The Committee stressed the importance of strengthening the capacity of State institutions and re-establishing credible governance and public administration institutions in countries affected by conflict.

The Committee further stressed the important role of subnational governments in delivering the SDGs. As demonstrated in the current fight against the pandemic, state, provincial and municipal governments are often the first level providers in the delivery of the SDGs. Expanded efforts are needed to strengthen local government finance and financial management to this end, including through a concerted international effort to address severe budgetary challenges and financial risks that governments are currently facing at the subnational level.

Another key message of the Committee is that Governments should not simply aim to return to pre-existing procedures and institutional cultures in seeking to respond to the pandemic and planning for recovery. The pandemic presents a unique opportunity to reimagine the role of institutions and policymaking, promote new governance norms and shift from past practices to transformative pathways that strengthen resilience and accelerate action to achieve the SDGs. Bold action that engages all stakeholders and society-at-large is clearly possible.

The Committee noted that the principles of effective governance for sustainable development had been put to test and proven useful as a guide to analysing complex governance challenges and building strong institutions to realize the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development, at all levels and in both developed and developing country contexts.

The Committee adopted a draft resolution and a draft decision for the consideration of the Economic and Social Council. The Committee also reaffirmed its contribution to the 2020 high-level political forum on promoting effective governance and institutional reform to accelerate the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals.