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Economic and environmental questions: public administration and development

Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 22 July 2020

[on the recommendation of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration
(E/2020/44)]

2020/21. Report of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration on its nineteenth session

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling its resolutions [2018/12](#) of 2 July 2018, [2019/26](#) of 23 July 2019 and other related resolutions on public administration and development, in which it affirmed that service to citizens should be at the centre of transforming public administration and that the foundations of sustainable development at all levels include transparent, participatory and accountable governance and a professional, ethical, responsive and information and communications technology-enabled public administration,

Reaffirming General Assembly resolution [70/1](#) of 25 September 2015, entitled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”,

Reaffirming also General Assembly resolution [69/313](#) of 27 July 2015 on the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development,

Reaffirming further the outcome document, entitled “New Urban Agenda”, adopted by the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), held in Quito from 17 to 20 October 2016,¹

Recalling General Assembly resolution [69/327](#) of 14 September 2015, in which the Assembly reaffirmed the importance of freedom, human rights, national sovereignty, good governance, the rule of law, peace and security, combating corruption at all levels and in all its forms, and effective, accountable and inclusive democratic institutions at the subnational, national and international levels as central to enabling inclusive and accountable public services for sustainable development,

¹ General Assembly resolution [71/256](#), annex.



Referring to the United Nations Convention against Corruption,² which entered into force on 14 December 2005,

Recalling General Assembly resolution [74/197](#) of 19 December 2019, in which the Assembly recognized the need to harness the potential of information and communications technologies as critical enablers of sustainable development and to overcome digital divides, and stressing that capacity-building for the productive use of such technologies should be given due consideration in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution [69/228](#) of 19 December 2014 on promoting and fostering the efficiency, accountability, effectiveness and transparency of public administration by strengthening supreme audit institutions, in which the Assembly emphasized that efficient, accountable, effective and transparent public administration has a key role to play in the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals,

Recalling further General Assembly resolution [74/236](#) of 19 December 2019 on human resources development,

Referring to General Assembly resolution [74/270](#) of 2 April 2020, in which the Assembly recognized the unprecedented effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, including the severe disruption to societies and economies, as well as to global travel and commerce, and the devastating impact on the livelihood of people, and reaffirmed its full commitment to the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development,

Recognizing the role of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration in providing policy advice and programmatic guidance to the Economic and Social Council on issues related to governance and public administration, and the relevance of the work of the Committee to the implementation of and follow-up to the 2030 Agenda,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration on its nineteenth session,³ and expresses its appreciation for the work done by the Committee on building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions, including the promotion of effective governance and institutional reform to accelerate the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals in accordance with the 2020 theme of the Economic and Social Council and the high-level political forum on sustainable development;

2. *Invites* the Committee to continue to place the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁴ at the centre of its work and to continue to advise the Council on how public administrations can support the implementation and progress reviews of the Sustainable Development Goals;

3. *Welcomes* the contribution of the Committee to the high-level political forum, and reaffirms that the principle of leaving no one behind should be a core principle of public administration;

Promoting effective governance and institutional reform to accelerate delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals

4. *Reiterates* the critical role of institutions in the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals and targets, calls for institutions to develop more

² United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2349, No. 42146.

³ *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2020, Supplement No. 24 (E/2020/44)*.

⁴ General Assembly resolution [70/1](#).

creative, flexible and integrated ways of working to this end, and notes that implementing the Goals does not necessarily require the creation of new institutions;

5. *Recalls* the importance of a timely implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and urges Governments to address the structural and procedural weaknesses in institutions at all levels that may be hindering the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets and pursue bold policy reforms to accelerate achievement of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development;

6. *Underscores* that realizing the Sustainable Development Goals, leaving no one behind and mitigating the adverse social, economic and financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on all societies require addressing the deep inequalities that exist in many countries, which may require institutions at all levels to play a greater role in promoting and enforcing non-discriminatory laws and policies, inter alia, through more effective redistribution and social protection programmes, effective taxation systems and administration, and special measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination and their compounded negative impacts, particularly on the poorest and most vulnerable;

7. *Welcomes* the expanded use of digital technologies in public service delivery in response to the pandemic, and calls for greatly accelerated efforts to address digital divides in access to affordable high-speed broadband and improve digital literacy and knowledge-sharing enabled by Governments, including among disadvantaged groups and in rural and remote areas, to ensure access to public services on general terms of equality, build resilience to crises and leave no one behind, while respecting the right to privacy;

8. *Reaffirms* the need for pragmatic ongoing improvements in national and local governance capabilities to achieve the 2030 Agenda and other international agreements, and encourages Governments at all levels to apply the principles of effective governance for sustainable development,⁵ endorsed by the Council in its resolution [2018/12](#), to all public institutions and in support of the implementation of all Sustainable Development Goals, taking into account different governance structures, national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities;

9. *Encourages* the Committee to continue to identify and review related technical guidelines to operationalize the principles, including from sectoral perspectives, and to further engage the relevant United Nations organizations, regional organizations and professional and academic communities in this regard, in an inclusive manner, together with all relevant stakeholders;

10. *Takes note* of the initiative of the Committee to associate a set of indicators with each of the principles, with a view to contributing to strengthening the analytical basis for assessing the impact of reform policies on building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, and to engage with regional organizations in putting the principles into practice;

11. *Encourages* Governments to accelerate action to increase transparency and equal participation in the budgeting process, establish transparent public procurement frameworks as a strategic tool to reinforce sustainable development, and strengthen national control mechanisms, such as supreme audit institutions, along with other independent oversight institutions, as appropriate, in auditing budget performance, and to embed commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals in budgetary and financial processes at the national and subnational levels by adopting practices to

⁵ *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2018, Supplement No. 24 (E/2018/44)*, chap. III, sect. B, para. 31.

monitor and report on the use of public financial resources in support of the Goals, such as mapping and tracking budgetary contributions to each Goal;

12. *Welcomes* the continuing work of the Committee on strengthening the capacity of State institutions and re-establishing credible governance and public administration institutions and systems in countries affected by conflict, and looks forward to the Committee's further engagement in promoting effective governance for sustainable development in such situations and its contribution to the work of the Peacebuilding Commission;

13. *Stresses* that building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels calls for a comprehensive understanding of the scope and capabilities of the public sector workforce, and encourages countries to address public sector workforce capability gaps, including gaps in digital skills, within the context of human resources and national development strategies, including policies and strategies to eradicate poverty and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, inter alia, by strengthening related training programmes, peer-to-peer learning and exchange of good practices within and across countries, and provide basic training on the Goals for all public sector workers;

Follow-up

14. *Requests* the Committee, at its twentieth session, to be held from 12 to 16 April 2021, to examine and make recommendations on the theme of the 2021 session of the Council and the 2021 high-level political forum and to contribute to the review of the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 16, giving particular attention to the cross-cutting nature of all the Goals;

15. *Invites* the Committee to continue to advise on approaches and practices related to the institutions, policies and arrangements being established to promote the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, bearing in mind that the specific contexts and situations of countries differ widely, as well as to advise on making institutions effective, accountable and inclusive;

16. *Requests* the Secretary-General to take the present resolution fully into account in the work of the Organization, inter alia, in addressing gaps in research and analysis and in responding to the capacity development needs of Member States for building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels in pursuit of the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;

17. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to continue to promote and support innovation and excellence in public services for sustainable development through the United Nations Public Service Awards;

18. *Further requests* the Secretary-General to report on the implementation of and follow-up to the present resolution through the established working methods of the Committee.

22 July 2020