

**Video Message from
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20th NISPAcee Annual Conference

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Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations Division for Public Administration and Development Management welcomes the initiative of the Network of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration in Central and Eastern Europe to hold its 20th Annual Conference on the theme of “Public Administration East and West: Twenty Years of Development.”

This event is very significant for two reasons. Firstly, it will serve to underscore the importance of the modernization of administrative systems in the context of effective governance in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, including the Commonwealth of Independent States, through policy advice and intensive personnel training – areas that have always formed the core of NISPAcee activities. Secondly, the event also marks the 20th anniversary of NISPAcee, the institution that since its commencement has played a significant role in helping countries in economic transition to develop their public administration systems and overcome transitional difficulties.

NISPAcee has always demonstrated the value of networking, dialoguing, and experience and information sharing, which are much needed for the successful implementation of socio-economic reform.

The need to address the problems of the public service profession, currently in rapid change, has been stressed by the crises and mounting challenges faced as a result of massive transition in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe and beyond. Although it would be wrong to generalize regarding the prevailing conditions in the region, there can be little doubt that transition has been difficult in many countries and that some are still struggling with recession. In some of these countries, the government administration has been adversely affected in many ways, prompting large-scale dismissal of employees. Therefore, it can be argued that the urgency of reform is only matched by its complexity.

Manifestly, not all measures of reform can be taken simultaneously. However, it is certain that economic and social progress in the countries concerned largely depends on the effectiveness of public service reform, especially critical at times of unfolding financial crisis that has yet to fully collect its toll, particularly in Europe.

The urgency for reform was underscored at several recent fora organized under the auspices of the United Nations, the World Bank, the European Union, and OECD. Common to all these meetings was the priority accorded to reinforcing the professional core, ethical standards and role of the public service. The political divide, which for decades separated Europe into East and West, has now ceased to exist. However, to translate the will to

cooperate into a palpable reality, we still need enabling frameworks. I am not afraid to say that NISPAcee is one such framework, which for a long period, on many occasions together with DPADM, relentlessly worked to help enhance the role, prestige, performance and professionalism of the public service.

In this connection, I would like to highlight two areas where NISPAcee and DPADM have cooperated most fruitfully.

The first area of cooperation has been in the development of the United Nations Public Administration Network - UNPAN, of which NISPAcee became one of the first institutional members. The success and impact of UNPAN has dramatically increased the number of users and the quality and quantity of its content, much thanks to the expert contributions of NISPAcee. I am sure that the deliberations and outcomes of this 20th Conference of NISPAcee will be also reflected in UNPAN, further improving its content and relevance to the needs of public administration community worldwide.

The second area is the development of leadership capacity in the public service. This theme is particularly important to DPADM not only because it echoes the Division's work in building and strengthening capacities in governance and public administration, but also because the same theme is at the heart of the efforts of the DPADM and NISPAcee collaboration in developing leadership capacity in the wider region of Central and Eastern Europe.

For quite some time, but more specifically, since the Millennium Summit of the United Nations General Assembly in September 2000 and the Millennium Declaration it endorsed, leadership capacity development has been at the top of our agenda since we believe that the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals - the MDGs - can only be pursued with support of capable leadership. Whether we are talking of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, or ensuring environmental sustainability and developing global partnerships for development - all of which are very critical goals for sustainable human development - we need to bear in mind that they can be tackled only by bold, capable, innovative, inspiring, persevering, and trustworthy, as well as people-sensitive leadership.

In this context, building leadership for modernization and effective governance cannot be just an exercise for intellectual or academic satisfaction. As we reflect and discuss the topic we need to bear in mind that the ultimate purpose of leadership worldwide, especially in developing countries, must be the development and wellbeing of people. Modernization and effective governance are relevant only to the extent that they contribute to the improvement of the quality of life for everyone, especially for the disadvantaged groups. From studies that have been undertaken, including studies on the implementation of the MDGs, it is clear that countries with weak leadership capacity, particularly in the public sector, tend to lag behind in the progress of development goals. We must, therefore, acknowledge that

such ambitious human development targets will not be reached without strong and committed leadership at all levels and in all sectors.

The presence of all of you gathered here makes us appreciate the significance of the work that will be accomplished here this week in pinpointing the role of leadership for development and for meeting the challenges confronting the world today and in the future.

The challenges are many, and they express themselves differently from region to region and from country to country, and are highly contingent on the current socio-politico-economic and cultural conditions.

In Central and Eastern Europe and the CIS region, many countries have already embarked on large-scale transformations in order to bridge the development gap between themselves and the rest of the world. This task needs knowledge, skills, attitudes, and networks that enable working with stakeholders, balancing and managing long term and short term objectives in the context of change, creating a shared vision and strategy, and empowering people.

As we are approaching the deadline for the full implementation of the MDG's, which is 2015, the United Nations Member States have requested all stakeholders world-wide start thinking about the post 2015 development agenda.

It is my humble wish that, in the course of this Conference, your discussions on how to build leadership capacity for development and

modernization beyond 2015, will open new horizons for DPADM's traditional cooperation with NISPAcee and will lay the ground work for empowering leaders in the region to work towards ensuring a peaceful developed world where life is equally enjoyed by all.

Thank you