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**DIVISION FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT  
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS**

**Statement by**

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Delivered by pre-recorded video

***New Frontiers in Public Administration:***

***Practice and Theory***

**International Conference in Public Administration**

**8th Conference**

**Hyderabad, India, October 25-27, 2012**

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour to address such a distinguished group of world-wide scholars and practitioners who have gathered in the beautiful city of Hyderabad to take part in the 8<sup>th</sup> International Conference in Public Administration. On behalf of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the organizers. In particular, I wish to thank Prof. Pardhasaradhi, Executive Chairman of ICPA 2012, for his kind invitation to deliver this message. Regrettably, duties at Headquarters prevent me from joining you in person.

As custodian of the United Nations Programme on Public Administration, I would like to highlight that public administration today is at a crossroads. Governments across the globe need to transform their institutions, systems, and processes. Otherwise, they will not be able to meet the complex and multi-faceted challenges of our times.

The United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration, a subsidiary organ of the UN Economic and Social Council, has been strongly advocating for a more

effective, accountable, transparent, inclusive and citizen-centric public administration. One that works with all sectors of society, through innovative and collaborative governance approaches and practices.

Indeed, Governments around the world need to break with “business as usual.” They need to engage in more innovative ways of delivering public services and of organizing the way they function and deploy their resources. They must do more with less; be more accountable, transparent and open. They must favour greater participation of citizens in public decision-making and service delivery. In times of multiple crises requiring holistic responses, governments need to innovate how they respond to multi-faceted challenges. In the past, government agencies would work in silos with little or no coordination among departments and limited impact. But today there is a growing awareness of the need to adopt whole-of-government approaches to solve complex, multi-faceted problems, which require concerted action at all levels both horizontal and vertical, national and local.

The United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration has underscored that an effective and innovative public administration requires:

- (1) Visionary and committed leadership, coupled with capable human resources who uphold the highest principles and standards of public service;
- (2) Effective and well-functioning governance institutions;
- (3) Efficient, inclusive and citizen-centric service delivery;
- (4) Forward-looking strategies, mechanisms and institutional arrangements to engage citizens, and last but not least
- (5) Strategic use of ICTs as an enabler for better governance.

The application of ICTs in government and greater investments in telecommunication infrastructure coupled with capacity-building in human capital can provide formidable opportunities to transform public administration into an instrument of development at the service of its citizens. Governments can also restore the trust of citizens in government by adopting the new paradigm of “open government.” This means sharing data and disclosing information that may be re-used by citizens in multiple ways, including by developing mobile applications for new services. Opening up data makes governments more accountable and transparent, and can ultimately help reduce corruption.

Yet, there is a growing recognition that governments can no longer be the sole provider of services nor can they provide the solutions to all problems. Governments need to work very closely with the private sector and civil society. Experience has shown that when citizens are effectively involved in identifying their own challenges and when they work - hand in hand - with governments, great strides can be made in terms of poverty alleviation and a better quality of life for all.

Innovative practices from across the globe are a testament to this fact. Winners of the United Nations Public Service Awards, which my Division manages, show that innovation is not only a prerogative of developed countries. In fact, many of the most innovative and effective solutions to improve citizens' quality of life originate from developing countries.

India is certainly at the forefront of innovation in public governance. It has been playing an important role in devising effective solutions to sustainable development challenges. Over the years, many Indian public sector institutions have won a United Nations Public Service Awards. Just to mention a few: an innovative Citizen-Government partnership initiative in New Delhi that has created networks of local groups to discuss problems with government officials; a programme in India's Government of Nagaland which has empowered local communities to manage essential public social services, including health, education, and electricity, and an advanced e-procurement system in the Government of Andhra Pradesh which made public procurement more efficient and transparent.

Other countries around the world have also been introducing innovative practices. For example, Rwanda's "Ubudehe" initiative has allowed citizens, at the village level, to assess their needs and establish their priorities on how to spend public funds. Singapore's "Home Ownership Programme" has provided quality housing for over 80% of the population, and helped more than 95% of them own their homes. And in Saudi Arabia, the "*SADAD Payment System*", which is a single shared national platform payment system for bills through banks 24/7 and other channels, has promoted greater efficiency and transparency; minimized fraud, and increased women's access to employment. Similarly, in Chile an e-procurement system has increased efficiency and helped reduce corruption. In Spain, a Directorate General for Participation was established in Catalonia to devise effective mechanisms to engage citizens.

Sharing knowledge of innovative practices through international cooperation, including South-South and interregional cooperation, is one of the most powerful capacity development tools. It provides governments with a menu of concrete solutions to complex governance challenges. Good practices can inspire and be effectively adapted and replicated.

I am pleased that over the next days you will have the opportunity to share ideas and practices. I applaud the sponsors of this conference for the organization of this timely and topical conference. I am particularly pleased that you have decided to discuss the new frontiers of public administration both in terms of theory and practice. We know that too often theory that is not complemented and substantiated by concrete facts, data and examples has little foundation. At the same time, theory is necessary to provide a framework to our research and work in public administration. The two must go in hand-in-hand if we wish to effectively contribute to public administration development.

As you may know, a global conversation has begun at the United Nations about how to define a concrete sustainable development framework that embodies bold, ambitious and universal values. The peoples of the world are looking to the United Nations to help them achieve prosperity, equity, freedom, dignity and peace beyond 2015. There is an increasing recognition that the United Nations should provide best available evidence and practice in the field in order to assist Member States to formulate a holistic development framework. Data and information is required to inform evidence-based decisions and policy options on how to fight poverty; how to arrest climate change; and, how to ultimately promote sustainable development, peace and security. In this respect, I am pleased to inform you that my Division is collecting and analyzing key data and information for 193 Member States on critical aspects of public administration, including on institutions and human resources, e-government and citizen engagement. This information will be available on an online platform called the United Nations Public Administration Country Studies - UNPACS.

Lifting people out poverty and promoting more equitable societies call for a holistic approach to sustainable development. This, in turn, calls for more effective and inclusive public governance. I trust that over the next days you will be able to tackle some of these critical issues and further discuss how public administration can truly become an instrument for sustainable development, peace and security.

Thank you.