



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

**Statement by**

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

Delivered by pre-recorded video

**Expert Group Meeting on**  
**Citizen Engagement in Post 2015 Development Agenda**  
**3-4 December 2012, Beirut, Lebanon**

Excellencies,

Esteemed Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to address you, as a group of distinguished Experts,  
gathered in the beautiful city of Beirut for this meeting.

On behalf of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social  
Affairs, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to ESCWA, this  
meeting's co-organizers. In particular, I thank Mr. Tarik Alami, the Director  
for the Emerging and Conflict Related Issues Division, and his team for their  
excellent cooperation.

Regrettably, duties at Headquarters prevent me from joining you in person. However, we have sent three competent colleagues to represent our Division.

I would like to set the context of this meeting with three topics: (1) the post-2015 development agenda and the importance of citizen engagement, (2) institutional frameworks and practices for governments to engage their citizens, and (3) harnessing information and communication technologies (ICTs) for engaging citizens.

Twelve years ago, the United Nations Member States adopted the Millennium Declaration with a clear focus on the well-being of the individual as the centre of development. They set measurable, time-bound goals: the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with a target date of 2015. In the achievement of these goals, they called for equality, non-discrimination, empowerment and participation in the development process.

Since then, we have witnessed progress, with huge improvements in the lives of billions. Extreme poverty has fallen in every region; the proportion of people without access to decent water has been cut in half; housing conditions have improved for more than 200 million slum dwellers; 40 million more children are attending school; the world has achieved parity in primary education between girls and boys; and an estimated 5.2 million people in low and middle-income countries are now receiving life-saving HIV treatment.

But progress has been uneven. And even if the MDG's were to be fully achieved, much unfinished business would remain. Climate change and poverty eradication are still important, as are the creation of jobs, reducing inequality, providing social protection, and ensuring a strong voice for civil society. Thus, the new vision for after the MDG's is of utmost importance. A global conversation has already begun on defining a practical framework for sustainable and inclusive growth.

Last June, at the Rio+20 Summit on Sustainable Development, the United Nations Member States again stressed the need for effective governance at local, national, regional and global levels -- representing the voices and interests of all. They resolved to enhance the participation and effective engagement of civil society and to promote transparency and broad partnerships in the implementation of the goals of sustainable development.

Indeed, the post-2015 development agenda should incorporate national strategies to ensure wide participation for the setting of global, national and local goals and targets. The success of the implementation of any strategy is contingent on the buy-in of stakeholders. In other words, engaging citizens at national, global and local levels for better developmental results is an imperative.

The challenge for governments is how best to engage their citizens in managing development policies. There are new governance challenges, including the need to empower communities and include socially marginalized and vulnerable groups. Governments must lead the way by creating opportunities for effective participation through democratic institutions, civic education, the sharing of information and institutional responsiveness.

At the United Nations, we have adopted a framework to assist the Member States to engage their citizens through three sets of activities: informing, consulting, and involving citizens in decision-making. These are not new concepts, but we have been focusing on the embedding of the legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks in public administrations.

Public information and access to information usually have their beginnings in constitutions as a political or a civic right of citizens. Our Division's initial study of the public administrations of 193 United Nations Member States, called the United Nations Public Administration Studies (UNPACS), found relevant articles in almost all of their constitutions. Furthermore, around 90 Member States have enabled these provisions through legislation, or a regulation on freedom of information or access to information, with another 28 with draft legislation.

Similarly, constitutional provisions for consulting citizens have been enabled through legislation. One example in the economic and social spheres includes legislative and regulatory instruments for the creation of institutions for public consultation. They include, but are not limited to, economic and social councils, councils of tri-partite or stakeholders, or national advisory councils on development in at least 65 countries. And more than 80 countries have institutions to enhance public consultation and participation.

There are also successful examples of engaging citizens in shaping national and global developmental priorities in policy decision-making and implementation. Brazil provides an example of pro-active outreach. The Social and Economic Advisory Council of Brazil holds plenary meetings, thematic groups and colloquia and promotes theme-specific seminars and round table discussions. National and international leaders and experts as well as members of the Government and civil society all participate in such process. During this meeting, you will hear of examples from other regions.

What is new, however, is that by combining old concepts with new technologies, governments can reach out to citizens on a previously unmatched scale. Broadband and mobile technology advances can, and have, promoted participatory methods, both digital and face-to-face. Whilst citizens are better informed about public decisions and actions, they also expect to play a greater role in influencing public service delivery. In response, some governments started publishing data available on public institutions. As of today, around 25 per cent of 193 Member States have embarked on Open Government Data initiatives. Such initiatives are intended to increase transparency, accountability and participation that empower citizens through knowledge.

Some governments have also been actively promoting e-participation, using the Internet to engage a much wider range of stakeholders in public policy-making. Evidence shows that social media, e-surveys, e-focus groups, e-citizen assemblies and e-networks can increase public participation and citizen engagement. Such consultative mechanisms will be integral to governance systems of the future, and there is much to learn from the experiences of countries that have been active in this field.

The objective of this meeting is to seek your expert views on key institutions, legal and regulatory frameworks for, and good practices of, engaging citizens in development management. It is hoped that this meeting will also provide you with the opportunity to exchange knowledge, information, experiences and evidence. We have also prepared a draft questionnaire to assist governments to assess their own institutional frameworks and readiness for citizen engagement. We are interested in receiving your advice on how to improve this questionnaire and ideas for its application.

In addition, the United Nations Member States have reiterated their commitment at the Rio+20 Summit to increase public participation in shaping the development agenda after 2015. We need to find practical ways to introduce and improve existing frameworks and capacities within their public administrations. Our ultimate goal is to engage citizens to have a say to improve their lives and those of future generations.

I wish you a productive meeting.

Thank you.