

**7<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration  
60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration of the  
UN Programme on Public Administration and Development  
Wednesday, 16 April 2008, 10:00 a.m., Trusteeship Council**

Madam President,  
Mr. Sha,  
Distinguished Committee Members and Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for having invited me to your celebration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations Programme on Public Administration and Development. On behalf of the ECOSOC membership, I would like to congratulate you for your important work on public administration and governance in development. Your collective expertise and experience that serve as the basis of your contributions to furthering the internationally agreed development goals are very much valued. I also would like to take this opportunity to welcome the newly appointed Member of this Committee of Experts.

The ECOSOC has taken into account the conclusions and recommendations of this Committee since its inception in 2002. The ECOSOC has also benefited from the advice of the former Group of Experts on Public Administration which was established in 1967 and held its last meeting in 2000. Overall, the UN membership has benefited from the 60 years of the UN Programme on Public Administration and Development, through its knowledge base and capacity-development activities. The General Assembly's 50<sup>th</sup> Resumed Session in 1996 was devoted exclusively to the theme of *Public Administration and Development*. The Member States reaffirmed that the promotion of equal access to quality services and productive assets, participatory mechanisms and strengthened public administration and financial management capacities were all essential for sustainable development.

More than a decade later, these same issues are crucial in the fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). As you know, when world leaders gathered to adopt the Millennium Declaration in September 2000, they set the target date of 2015 to bring improvement in the lives of the poor and the marginalized around the world. Today, more than half-way to the target date, regrettably, many regions of the world still find themselves grappling with difficulties in fulfilling the MDGs.

Slow progress is especially the case in Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Estimates indicate that although the HIV prevalence has leveled off in the developing world, deaths from AIDS continue to rise in Sub-Saharan Africa. Even though extreme poverty has fallen in Sub-Saharan Africa, inequality has soared. Poorer households living in rural areas still have the highest rates of school drop out for children and the discrimination of

women in labor markets worldwide is a persistent and ubiquitous problem.<sup>1</sup> This mixed report of success could go on.

As you know, the MDGs are not merely end goals or standard indicators of economic achievement. On the contrary, MDGs are milestones of human development that reflect *universal values* and *human rights*, including the right to food and shelter, right to education, right to decent work and good health. The MDGs are *people-centered* and *process-oriented*. How people perceive and participate or *own* their advancement towards the MDGs are as important as the results achieved. Collectively, the MDGs offer a *holistic* rather than a *sector-* or *activity-specific* perspective on development. This means that there is not one and predetermined way of implementing the MDGs. Different countries, having different needs, may have differing priorities in the MDGs “menu.” Some countries may even have different or additional MDGs. Therefore, every MDG should be implemented according to a given country’s own needs and aspirations.

Yet, we are running out of time and the poor continue to lack food and shelter, children go undernourished, mothers lose their lives at childbirth, biodiversity declines and global partnerships still yearn for long-term commitment and consensus. What can we do to improve these shortcomings? Two requirements are pressing. One is the need for *scaling up public investments* in vital areas for citizens. This requires stronger and more predictable allegiance to development from the international community. Second is the urgency of a wide-ranging governance approach that directly and explicitly seeks to achieve *pro-poor economic growth*. This, in turn, demands building productive capacity and mainstreaming sustainable development into policy-making.

Given the short timeframe left for reaching the MDGs, countries cannot risk uncoordinated policies or unwanted services. Citizen engagement in the planning and implementation processes of the MDGs, improving transparency and accountability for public resource allocation, decentralization and better delivery of services are critical.

Governance and public administration challenges that we face in translating the MDGs into viable and long-term policies and institutions are real and immense:

- First, we need to acknowledge that governments cannot achieve the MDGs alone. Active involvement and intervention from all parts of society and the international community are necessary for progress and successful results.
- Second, how new or reformed public institutions, partnerships, structures and processes can best meet those challenges needs to be examined in detail.
- Third, capacity development needs of the public sector in creating an enabling environment for sustainable development must be identified and met with the most appropriate policies and strategies. This requires knowing and understanding practices that have worked and not worked so well in other countries and contexts.
- Finally, rebuilding governance and public administration in crisis and post-conflict situations is of utmost importance. United Nations’ peacebuilding and

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<sup>1</sup> Millennium Development Goals Report 2007: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/mdg2007.pdf>

security efforts can only come to fruition if necessary and concomitant recovery needs are fulfilled.

In this regard, ECOSOC has done its utmost to revitalize and improve strong dialogue and coordination among all different stakeholders, bringing them together to discuss and recommend courses of action on development policy issues. In particular, ECOSOC has pushed for a better coordination of its annual themes and the substantive work of its subsidiary commissions and expert bodies. Therefore, the Bureau has noted with appreciation CEPA's recent standing agenda item on the theme of the Annual Ministerial Review. The theme for this year is *implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to sustainable development*. We look forward to your conclusions and recommendations.

I thank you for your attention. And I wish you a most productive session while reiterating my sincere appreciation and congratulations for this 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations Programme on Public Administration and Development.