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Workshop 3
ADVANCING E-GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT AND
KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The Key Role of e-Government to Promote a Citizen-Centric Approach for
Public Administration and Development

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Distinguished speakers and participants,

First let me express my sincere thanks to the Government of Catalonia of Spain for their great effort in coordinating this important event with my Division.

Today, e-government development and knowledge management for public administration and development are especially important because being a ‘crisis-solver’ is not a choice, but a necessity for today’s governments. As evidence shows, e-government in the information age has become a new and valuable template for governments to tackle the many crises that surround us—food shortages, energy bottlenecks, natural and man-made disasters - including the recent oil spill - climate change and the global financial and economic down-turn.

E-government and knowledge management are also at the crux of development because they are synonymous with citizen-centric public service delivery—a requisite for advancing the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs.

If we look at the four stages of online service development as noted in the latest United Nations e-Government Survey 2010, which are emerging, enhanced, transactional, and connected, out of 192 Member States 98 per cent of governments provide services online.

And, as you can see from the next slide the majority of governments have moved from the first stage to the second and third stages, with very few, though, at the fourth stage.

These statistics show considerable improvements compared to our findings from the previous years. Thus, we have every reason to be optimistic - that is to say governments are consciously remolding their operations to adequately respond to the new needs and expectations of citizens.

More specifically, three layers and levers of e-government, which I will refer to as the **3H-Matrix of e-Government**, characterize the essence of the relationship between e-government and citizen-centric services in this information age and the age of crises.

The 3H-Matrix includes the **Head, Heart and Hands of e-Government Systems** worldwide.

- The **Head** is the *rational command center* where data, information and knowledge forge the new parameters of the emerging **global** financial and governance architectures.
- The **Heart** of e-government is the *ideational lifeline* of the revised **national** development strategies where notions of equality receive increased attention.
- The **Hands** of e-government are *online participation tools*, which are now capable of engaging large chunks of previously unconnected citizen communities in all stages of e-government development through a variety of channels.

Let me briefly go over each one of the three Hs in this simple matrix:

At the **Head of e-Government Systems**, we witness the ability of pulling large data and information together and making sense out of complex content and trends through an unlimited number of free applications on the Internet.

Particularly, in the crises age, we find e-government's efficiency in eliminating asymmetries of information among a multitude of actors—banks, private investors, credit rating agencies, government representatives and institutions, societal organizations and people at large.

Based on the study of 115 government crisis-response websites, our E-government Survey finds that:

(i) in general terms, e-government has ensured efficient, effective, transparent and accountable transactions between governments and the recipients of public funds at all levels; and that (ii) in more specific terms, it allows citizens to be empowered in monitoring and evaluating government performance in the use of funds in order to reduce corruption and avoid wastefulness.

At the **Heart of e-Government Systems**, we observe the improvements noted through the inclusion of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

In fact, an overall sense of fairness is as important as information for the success of regulatory reforms of the financial markets as well as the development of sustainable public policies. Hence, more and more countries now develop their e-government programmes that are sensitive and friendly to women, the poor, the illiterate, the disabled, the aged and the young.

The United Nations e-Government Survey has concluded that, particularly through the use of **open data**, effective and long-lasting partnerships for public service delivery can be forged between governments and all other stakeholders.

The open data movement is about making information freely available to everyone, without the restrictions of copyright or patents and in standard machine-readable formats that can be exploited without the use of any given piece of software.

It is also worth noting that the take-up of mobile technology is particularly glaring in the developing world. The number of mobile phone subscribers has increased by more than 30 per cent in Sub-Saharan Africa from 2000 to 2008. For the same time period, Internet subscribers have increased only by about 5 per cent. There are presently 4 billion to 5 billion mobile phones in the world of which 100 million are in Africa. This number is expected to quadruple by 2011.

The fast spread of mobile technology has culminated in more and better m- than e-services in Africa as well as in other parts of the developing world. Therefore, governments of both developed and developing countries need to pay special attention to this trend when undertaking e-government-related developmental work as there is a clear indication from our recent research that mobile technology can help bridge the digital divide and m-services can provide users with greater options and flexibility.

Finally, the **Hands of e-Government Systems** refers to the immediate points of contact between government and citizens, and the latter become full and active participants in public management processes and service delivery through innovative e-tools such as group discussions, online campaigns and social media networks.

The connected government that we promote is about delivering e-government services not only through an integrated, seamless and ubiquitous model, but also through public, private and people partnership. Governments and government leaders are now blogging, using Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and other popular online platforms to engage their citizens and gather targeted support at the lowest cost for managing public affairs.

Clearly, there are myriad tools for different types of service provision and each presents its own advantages and disadvantages. In building robust e-government systems, what matters are scalable and sustainable community outreach programmes for citizen-centric and value-added services; not how many official websites are present on the Internet.

The United Nations 2010 Survey includes a comprehensive review of how governments include their citizens in *decision-making processes*; how they provide *information*; and how they *consult* citizens. It shows that the best performing countries in the e-participation category are in Europe (51 per cent), followed by Asia (29 per cent), the Americas (14 per cent) and Oceania (6 per cent).

In summary, the layers and levers of the 3H-Matrix of e-Government are **mutually inclusive and positively reinforcing**. For instance, increasing the reach of e-products contributes to reducing vulnerability and sensitizes national development plans to

equality, which are both supported by information exchange and e-integration at the global level.

The 3H-matrix with e-government as the agent of change and citizen-centric service as the new governance paradigm aims at building **trust** between governments and citizens. Therefore, all implicit and explicit trust-building policies by governments also contribute to the strengthening of e-government systems, and vice-versa.

Clearly, therefore, e-government is not mere technology. Nor is it a subset of government. It is the new way of governing the core of which is citizen-centric service delivery. That is why a next United Nations e-Government Survey will focus on citizen-centric and whole-of-government service provision rather than a rudimentary government website assessment as part of its methodology. The newly introduced United Nations e-Government Service Awards will also take this shift into consideration for next years' competition.

In addition to the shift in our methodology, another initiative of my Division will be the building of the first global community of national Chief Information Officers. Having recognized the importance of connectivity and integration for efficient, effective and legitimate policy-making in the crises age, DPADM, with the support of the CIO of the Government of the United States, will establish the foundations for this global network, which, we believe, will be instrumental in mitigating and possibly even preventing global crises.

E-government can be the long-searched catalyst in transforming 'government-centric services' into 'citizen-centric services.' It can do that by igniting a virtuous cycle of technological development, organizational change, and ultimately a cultural shift in the way government is run.

This cycle of transformation, however, is neither automatic nor given. It can materialize only if all actors understand the need for adaptation, and do their parts in the process.

Those of you who are here today have already started this process of change because you have understood that the key to future public governance rests in citizen-centric services which depend on the Head, Heart and Hands of e-Government Systems.

Thank you.