



CHAPTER TEN

COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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PURVIEW OF THE COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) provides expert advice to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) on improving public administration and good governance. It is composed of non-governmental representatives and its recommendations are non-binding on Member States. It is expected to provide comprehensive recommendations for both governments and the United Nations system on the topics under its purview. Past work has included advice on the use of information communication technology in governance, government ethics, and the relationship between public administration and development.

In 2017, AMUN will simulate the Committee of Experts on Public Administration as a report-writing body, rather than a resolution-writing body. For more information about report-writing bodies, please see 20-21 in the AMUN *Rules and Procedures* handbook.

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PROMOTING ACCOUNTABLE INSTITUTIONS, ETHICAL LEADERSHIP AND INTEGRITY TO ENHANCE CONFIDENCE IN EFFORTS TO DELIVER SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 is “the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, the provision of access to justice for all, and building effective, accountable institutions at all levels.” Sustainable development requires accountable and ethical government, as it is precisely that government that holds the primary responsibility for ensuring development. Additionally, corruption impedes economic growth. The World Economic Forum estimates that corruption causes on average a 10 percent increase in the cost of doing business. Recalling the United Nations founding principle of national sovereignty, it is crucial that governments be situated to most efficiently lead the development agenda for their state. However, as recognized by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, public service and public trust are interlocked.

CEPA noted in 2015 that the interrelated concepts of transparency, accountability, ethical leadership and integrity form the basis for effective public administration. Integrity, as the opposite of corruption, is necessary to set and follow the rules that prevent corruption from taking hold. Ethical leadership is the commitment of public servants to

adhere to that integrity. Transparency and access to information allow the public; other internal institutions, such as the private sector or other layers of government; and outside observers to identify breaches of ethics when they occur. Finally, accountability is the ability to react to ethical breaches and correct them, however this requires integrity to ensure that the measures taken are in the public interest. CEPA identified four main factors that promote accountable institutions, ethical leadership and integrity: procedural methods, institutional arrangements, social accountability and public control, and cultural norms.

The four aforementioned factors differ not only in their contexts, but also in their ease of adoption. Procedural methods, such as freedom of information legislation, tend to be the simplest to put into place and, while they can result in immediate changes, they lack in long-term durability. These methods generally increase access to information or regulate the behavior of public officials; both of which assist in increased citizen engagement and improve trust in government. The drawback, however, is that procedures that are implemented by the government can easily be repealed by the government. It is therefore important to build a supporting infrastructure to promote good governance while these methods still provide momentum. In particular, the institutional makeup of the government should be organized to promote transparency and accountability, even within itself through a system of checks and balances.

Accountability is the step connecting empowered citizens and transparency to reliable governance. In addition to requiring institutions on the governmental side that can audit activities and enforce reforms, accountability requires the citizens to organize and participate in the political process. The United Nations describes civil society organizations (CSOs) as the “third sector” of society, cooperating with both the public and private sectors. Regarding accountability, CSOs need to be able to work closely with public institutions to act as a bridge between citizen demands and the government. Establishing the necessary protections to allow CSOs to function, such as freedoms of information and association, also set traditions of good governance that reinforce these efforts. The promotion of an accountability culture needs time to take root, but it can provide some of the force needed to maintain anti-corruption and good governance measures.

The first global and legally-binding action against corruption was the 2003 Convention against Corruption (UNCAC). The Convention approached the issue of corruption in five areas: preventative measures, criminalization and law enforcement, international cooperation, asset recovery, and technical assistance and information exchange. The



details of this implementation were left to the newly created Conference of States Parties (Conference), which would also engage in periodic reviews. However, the details of the Convention have come under criticism, as the UNCAC Coalition, representing over 350 civil society organizations, argued that the Convention suffered from a lack of involvement of CSOs, particularly with respect to the review process. Within States, lack of legal protections—particularly freedoms of expression and of the press—have allowed for increased persecution of CSOs, hampering anti-corruption efforts.

As CEPA discussed in 2015, progress in promoting accountable institutions, ethical leadership and integrity is slow, so any effective plans will need to balance short, medium and long-term goals. The Arab Spring and the spread of information and communications technology have shown a change in how people expect to interact with their government, a phenomenon dubbed by CEPA as “2.0 culture.” In 2.0 culture, people place a priority on open government, transparency and broad civic engagement. This change in culture will require a shift in how the public sector presents itself, both in its structure and in the expectations levied upon its civil servants.

Questions to consider from your government’s perspective on this issue include the following:

- What can the United Nations do to support greater transparency among State governments, including through the use of information and communication technology?
- What policies or practices keep state institutions accountable? How can leaders best ensure accountability and ethical leadership by government officials?
- How can civil society and the public best keep governments accountable? What resources do they need to do so?

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REDEFINING RELATIONSHIPS AND RESPONSIBILITIES TO SUPPORT PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE AND RESPONSIVE PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY, INCLUDING THROUGH E-SOLUTIONS

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims the right of all people to engage with their governments on a fair basis, which requires effective communication in both directions. Citizens should be able to petition and otherwise direct the actions taken by their government, while the government needs to deliver its services effectively to its citizens. These processes rely on citizens’ trust in the system to be effective. However, despite wide agreement on the importance of good governance, case studies have shown that there is no uniform strategy to achieve it. Instead, a diverse body of approaches have been developed at varying levels and differing amounts of governmental (“top-down”) and grassroots (“bottom-up”) involvement. Additionally, democratization movements have resulted in more decentralized governments, which help position governments closer to the people and facilitate general access to the political process. Good governance also plays an important role in stimulating development, as noted by Sustainable Development Goals 16 and 17, which call for Member States to build inclusive institutions at all levels and to improve partnerships within and among the various players in the development sector.

Responsive public service delivery plays an important role in participatory governance as well, as it is important for public services to be responsive to the changing needs at the local level. This makes public service delivery a two-way street: the government needs to effectively provide public services to its citizens and requisition the help of the citizens to survey its own effectiveness. The wording of this is important; as remarked by CEPA in 2015, it is the function of public administration to be there for its citizens, but it is not the function of citizens to be there for the public administration. Instead, the public institutions should reduce the barriers for citizen interaction. One method that has seen success in several countries is the adoption of freedom of information legislation, as increasing public knowledge of citizens’ rights and the actions of public institutions allows for community organizers to lobby for effective changes.

Given the beneficial relationship between good governance and development, the World Bank has promoted efforts to reduce corruption and improve governance. The 2007 Governance and Anti-Corruption Strategy focused the Bank’s efforts on Demand For Good Governance (DFGG), which encompasses projects that increase the ability of citizens and organizations to hold the state accountable. Rather than affect the structure of the government, which effects the “supply” of good governance, these projects range from public expenditure tracking of Ugandan education funding in 2001, to providing grants to organizations working to address known weaknesses in government programs in Cambodia in 2008. The World Bank noted that, despite anecdotal



evidence that demand-side governance programs are more effective than supply-side ones, the key is to focus on the interface between supply and demand as well, namely improving interactions between the state and the citizenry.

Urbanization has a significant impact on public service delivery and participation. Urban populations have higher service needs, and rapid urbanization, particularly in the developing world, puts tremendous pressure on local governments to provide adequate services. While improving participatory governance and responsive public service delivery is not isolated to developing countries, developing countries see the vast majority of effects of urbanization and thus are especially impacted by its effects on public administration. The International Growth Centre remarked that in developing countries in Asia and Africa, municipal governments often were not empowered enough to deliver adequate public services. It further noted that political shortcomings, not technological ones, are largely responsible for the inability for cities to meet their responsibilities. In 2014, UN-Habitat held the seventh World Urban Forum, which recognized that cities have seen rising inequality and declared the need to promote urban agendas that, among other goals, encourage participatory and inclusive local governance.

On the larger scale, the World Bank agreed that availability of technology is not the limiting factor to its usefulness. Existing Informations and Communications Technology (ICT) can be of great use toward improving participatory governance and responsive public service delivery. Over recent decades, governments have integrated ICT into government programs to increase transparency and responsiveness, such as through “open data” websites or websites where citizens can petition their government. In particular, ICT reduces the cost and difficulty of large-scale communications, enabling governments to interact with their citizens in ways that would otherwise simply be unfeasible. However, as ICT’s effectiveness relies upon its usage, it is important that governments support citizens’ trust in ICT. CEPA ranked cybersecurity concerns, especially regarding data security, as of equal importance for this issue as encouraging use of ICT. Given the global nature of most ICT, these concerns necessarily require international cooperation to address.

The issues of participatory governance and responsive public service delivery can be approached on several fronts. At their core, efforts to increase democratization and decentralization will assist in these goals, however, care must also be taken to ensure coherence among the different levels of government, especially with increased decentralization. Urban areas will need special attention to reverse the decline in public service availability and the rise of urban slums as urbanization continues to rise across all states. ICT has proven to be a useful asset to improve communications between the government and its citizens, although it cannot overcome political shortcomings or declining trust in ICT. Cybersecurity concerns reduce the effectiveness of ICT through diminished usage and will need to be addressed through cooperation at the international level.

Questions to consider from your government’s perspective on this issue include the following:

- How can Member States best use ICT to increase responsiveness to their citizens?
- What steps can the United Nations take through its programs to support participatory and responsive governance by Member States?

- What participatory governance techniques might address the current erosion of trust and growing dissatisfaction with governments?

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