

Symposium on

"Effective, Inclusive and Accountable Public Institutions and Digital Government Transformation for Resilient Recovery and the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals"

Aide-Memoire

24 – 26 November 2020

11:00 AM – 2:00 PM (ROK), 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM (Thailand)

10:00 AM – 1:00 PM (Malaysia), 3:00 – 6:00 PM (Fiji), 4:00 – 7:00 PM (Samoa)

9:00 PM – 12:00 AM (New York)

Organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)
Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG)
with the Ministry of the Interior and Safety of the Republic of Korea (MOIS) and Incheon
Metropolitan City

I. Context

When the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at its core was adopted in 2015 with a call of action for people, planet, and prosperity, the world leaders affirmed to build an equitable and sustainable world in which no one is left behind. The Agenda weighed the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and addressed climate change, public institutions, peaceful and inclusive societies.

The Agenda encourages all countries to develop bold responses to the 2030 Agenda, while underscoring the special challenges facing the most vulnerable countries, in particular, African countries, Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), and Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Countries were called to adopt the SDG targets to their national situation and priorities, incorporate them into national plans and strategies, pursue integrated implementation, and lead regular reviews for monitoring and evaluation.

This commitment was renewed in 2019 when Heads of State came together to reiterate their commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. They recognized that despite advances in some areas, progress was uneven, and the world was not on track to meet the SDGs by 2030. The Summit resulted in world leaders adopting a Political Declaration¹ calling for a 'Decade of Action' to deliver the SDGs by 2030. The Declaration sets out an "ambitious and accelerated response" to reach the Goals and pledges "to make the coming decade one of action and delivery".

Among the ten key commitments set out as being central to the Decade of Action is the pledge to strengthen institutions for more integrated solutions, calling to "proactively develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels and ensure more responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision - making processes". The Declaration notes too that world leaders will strive to "equip domestic institutions to better address interlinkages, synergies, and trade-offs between the Goals and targets through a whole-of-government approach that can bring about transformative change in governance and public policy and ensure policy coherence for sustainable development".

With this reaffirmation, the year 2020 was to commence the Decade of Action with much enthusiasm. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically shifted the focus and resources of the governments to combat the pandemic. Furthermore, unprecedented disruption caused by the COVID-19 strained the governments' ability to accelerate the SDG implementation, and it will most likely hinder the progress towards the SDGs as it has been not only a health crisis but also a socio-economic crisis.

In the 2020 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), participants discussed the impact of the COVID-19 on the SDGs and how the international community can respond in a way that puts us back on track to achieve the SDGs and accelerate progress. Eleven (11) countries from Asia and the Pacific

¹ Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 15 October 2019 (A/RES/74/4) <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/74/4>

region participated in the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), including Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, India, Kyrgyzstan, Federated State of Micronesia, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Syrian Arab Republic, and Uzbekistan. Most countries cited have adopted a comprehensive response plan for health and socio-economic recovery measures to control and contain the COVID-19 in their SDG progress report.

Against this backdrop, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) through its Project Office on Governance (UNPOG) and in collaboration with the Ministry of the Interior and Safety (MOIS) of the Government of the Republic of Korea, is organizing a Symposium on "Effective, Inclusive and Accountable Public Institutions and Digital Government Transformation for Resilient Recovery and the SDG Implementation". The Symposium aims to equip public institutions with the capacities necessary to sustainable and resilient recovery while keeping the focus on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Symposium will be held virtually.

II. Objective

The main objective of the Symposium is to strengthen the capacities of government officials to promote sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic while not losing sight of the SDG implementation. The Symposium aims to reflect on how best to mobilize, organize and equip institutions and rally whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches for building back better and achieving the SDGs by 2030.

The Symposium will build upon the 11 Principles of effective governance for sustainable development developed by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration and endorsed by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in 2018. The Principles seek to help build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, with a view to achieving the shared vision for the people and the planet embodied in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.² As basic principles, they apply to all public institutions, including executive and legislative organs, the security and justice sectors, independent constitutional bodies and State corporations. The principles are accompanied by a selection of commonly used strategies and related practices.

The Symposium will provide a platform for decision-makers to discuss challenges and share lessons learned on how to promote effective, inclusive and accountable institutions and accelerate digital government transformation to mitigate current and future shocks and build more resilient societies in Asia and the Pacific. It will provide an opportunity to take stock and learn from many innovative approaches to public service delivery, especially for the COVID-19 responses that aim to leave no one behind, engage all stakeholders in decision-making processes, and leverage new technologies. It will also engage the private sector and civil society organizations to discuss innovative partnerships for building a sustainable and resilient society.

² E/2018/44-E/C.16/2018/8, para. 31

The Symposium is also expected to contribute to the 2021 HLPF, which will review SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 3 (good health and wellbeing), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), SDG 12 (responsible consumption and production), SDG 13 (climate action), SDG 16 (public institutions) and SDG 17 (building global partnership).

III. Thematic Focus

The COVID-19 pandemic has innumerable negative consequences on the lives of people from around the globe. It has also highlighted the importance of effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions for well-coordinated responses and containment of the socio-economic impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable groups. It has heightened the critical role of innovation and digital solutions in business continuity and for delivering essential public services in times of crisis.

Session I will focus on ***Effective, Accountable and Inclusive Institutions to Leave No One Behind***. As governments have been on the frontline in combating the COVID-19, the role of public institutions in delivering essential services and providing social and economic safety nets has never been more important than it is today. Many governments in Asia and the Pacific have successfully curbed the pandemic through effective coordination, whole-of-society approaches, and exercising flexibility. Good practices, innovative measures, and lessons learned have emerged across the region.

Whole-of-government and society approaches require effective and inclusive institutions that enable cooperation among all stakeholders. Indeed, to address the immediate challenges of the pandemic and accelerate the implementation of the SDGs, governments must strive to eliminate policy silos, work across sectors, engage all key stakeholders, and coordinate actions at all levels of government given the inter-linkages among the SDGs and their targets. For example, eliminating policy silos and working across sectors are needed for COVID-19 recovery as it entails broad social and economic measures. Similarly, there is a need for risk-informed governance and accountable institutions to ensure that services and funds are delivered to those furthest left behind.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted the poorest and the most vulnerable groups, special attention should be paid to inclusive recovery and equitable development that keeps the promise of leaving no one behind. The pandemic brought forth inequalities already in place and highlighted the depth of the problem. Prior to the pandemic, the World Bank projected that 35 million people in East Asia and the Pacific would escape poverty in 2020. Now, those 35 million people are likely to remain in poverty and additional 11 million people could fall into poverty.³

³ Governments facing tough choices in COVID-19 crisis <https://blogs.worldbank.org/eastasiapacific/governments-facing-tough-choices-covid-19-coronavirus-crisis>

Institutions enabled by good governance will be critical for providing and expanding the safety nets and social assistance to those furthest left behind. Policies that are both appropriate for the current crisis as well as for long term sustainable development will be required as the goal of the 2030 Agenda is to ultimately end poverty and hunger and to combat inequalities everywhere.

Session II will focus on ***Partnerships and Governance Capacity Development to Strengthen Resilience***. Whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches are central in the context of resilient recovery and sustainable development. Recovery from the pandemic is not only the sole responsibility of public institutions. It requires the engagement of all stakeholders. The precarious situation of the pandemic highlighted that everyone must do their part. The same applies to achieving sustainable development. Partnering with stakeholders across sectors, local governments, private companies, research institutions, and civil society organizations is crucial not only in fighting the pandemic but also in promoting sustainability and resilience in all facets of development.

Furthermore, continued effort is required to make public institutions and public servants more resilient and flexible. They need to be properly equipped with new mindsets and capacities to mitigate future shocks. They also need to provide steady direction in sustainable and resilient development. Transforming mindsets and competence in line with the ECOSOC principles for effective governance is critical to ensure institutional change that supports the SDGs.

Session III will focus on ***Digital Government Transformation and Innovation for Building Back Better***. The role of digital government in responding to the pandemic and enabling a more effective recovery has been instrumental. However, governments need to do more to realign their digital policies and find ways to scale up investments in ICT infrastructures and capacity building while addressing the widening digital divide, not only for recovery but also for meaningful development. A better-defined digital policy framework and strengthened cybersecurity policies are also needed for the future.

To achieve sustainable and resilient recovery and to successfully achieve the SDGs, innovation is a must. Public institutions have been trying new approaches and experimenting with new ideas. But more needs to be done to ingrain the culture of innovation in public institutions. Institutions must create an environment that is conducive to change. Innovation is not only limited to the use of ICTs and digital government. It requires a more comprehensive transformation based on new approaches and processes, diverse ideas, and an entrepreneurial spirit among public officials who are able to take calculated risks.

SPECIAL SESSION: Asia-Pacific Taskforce on the Global Initiative on Building Capacities of Public Servants for SDG Implementation

This Session aims to exchange views of the Members of the Asia-Pacific Taskforce of the Global Initiative for Schools of Public Administration on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on the UN DESA's Curriculum on Governance for the SDGs. The Members of the Taskforce will be invited to share their country/organization's needs for public servants' capacity development in

support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Meeting will also provide a platform to discuss how the UN DESA Curriculum on Governance for the SDGs can effectively contribute to addressing such capacity development demands. Specifically, Members will share their experiences and suggest recommendations for effective implementation of the Curriculum at the national and local contexts. They will provide advice on how to interlink and contextualize the Curriculum to other existing curricula developed by schools of public administration and other public service training agencies. Members will also discuss how to deliver the Curriculum so that it is tailored to the specific demands of each country or organization.

IV. Structure and Methodology

The Symposium will include three plenary sessions and a special session.

Session I will provide an overview of the progress made in implementing the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in the Asia and Pacific region. It will also highlight the crosscutting roles of public institutions in recovering from the COVID-19 and advancing sustainable development. The Session will provide an opportunity to discuss strategies and lessons learned on how to make institutions more effective, accountable and inclusive to leave no one behind. Session II will focus on digital government and innovation for building back better. It will provide an overview of the 2020 E-Government Survey for the Asia-Pacific region. Notable public sector innovative cases that have won the United Nations Public Service Awards in the Asia and Pacific region will also be shared. Session III will explore ways to strengthen regional cooperation and key stakeholder engagement of the private sector, civil society, youth and vulnerable groups through partnerships. Developing capacities for effective, accountable and inclusive institutions in the context of building back better will also be addressed as well as capacities for digital government transformation.

The second special session will be devoted to the meeting of the Asia Pacific task force on the Global initiative for schools of public administration. It will focus on UN DESA's Curriculum on Governance for the SDGs where the members of the task force will be invited to share experiences and suggest recommendations for effective implementation of the curriculum at the national and local levels.

An evaluation of the regional symposium will be carried out following the co-organizers' monitoring and evaluation frameworks. This will help to determine the impact that participating in such an event had on the participants' knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

The Symposium will be held virtually via the Cisco WebEx platform and will be live streamed on UN DESA Facebook (TBC). The recording, presentations, and the report will be made available after the Symposium on the UN DESA and UN DESA/UNPOG website at <http://www.unpog.org/>.

The Symposium will be conducted in English.

V. Target Audience and Beneficiaries

The Symposium will primarily bring together participants from 27 countries in Asia and the Pacific region, including the Republic of Korea as the host country. These target countries are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nauru, Nepal, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Vanuatu, Vietnam and the Republic of Korea.

Participants will be composed of government officials from the target countries, in particular SDG focal points, ministries or other entities in charge of public administration and/or overseeing public service management, and ministries and agencies in charge of ICT and innovation, government officials, and other relevant stakeholders who are responsible for risk-informed development, schools and training institutes, the private sector, civil society organizations, and academia.

The ultimate beneficiaries are the people in those countries who will benefit from more effective, inclusive and accountable public institutions and digital government transformation to advance the SDG implementation.

VI. Expected Outcomes

The Symposium is expected to contribute to the 2021 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) to be held in July 2021. It also aims to strengthen partnerships through North-South, South-South, and triangular cooperation.

It is expected that by the end of the workshop, participants will have:

- Enhanced understanding of why effective, inclusive and accountable public institutions and digital government transformation are critical for sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 and SDG implementation;
- Capacity to apply knowledge gained on the principles of the 2030 Agenda and the ECOSOC principles of effective governance for building back better;
- Exchanged information about strategies, methodologies and lessons learned for effective institutions and digital government transformation for resilient recovery, and strengthen partnership among stakeholders; and
- Enhanced transfer and adoption of innovative cases and good practices among participating countries in designing, delivering, and implementing policies and public service delivery for sustainable and resilient recovery.

A report documenting the key discussions and outcomes of the proceedings will be produced and shared online with Symposium participants, stakeholders, and the wider public.

VII. Follow-up Actions

- Expression of commitment to further promote and integrate key lessons and outcomes of the Symposium into national policies and programmes to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda and build sustainable and resilient societies;
- Expression of commitment to integrate strategies and methodologies into policies, programmes, and legislative/ institutional frameworks;
- Increased number of domestic capacity development training activities, policy initiatives, and actions induced by the Symposium to support the sustainable and resilient recovery and SDG implementation; and
- Number of partnerships between participating countries through North-South, South-South, and triangular cooperation as well as Public-Private-Partnerships.

VIII. Co-organizers

The Symposium will be co-organized by the UN DESA and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety of the Government of the Republic of Korea and Incheon Metropolitan City.

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)⁴

Rooted in the United Nations Charter and guided by the transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) upholds the development pillar of the United Nations.

UN DESA brings the global community together to work towards common solutions to the world's most pressing problems. It helps countries translate their global commitments into national action in the economic, social, and environmental spheres.

UN DESA is a pioneer of sustainable development and the home of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), where each goal finds its space and where all stakeholders can do their part to leave no one behind. We are a leading analytical voice for promoting inclusion, reducing inequalities and eradicating poverty, and a champion for tearing down the barriers that keep people in poverty.

⁴ Department of Economic and Social Affairs, About UN DESA, Who we are
<https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/about/who-we-are.html>

UN DESA helps countries make informed decisions by providing a wealth of information through our publications and databases and through our support for international deliberations at the United Nations General Assembly, Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Commissions, Forums, and other bodies.

Step by step, UN DESA works towards sustainable development for all.

The Ministry of the Interior and Safety of the Government of the Republic of Korea

The Ministry of the Interior and Safety (MOIS) is responsible for general affairs of the State Council, the promulgation of Acts and subordinate statutes and treaties, government organization and a prescribed number of public officials, awards and decorations, government innovation, administrative efficiency, e-government, personal information protection, management of government buildings and support for elections and referendums.

Furthermore, MOIS actively promotes local autonomy and decentralization by supporting business, finance, and taxation of local governments and mediating disputes among local governments. In addition, MOIS takes charge of establishing, supervising, and adjusting policies related to safety and disaster management such as emergency countermeasures, civil defense, and disaster prevention.

Incheon Metropolitan City

Located on the West Sea (Yellow Sea) of Korea, Incheon is home to the Incheon International Airport, large-scale seaport, and Free Economic Zone, and is rich in tourism resources. It is growing by leaps and bounds based on its foundation for nurturing various industries.

The population of Incheon exceeded three million in 2016, becoming the third-most-populous city in Korean. At 1,062 km², Incheon also has the largest land area among the metropolitan cities in Korea.

Having successfully hosted the World Education Forum in 2015, Incheon is a city where everyone wants to live for its educational and living conditions. Four globally renowned foreign universities and eight local colleges have their campus in the city, and the city government provides various support programs for foreigners to settle in, which has led the number of foreign residents in Songdo to exceed 2,000.

In particular, Incheon stands as a global city where many international organizations are based. A total of 15 international bodies are located in Incheon, such as Green Climate Fund Secretariat, World Bank Group Korea Office, and 9 United Nations organizations. With the second expansion phase of the Songdo Convensia convention center completed recently, the city of Incheon is also emerging as a new hub for the MICE industry.

IX. Contact Information

Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)

Juwang Zhu

Director
DPIDG/UNDESA

Adriana Alberti

Chief, Programme Management and Capacity Development Unit/DPIDG/UNDESA
alberti@un.org

Bokyun Shim

Head, UN Project Office on Governance (UNPOG)/DPIDG/UNDESA
bokyun.shim@un.org

Victoria Kim

Governance and Public Administration Expert, UNPOG/DPIDG/UN DESA
kim47@un.org

Samuel Danaa

Associate Capacity Development Expert, UNPOG/DPIDG/UN DESA
samuel.danaa@un.org

Prabin Maharjan

Associate Research & Policy Analysis Expert, UNPOG/DPIDG/UN DESA
prabin.maharjan@un.org

Hye Kyung (Shelley) Choi

Programme Management Assistant, UNPOG/DPIDG/UN DESA
choi9@un.org

Annex I

SPECIAL SESSION: Asia-Pacific Taskforce of the Global Initiative on Building Capacities of Public Servants for SDG Implementation

26 November 2020
11:00 AM -13:00 PM (KST)

I. Objectives

This Session aims to exchanges views of the Members of the Asia-Pacific Taskforce of the Global Initiative for Schools of Public Administration on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on the UN DESA's Curriculum on Governance for the SDGs, which will be launched/has recently been launched (tbc). The Members of the Taskforce will be invited to share the demands of their country/organization on developing capacity of public servants for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and discuss how the UN DESA Curriculum on Governance for the SDGs can effectively contribute to addressing such capacity development demands. Specifically, Members will share their experiences and suggest recommendations for effective implementation of the Curriculum at the national and local contexts, including the ways to interlink and contextualize the Curriculum with other existing curriculum of schools of public administration/other public servant training agencies and how to deliver the Curriculum that is tailored to the specific demands of each country/organization.

II. Tentative Structure

Time	Agenda
1:00-1:05	Introduction by UN DESA
1:05-1:25	Presentations by 3-4 PA Schools i) Specific country demands on the Curriculum on Governance for the SDGs ii) Plans or suggestions for effective national implementation of the Curriculum
1:25-1:55	Open Discussion
1:55-2:00	Summary of Discussion and Closing

III. Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes of this Session would include:

- Recommendations and suggestions from schools of public administration on how to effectively implement the UN DESA Curriculum on Governance for the SDGs by ensuring that it is demand-driven and creates sustainable impact;

- Specific plans of the schools of public administration on how to implement the Curriculum into their national/local trainings; and
- Partnership building among the Members for sharing of experiences and lessons learned in capacity development of public servants for achieving the SDGs.

The outcome of the Session will be reflected in the implementation strategy of the UN DESA Curriculum on Governance for the SDGs as well as its other future capacity development activities.