



AIDE MEMOIRE
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON GOVERNMENT INNOVATION
24-25 October 2007, Seoul, Republic of Korea

BACKGROUND

Government innovation has become a global trend across the world. Although there is an ongoing controversial debate on the role of national governments in the era of globalization, the need to improve governance and public administration is now widely recognized. Innovations in governance and public administration are essential for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in developing countries. As highlighted by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 57/277, “efficient, accountable, effective and transparent public administration, at both the national and international levels, has a key role to play in the implementation of internationally agreed goals” including the MDGs.

The United Nations Governance Centre (UNGC) supports the efforts of the UN Member States to improve the quality of governance and public administration in order to enhance conditions for their citizens. The Centre’s principal objectives include increasing international awareness of and access to alternative measures, strategies, innovations, and best practices that have been employed across and within regions, different levels of government and with civil society and/or the private sector; and developing a targeted innovators network that will enable these interested parties to rapidly access synthesized information and knowledge with a view, *inter alia*, to facilitating the further exchange of experiences.

In this context, the UNGC will partner with the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs (MOGAHA) of Korea, to co-organize an international conference on government innovation on United Nations Day 2007. The Government of the Republic of Korea has been the recipient of three UN Public Service Awards for innovation since the inception of the awards in 2003 (in 2007 an award for Improving the Delivery of Services; the 2006 Special Award in Innovation; and in 2003 an award for Innovations in the Public Service). Accordingly, the partnership will enhance the UNGC’s plans for sharing innovation strategies, experiences and achievements and discussing future agenda for successful innovation through the holding of this Conference in Seoul.

PURPOSE

Governments are now under pressure to better respond to the demands of their citizens and to the growing complex challenges in a globalizing society through innovation. Few innovations in government are pure invention; they are more often discoveries combining ideas and practices that have been attempted elsewhere. However, the patterns and processes in government innovations are not so uniform with each country having different social, economic, political and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, there are no

“one-size-fits-all” answers to complicated problems and issues, but this does not diminish the value of learning from other countries’ experiences in government innovations. The General Assembly, in its resolution 57/277, also underlined that particular emphasis should be placed on the exchange of experiences associated with the role of public administration in the implementation of the MDGs.

To this end, the main goal of the Conference is to offer an opportunity for disseminating information and exchanging experiences in government innovations. In particular, this Conference aims to address key values and strategies to promote excellence in governance and public administration and to attain a better understanding of what and how government innovations are undertaken in the Asia region.

The Conference will also mark United Nations Day, October 24.

THEMES AND METHOD

This Conference will take place over two days, on 24 and 25 October.

On the first day, there will be a seminar which focuses on “Government Innovation in Asian Countries: Experiences and Prospects”. This seminar will cover the following sub-themes:

(i) Key Values and Perspectives in Sustaining Government Innovation

The first section aims at exploring conceptual issues, approaches and tools for facilitating government innovation. Given the significance of policy learning, especially in the case of innovations and good practices, this section will illuminate the sustainability and effectiveness of government innovations. It will also attempt to envisage a new agenda for innovation in governance and public administration.

(ii) Insights from Implementing Government Innovation

As shown by the UN Public Service Awards, there is great capacity in all corners of the world to reinvent governments and to launch innovative practices in governance. This implies that we all can benefit from the sharing of knowledge and successful practices in reinventing government. In this regard, this section will focus on Asian countries’ efforts to adapt, implement and institutionalize innovations. Particular attention will be paid to the different approaches and methodologies that have been proved successful (or problematic) in innovations.

The second day will comprise a field trip in order to explore how government innovation has taken place in Korea. In the morning session, there will be a visit to the INNOVISION, i.e. an exhibition hall established by the MOGAHA to introduce Korea’s experiences and achievements in government innovation, including the UN PSA winners.

The afternoon session is expected to gain hands-on experience by observing a so-called Information Network Village in regional areas. The Information Network Village is designed to reduce a gap between rural and urban areas by increasing the availability of e-government services and by boosting regional economy through e-commerce, which eventually leads to the improvement of the quality of life in rural communities.

PARTICIPANTS AND VENUE

Invited participants of the Conference will include international academic experts and policy makers, including representatives from past UN Public Service Award winners from the Asia region; and innovators and public administration experts from the host country, including civil servants, scholars and policy experts

The first-day seminar will be held from 13:00 to 17:30 on Wednesday 24 October 2007 at the International Conference Hall in the Annex of the Government Complex, Seoul.

On Thursday 25, the morning session will take place from 10:00 to 12:00 at the INNOVISION hall in the Government Complex, Seoul, which will be followed by the afternoon tour to one of the Information Network Villages between 15:00 and 17:00.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Overall, the Conference will offer opportunities for participants to exchange ideas on approaches and practices that are crucial to improving public administration and governance. It will also highlight that government innovations span the range of public services and bring out broad insights into how innovation implemented in one country may be adapted to work successfully in other countries.

In particular, the Conference will serve an advocacy and outreach objective by bringing together interested parties from developed and developing countries to dialogue, and by highlighting the utility of public sector innovation through relevant discussion of theories and practices.

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