

## **Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi**

Chair CEPA

### **Opening remarks at the African regional webinar on Resilience and Recovery from COVID-19 through sound policymaking: risk management**

16 November 2021

United Nations Assistant Secretary-General, Ms. Maria-Francesca Spatolisano,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon and good morning. It is a great pleasure for me to be part of this webinar on resilience and recovery from COVID-19 through sound policymaking.

As you all know, Governments in Africa are facing enormous economic, social, and public health challenges as they navigate recovery and undertake rebuilding efforts in response to the COVID-19 crisis. If left unaddressed, these challenges will erode the ability of societies to flourish and diminish trust in government.

As highlighted by ASG Ms. Spatolisano, the UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration has elaborated eleven principles of effective governance for sustainable development that are designed to ensure effective, accountable, and inclusive government, in line with SDG 16 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and whose purpose is to provide practical, expert guidance to interested countries in a broad range of governance challenges associated with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

As a keen proponent of the principles, I am delighted to see that strategy guidance notes on these topics have been developed in the meantime. The notes highlight, inter alia, methods of implementation, opportunities to engage in peer-to-peer learning and research, good practices, and pursue further international development cooperation in accordance with country needs.

As mentioned by the ASG Mrs. Spatolisano, today's event is a follow-up to a virtual regional workshop on sound policymaking that was organized in February 2021 where it was my pleasure to serve as facilitator of the workshop. I believe some of you may also have participated.

Supported by the African Peer Review Mechanism and DESA, we gathered again in Cape Town, from 28 to 30 October 2021, to consider concrete action to build resilient institutions for the SDGs in the time of COVID-19. The workshop recognized that effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions are critical to help countries accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda and AU Agenda 2063, which are

complementary and mutually reinforcing. Participants stressed the importance of cooperation and new partnerships to accelerate the implementation of both Agendas, as well as the urgent need for capacity development across Africa.

The issues and techniques discussed during these workshops and webinars seem to have struck a chord. I am told that DESA in the meantime received a number of requests from countries in Africa for support in taking this work forward. Countries expressed particular interest in exploring the nexus between implementing the strategies in a way that ensured risk-recovery and resilience after the pandemic.

To that end, I see that UN DESA and APRM are now organizing another series of 3 webinars on specific strategies of sound policymaking that are very relevant because they are key to resilience and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic has exposed the importance of **risk management** and crisis management capacities including the ability to anticipate and monitor risks and threats, build risk mitigation, risk preparedness response and crisis management capacities to lead recovery and long- term resilience building.

Natural disasters, climate change impacts and epidemics increasingly have systemic implications that threaten sustainable development progress in the region. These events compound existing risks such as weak economic and governance systems and fragile status. Moreover, inherent weaknesses in the economic system contribute to systemic risks, including high poverty rates, limited fiscal capacity, extreme commodity exposure, a fragile informal economy, remittance flows which are vulnerable to global shocks.

There are three areas that are particularly challenging across the African continent in terms of risk management. These are post-conflict risk management, disaster risk-management and financial risk-management. Post-conflict risk management includes putting in place measures to ensure that countries do not fall back into conflict. Financial risk management is linked, among other things, to tax avoidance and evasion as well as illicit flows and effective aid management.

An opportunity therefore exists for building public sector capacity to achieve sound policy making through better risk management. Moving forward, Governments must actively move to equip society with the proper knowledge, tools, and planning for future unknown shocks that could disrupt social and economic stability.

The immediate goal of the initiative of today is to identify areas for capacity building within the public sector and to stimulate dialogue and additional insight on risk management priorities amongst government actors through these regional webinars. The broader objective is to support interested countries in applying the principle of sound policymaking and its different strategies to build back better from the pandemic while simultaneously addressing various competing policy objectives to promote resilience, preserve agility and promote innovative approaches.

During this webinar, the findings of a paper on current trends and practices on risk management in Africa with challenges and opportunities will be shortly presented. Despite these many challenges, there also innovative examples across the continent of countries that are effectively promoting sound policymaking and that are adopting risk management frameworks.

I am very pleased that today Sierra Leone will share with all of us its experience and some key lessons learned and recommendations. There are many other good practices and I truly believe that peer-to-peer learning is a very effective way to learn from one another.

I hope that the discussion this morning can contribute not only to increased awareness of the principle of sound policymaking and of the strategy guidance notes, but also identify action-oriented and concrete activities and capacity building initiatives to enhance sound policymaking.

Thank you.