



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



Regional Webinars in Africa

RESILIENCE AND RECOVERY FROM COVID-19 THROUGH SOUND POLICYMAKING

Concept Note and Agenda

16 November 2021

8 December 2021

January 2022

8 - 10 AM (EST)

3 - 5 PM South Africa time

I Event Description

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), through its Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG), in collaboration with the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and with the support of Resident Coordinators Offices, will hold a series of virtual workshops on how to promote resilience and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa through sound policymaking. The workshops will be held virtually using the zoom platform respectively on 16 November, 8 December 2021, and 5 January 2022.

II Objectives

The workshops aim at developing the capacities of national governments to promote sound policymaking, with a particular focus on policy coherence, strategic planning and foresight and risk management. More specifically, the workshops will:

(i) provide a platform to share knowledge on the strategies and guidance notes related to sound policymaking, which is one of the eleven principles of effective governance for sustainable development. These principles were developed by the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration and endorsed in 2018 by the United Nations Economic Council on Social and Economic Development.

(ii) increase understanding of how to effectively utilise the sound policymaking strategies for COVID-19 response measures.

(iii) link participants through peer-to-peer learning and create network opportunities, and

(iv) assist countries in identifying concrete activities and capacity building initiatives that can be undertaken with the support of the UN system and other organizations.



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III Background and Thematic Focus

Background

National institutions have been strongly impacted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, which has affected key government functions and processes, undermining the effectiveness of government action. The need to respond quickly and with drastic measures has also created additional risks for institutional processes and organisations. Beyond individual institutions, the pandemic has increasingly affected whole institutional systems and the way public institutions interact with people.

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. Moving forward, governments must enhance institutional arrangements for policy coherence and proactively equip themselves with the proper knowledge, tools, competencies for planning for future unknown shocks that could disrupt social, economic, and environmental stability, in line with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 on strong institutions and the principles of effective governance for sustainable development. The latter highlight the need for pragmatic and ongoing improvements in national and local governance capabilities to reach the SDGs. The essential purpose of these principles is to provide practical, expert guidance to interested countries in a broad range of governance challenges associated with the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The principles are designed to ensure effective, accountable, and inclusive government.

The United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) has mapped a wide range of commonly used strategies for operationalization of the principles. One of the principles is on sound policymaking. CEPA noted eight commonly used strategies for addressing the principle of sound policymaking, including (i) strategic planning and oversight; (ii) regulatory impact analysis (iii) promotion of coherent policymaking (iv) strengthening national statistical systems (v) monitoring and evaluation systems (vi) the science-policy interface (vii) risk management frameworks and (viii) data sharing. UN DESA/DPIDG engaged experts to prepare guidance notes and provide content to the eight strategies designed to give effect to the principle of sound policymaking. The notes were crafted through global consultation with other specialised experts in the field. The notes include information on how a government can both assess its status and measure progress in applying the strategy to national policymaking processes.



All notes have recent case studies and good practices to advance sound policymaking with practical and illustrative guides. The notes outline the strategies, assess the extent to which they are being or have been adopted in other countries, and highlight the methods of implementation, opportunities to engage in peer-to-peer learning and research, and pursue further international development cooperation in accordance with country needs. The notes are available here: <https://publicadministration.un.org/en/Intergovernmental-Support/CEPA/Principles-of-Effective-Governance>.

As a follow-up activity, UN DESA/DPIDG organized two virtual workshops on sound policymaking for sustainable development focusing on Africa on 16 February and Latin America on 18 February. The Virtual Workshop on Sound Policymaking for Sustainable Development examined how the principle of sound policymaking can help to build effective institutions for sustainable development. Resident Coordinators, UN agencies and regional organizations together with government representatives and members of civil society discussed the need for pragmatic and ongoing improvements in governance capabilities to achieve the SDGs.

As a follow-up to the above-mentioned workshops, UN DESA/DPIDG is organizing these regional webinars to explore the nexus between implementing the principle of sound policymaking and the strategies to ensure risk recovery and resilience after the pandemic.



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Thematic Focus

The thematic focus of the three workshops on sound policymaking is on policy coherence, strategic planning and foresight and risk management frameworks. These three strategies are the most relevant to resilience and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Policy coherence is crucial because a holistic approach to recovery is essential. Policy coherence increases the likelihood of reaching development commitments; and policies operating at cross-purposes can result in financial and other resources being wasted. Policy coherence can help balance policy synergies and trade-offs between short and long-term priorities and between the three dimensions of sustainable development. Governments should develop a roadmap for policy coherence to ensure a sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. Strategic planning and foresight are crucial for ensuring that Governments are prepared for handling such crises in the future. While it is impossible to predict the future, strategic foresight offers the tools for successful policymaking in the face of high uncertainty.

This involves exploring and preparing for a diversity of possible developments in order to future-proof strategies, identify new potential opportunities and challenges, and design innovative ways of improving well-being under rapidly evolving circumstances.

Risk management frameworks are key because the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the harsh consequences of flawed or inadequate risk (and crisis) management frameworks and practices in the public sector in countries around the world. The pandemic has raised the awareness and understanding of the importance of risk management. It has also provided an opportunity to strengthen capacities for risk management in support of effective governance for sustainable development.

IV Structure

The workshops on sound policymaking will be divided into plenary presentations and hands-on break-out groups. The break-out groups are intended to facilitate dialogue and discussion on how to enhance capacities for sound policymaking through the three strategies of policy coherence, planning and foresight and risk management. The workshops will be highly interactive and provide ample time for peer-to-peer learning.

V Target Audience

The target audience of the workshop includes senior policymakers in centres of government, ministries of finance, planning and public administration, among others, in Africa. who have requested capacity building support after the workshops held in February 2021. Relevant United Nations organizations, UN Resident Coordinators, and regional organizations and professional and academic communities, and schools of public administration are invited to attend. The webinars are open to interested countries upon registration.

VI Expected Outcomes

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

- Uncovered common challenges and roadblocks to the promotion of sound policymaking.
- Enhanced awareness of how the principles of effective governance for sustainable development can help countries in their efforts to recover from the pandemic.
- Gained knowledge about policy coherence, planning and foresight, and risk management frameworks. Each workshop will address one of these issues.
- Engaged in peer-to-peer learning with countries that have advanced on the issues of sound policymaking.
- Established follow-up actions and defined capacity needs and priorities.

UN DESA and APRM will continue to offer specialized capacity building support on the above topics in 2022 upon request from member states.

Risk management in Africa in response to COVID-19

08:00 - 08:15 **Setting the stage: How can the principles of effective governance help recovery from COVID-19: the role of risk management**

Maria Francesca Spatolisano, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, (UN DESA) (TBC)

Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, Chair, Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA)

08:15 - 08:25 **Risk Management Frameworks**

Rolf Alter, CEPA member, Senior Fellow, Hertie School, previous Director OECD on Public Governance

08:25 - 08:40 Q&A

08:40 - 08:55 **Raniya Sobir**, UN DESA consultant and author of the paper on **Risk management in Africa in response to COVID-19**

Presentation of preliminary findings of the paper on risk management: state of play of 5 countries and recommendations

08:55 - 09:15 **Plenary discussion facilitated by APRM/ UN DESA**

Feedback and comments on the findings of the paper and discussion among participating countries on the paper's key recommendations

09:15 - 09:30 **Presentation on risk management by a good practice country (Sierra Leone) (TBC)**

09:30 - 09:50 **Discussion and Q&A based on a presentation from Sierra Leone**, facilitated by APRM/UN DESA

09:50 - 10:00 **Follow up/ next steps on capacity building at national level by UN DESA and APRM**

Sara Tawfik Hamouda, Agenda 2063 and SDG Expert, African Peer Review Mechanism

Veronique Verbruggen, Senior Interregional Advisor Governance, UN DESA

Strategic planning and foresight in Africa in response to COVID-19

- 08:00 - 08:10 **Opening remarks by Adriana Alberti**, Chief, Programme Management and Capacity Development Unit, Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
- Setting the stage: How can the principles of effective governance help recovery from COVID-19: the role of strategic foresight**
- Prof. Eddy Maloka**, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)
- 08:10 - 08:20 **Cat Tully and Marius Oosthuizen**, School of International Futures
- Strategic planning and foresight**
- 08:20 - 08:30 **Plenary discussion/ Q&A** in response to the frameworks and approaches presented by M. Oosthuizen (TBC)
- 08:30 - 08:45 **Masse Lo**, UN DESA Consultant and author of the paper on strategic foresight in Africa in response to COVID-19:
Presentation of preliminary findings of the paper on strategic planning and foresight: state of play of 5 countries and recommendations
- 08:45 - 09:05 **Plenary discussion and Q&A (facilitated by UN DESA/ APRM)**
Reactions on the recommendations, including from African countries analysed in the paper and discussion.
- 09:05 - 09:20 **Presentation on a good practice country for strategic foresight (Cabo Verde or Morocco) (TBC)**
What has triggered strategic foresight? What are the challenges and opportunities? What are the recommendations for the future?
- 09:20 - 09:40 **Q&A and plenary discussion following the good practice presentation**
- 09:40 - 10:00 Follow up and next steps on capacity building at national level by UN DESA and APRM
- Sara Tawfik Hamouda**, Agenda 2063 and SDG Expert, African Peer Review Mechanism
- Veronique Verbruggen**, Senior Interregional Advisor Governance, UN DESA

Policy coherence in Africa in response to COVID-19

- 08:00 - 08:10 **Opening remarks by Adriana Alberti**, Chief, Programme Management and Capacity Development Unit, Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
- Setting the stage: How can the principles of effective governance help recovery from COVID-19: the role of policy coherence**
UN DESA
APRM
- 08:10 - 08:25 **Måns Nilsson Executive Director**, Stockholm Environment Institute, Sweden
- Promotion of coherent policymaking
- 08:25 - 08:40 **Q&A / plenary discussion**
Reactions on the framework and how relevant policy coherence is in response to COVID-19 based on experiences.
- 08:40 - 08:55 **Ivonne Lobos, research fellow at Stockholm Environment Institute and author of the UN DESA paper on Policy Coherence in Africa in response to COVID-19: presentation of preliminary findings of the paper on policy coherence: state of play of 5 countries and recommendations**
- 08:55 - 09:15 **Q&A and reactions from participants** on recommendations and findings of the paper
- 09:15 - 09:30 **Presentation of a good practice country (Uganda or Ivory Coast) (TBC)**
- 09:30 - 09:45 **Feedback and plenary discussion/** peer-to-peer learning following presentation of the good practice country
- 09:45 - 10:00 **Follow up and next steps on capacity building at national level**
- Presentation by **Veronique Verbruggen**, Senior Interregional Advisor UN DESA on Governance on the Curriculum on Governance, Toolkit on Institutional Arrangements for Policy Coherence
- Sara Tawfik Hamouda**, Agenda 2063 and SDG Expert, African Peer Review Mechanism