

# The Contribution of the United Nations to the Improvement of Public Administration

A 60-Year History



**Department of Economic and Social Affairs**  
Division for Public Administration and Development Management

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the United Nations  
to the Improvement of  
Public Administration  
  
A 60-Year History**



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## DESA

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat is a vital interface between global policies in the economic, social and environmental spheres and national action. The Department works in three main interlinked areas: (i) it generates, compiles and analyses a wide range of economic, social and environmental data and information on which Member States of the United Nations draw to review common problems and to take stock of policy options; (ii) it facilitates the negotiations of Member States in many intergovernmental bodies on joint courses of action to address ongoing or emerging global challenges; and (iii) it advises interested Governments on the ways and means of translating policy frameworks developed in United Nations conferences and summits into programmes at the country level and, through technical assistance, helps build national capacities.

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## Foreword

The United Nations Programme on Public Administration, Finance and Development (hereinafter referred to as the United Nations Programme on Public Administration or the Programme) is celebrating its sixtieth anniversary in 2008. Since its inception in 1948, the Programme has consistently promoted the importance of sound public administration for the political, economic and social development of all nations. It has been able to remain faithful to its message while, at the same time, incorporating the traditional public administration paradigm with appropriate innovations derived from the new public management movement and the public governance approach.

It is very difficult to pay tribute, in such a short book, to a Programme that was instrumental in the establishment of public administration systems in several developing countries, immediately after decolonization. In addition, it has continued its support and assistance in one way or another to all Member States of the United Nations for the last six decades. One can only understand the magnitude of the accomplishments of the Programme by looking at those countries that did not have a functioning public administration system in the 1960s but are now experimenting with e-government, alongside countries that have had a functioning public administration system for centuries. This is like jumping from “no government” to “e-government” in a short time. Besides, the impact of a well-functioning public administration system in a country has a multiplier effect on overall economic development and, as such, it cannot be seen apart from the whole. It would therefore be a disservice to measure the impact of the United Nations Programme on Public Administration by enumerating a long list of achievements in the public sector, such as the number of publications; the various conferences, workshops, seminars and other gatherings; the hundreds of technical assistance projects implemented; and the thousands of public sector officials trained under the Programme throughout the world.

Hence, this publication is simply designed to give a broad historical background of the United Nations Programme on Public Administration since its establishment by United Nations General Assembly resolution 246 (III) of 4 December 1948 to the present-day activities of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management. For those who are interested in looking more deeply into the history of the Programme, a CD-ROM is provided along with this publication that contains annexes; several reports pertinent to the Programme, such as the reports of the biennial meetings of the Group of Experts on the United Nations Programme on Public Administration held between 1967 and 2000 and the reports of the annual sessions of the Committee of Experts on Public

Administration (CEPA) since 2002; and a number of selected General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions. The CD-ROM also contains short messages from Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations; Mr. Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs; and Mr. Guido Bertucci, Director of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management, on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the Programme.

Most of the documents on public administration and finance that are published after 2000 are now available electronically on the website of the Division, [www.unpan.org](http://www.unpan.org).

As it is very difficult to list all the names of those who have provided invaluable service to the Programme through the years, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs expresses its gratitude to the hundreds of experts who provided support to the establishment of the administrative systems of the newly independent countries during the early stages of the United Nations Programme on Public Administration; to the former and current staff members of the Division for carrying the torch and for their dedication; and, more importantly, to the hundreds of experts who served at the meetings of the Group of Experts on public administration and finance and the sessions of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration between 1967 and 2008, without whose guidance the Programme would not have been able to achieve its goals.

Guido Bertucci, Director  
Division for Public Administration and Development Management  
Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
United Nations

## ***Acknowledgements***

This publication was prepared under the overall responsibility of Guido Bertucci, Director of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), and John-Mary Kauzya, Chief of the Governance and Public Administration Branch of DPADM. Almaz Atnafu Woldekidane was the principal coordinator of this publication, and she prepared the first draft of this book and the CD-ROM. Alejandro Carrillo Castro was the researcher and the writer of the more than four hundred pages of background materials out of which this short book was produced. Abu Tayeb Rafiqur Rahman, former Deputy Director of DPADM, provided substantive editing. Joliette Jean, Nadine Manket, Diane Lin and Soyeon Chung (an intern) provided help in digitizing and compiling the documents on the CD-ROM. Administrative support was provided by Mary-Elisabeth Danseco.

The publication is based on in-depth research and a review of hundreds of working papers, reports of the meetings of the Group of Experts, seminars and workshops, as well as the *Public Administration Newsletter* and the *Development Administration* newsletter, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions, reports of the Secretary-General and specialized thematic papers and publications on public administration and finance through the years.



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# 60 years

## Contribution of the United Nations to the Improvement of Public Administration: A 60-Year History

This book presents a concise history of the United Nations Programme on Public Administration, Finance and Development since its inception 60 years ago in 1948. It is organized in six sections. The first section reviews broadly the global trends in public administration. The second section narrates briefly the establishment of the Programme and the system of general direction and supervision of the Programme provided by the United Nations legislative bodies: the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The third section discusses how the Programme was directed and supervised by a specific body, first a United Nations Group of Experts and subsequently a United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA), both established sequentially by resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly. The fourth section summarizes the diverse activities carried out under the Programme during the last 60 years for the benefit of Member States and the international community. The fifth and sixth sections detail the present position of the Programme and its future perspective.



*From left to right: Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations; Mr. Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs; and Mr. Guido Bertucci, Director of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management, at the 2008 United Nations Public Service Awards ceremony, 23 June 2008, New York.*



## Section I. Overview: from public administration to governance

Over the past 60 years, the discourse concerning the role of the State in economic and social development has substantially changed. This change can be noted in multiple trends reflecting the political, economic and social developments in several groups of countries at different points in time. One broad trend in many industrialized countries is from the “maximalist” State at the aftermath of the Second World War to the “minimalist” State of the 1980s, shifting to a new understanding that signifies the importance of both the State and the market in performing invaluable functions in society. Another broad trend that can be noted in many developing countries is the changing role of the State to adjust periodically to the growth of market forces and the urgent and increasing needs of growing underprivileged groups. Yet another trend that can be noted in many current and formerly socialist countries is the gradual modification of the all-embracing role of the State to accommodate expanding market forces, growing pluralist democracies, and strengthening of an embryonic civil society. These changes in the role of the State have led to corresponding changes in State machineries that, over time, have evolved from applying new public management techniques to eventually a broader concept of governance.<sup>1</sup> This shift is divided into several periods.

### **The heyday of public administration: 1948-1970**

From 1948 until approximately 1970, the State was widely perceived as the necessary engine of socio-economic development, and effective administration was viewed as the primary agent in the formulation and implementation of development plans and programmes. At the same time, deficiencies in organization and management mechanisms at all levels of government were noted as major obstacles to progress in fulfilling national aspirations. It was during this period, mostly in the 1950s, that many developing countries gained independence from colonialism and looked upon the newly independent State as the main vehicle for delivering the benefits of political and economic freedom to their people. In many cases, States embraced socialist organization. Expansion of public administration machinery and personnel was undertaken as the State assumed and accelerated development tasks, focusing on achieving results but not on minimizing related costs and thus achieving efficiency.

However, disappointing results in the implementation of planned activities were increasingly recognized and often attributed to insufficient or inappropriate

ate administrative arrangements. In response, such techniques as administrative reforms, training programmes, information and monitoring systems and programme evaluation were undertaken to build and strengthen the capacity of public administration. These improvements were often undertaken with the technical assistance and support of bilateral donors and international development agencies. It was believed that improved administrative capability of the State machinery would be an important contributing factor in development processes, within a centralized planning framework and industrial development policies. This was evident in the expanding role of government and the thinking that a society could take on an overall approach to problems of national development and deal with them in a coherent manner only through the State apparatus.

### **From public administration to public management: 1970-1990**

By the 1970s, experts began to perceive weaknesses in the strong-State central planning model. First, industrialized democracies and then developing ones began to face the growing inefficiencies of an expanded public sector and the beginnings of fiscal crisis. There was an increasing realization of the need for a conceptual shift from administering public regulation to managed public services and national and community development, often borrowing principles and practices from the private and corporate sectors. Emphasis was placed on utilizing and reforming existing structures and systems rather than building new ones. Management improvements for achieving results were developed, often in cooperation with private and community organizations. Gradually, the focus and drivers of technical cooperation supported this shift.

During this period, a policy consensus favouring privatization, deregulation, de-bureaucratization and decentralization often went hand in hand with criticism of the State's role and a campaign to reverse the growth of government machineries. Major systematic cutbacks in public administration were undertaken in several Western democracies in the early 1980s. This cutback process was later employed in many developing countries as an integral part of "structural adjustment" programmes, which were undertaken under the aegis of international financial and development institutions. The State, which in the previous 20 years had been widely perceived as a necessary engine of socio-economic development, was now portrayed in negative terms and condemned for interfering in market forces. Despite changes that reoriented public administration through improved management approaches and increased collaboration with private and community sectors, the mystique of the dominant State machinery successfully leading development could not be restored.

## **From public management to governance: 1990-2008**

A dramatic shift began to appear in late 1980s and early 1990s when, due to fiscal crises and inefficiencies in the public sector and the introduction of various structural adjustment measures, the State stopped being regarded as the sole engine of economic growth and social development and eventually began to be seen as an impediment to prosperity. Instead, market forces came to be seen as the vehicle for solving most development problems. This idea was crystallized in the “Washington Consensus” in 1995 when it was generally accepted by major donors and international development agencies that trade, not aid, and private investment, not State money, would be more effective in bringing about sustainable development in less developed countries. In line with these new ideas, the involvement of the State in economic and social development was to be reduced, and government was to operate according to market-like mechanisms wherever possible.

Much of the new thinking originated in the developed countries, and was filtered down to developing countries through technical assistance and structural adjustment programmes. Experiencing rising debt levels and an inability to meet their international obligations, most developing countries acceded to reducing the role of the State. The fall of the former Soviet Union and the democratizing trends that followed also reinforced the move towards more market-based economic systems. Along with this change, there was also a growing acceptance of the fact that different cultural and political circumstances required different approaches in lieu of the notorious “one size fits all” solution.

However, while this reliance on market forces was being practised in many countries, there was evidence that market therapy, both shock and gradual, led to some economic dysfunctions and much social misery. Apparently, there might be a role for the State after all, if only to moderate the negative social consequences of the unregulated market. After decades of debate on the mutually exclusive roles of the State and the market, it became clear that there are as many complementarities as oppositions in the roles of these two partners. During the past few years, there has been a discernible though gradual move away from extreme market or government solutions. Market forces alone do not seem to lead to economic productivity and social progress. Apparently, markets and civil societies will not thrive without a strong and competent public administration.

In this changed context, the role of State machinery is viewed in the larger perspective of governance. Beyond conventional bureaucratic public administration, Governments now incorporate legal and policy frameworks for proper

policy environments, and appropriate measures to promote participatory systems for civil society to engage in policy formulation and programme implementation, as well as contribute to an effective and transparent process for control and accountability of government actions. Nonetheless, public administration remains the pre-eminent locus and responsible guarantor of the public interest and a vital player within public management and governance. To support the role of the State and ensure that its goals are fulfilled, public administration continues to evolve, absorbing new methods and adapting practices according to social and technological progress, internal and external pressures and cultural and contextual challenges. As public administration continues to provide the foundation for maintaining confidence in the stability and continuity of the State, efforts to enhance its professionalism and integrity and to buttress its impartiality, legality and transparency are critical to the fulfilment of the State's overarching goals.



*From left to right: Mr. Guido Bertucci, Director of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management; the Honourable Léo Mérorès, President of the Economic and Social Council and Permanent Representative of Haiti to the United Nations; the Honourable Jocelyne Bourgon, President Emeritus of the Canada School of Public Service and Chairperson of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration; and Mr. Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, on the occasion of the celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations Programme on Public Administration, 16 April 2008, United Nations Headquarters, New York.*

This new role of public administration in improving overall governance is carried out in the context of and in response to local, national, regional and global pressures, as well as challenges for survival, development and change. These pressures—globalization, restoring faith in government, accelerated economic development with equity, and environmental protection—affect countries to different degrees and the countries' responses are reflected in the variations of policy packages and reform initiatives. The big challenge for governance in the years ahead is to reinvent a framework for society that transcends the government structure, and moves towards a more inclusive and organic linkage of the roles of government, business and civil society.

The United Nations Programme on Public Administration has been a promoter of the adoption of new and improved practices of public administration, and numerous paradigm shifts. Along the way, the Programme has been an important element in the policy and implementation network that has woven the web of discourse and paradigm shifts, because the United Nations Programme on Public Administration has made concrete the mandate of Member States to promote sound public administration. A list of General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions will show how intergovernmental bodies, supported by the work of the Secretariat, have highlighted the Programme paradigm changes. General Assembly resolution 50/225 of 19 April 1996, adopted on the occasion of its resumed fiftieth session, was a pivotal document in highlighting the new role and scope of public administration.<sup>2</sup>



## Section II. Intergovernmental perspective

The United Nations is an intergovernmental organization that has a well-defined process for accepting mandates for work from Member States. On the basis of General Assembly resolutions, the Secretariat organizes and supervises the implementation of the work of the United Nations. While the Security Council deals specifically with “threats to peace and security”, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) deals specifically with social and economic activities. All United Nations activities in peace, economic and social matters can be traced back to resolutions passed by one or more of these bodies. In this section, we will review the legislative mandates provided by ECOSOC and the General Assembly for the establishment and expansion of the United Nations Programme on Public Administration. ECOSOC, a body of 52 member States, authorizes actions to be undertaken under the Programme, and supervises the implementation thereof. From time to time, the General Assembly has reaffirmed its commitment to promoting sound public administration.

### Origins of the Programme: 1946-1953

Since its inception in 1945, the United Nations has been concerned with the needs of its Member States, especially those emerging from colonial rule. Public administration has been identified as a major factor in promoting economic and social development. Such concern emanated directly from the Charter of the United Nations, which declared the determination of the United Nations to “employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social development of all peoples”.<sup>3</sup>

From its first session in 1946, the General Assembly set in motion the process of providing technical assistance in the form of expert advice, fellowships, scholarships, demonstration projects, technical publications and seminars in various economic and social fields as requested by Member States. This was followed up by an ECOSOC resolution that recommended the preparation of a study concerning “*the development of international facilities for the promotion of the science of public administration*, so as to provide adequate training for an increasing number of candidates of proven ability on the widest possible geographical basis, but mainly from countries in greater need of access to the principles, practices and methods of modern administration”.<sup>4</sup>

However, it is General Assembly resolution 246 (III) of 4 December 1948 that is considered the first broad legislative authority for “*technical assistance in*

*Public Administration*” as a specific field of United Nations activity.<sup>5</sup> Training was foreseen as a major need, and one activity identified early on was the establishment of “*an International Centre for Training in Public Administration*”<sup>6</sup> under the direction of the United Nations, designed to develop and spread knowledge of the art and science of public administration. After considerable discussion about the feasibility and desirability of a global training centre, it was decided to build activities to strengthen public administration into all development programmes and to encourage decentralized institution-building for training in improving public administration.

As public administration training activities developed as part of various economic and social programmes undertaken by the United Nations from 1947, ECOSOC felt the need for coordinating these activities and recommended to the Secretary-General in early 1949 the approval of a new Programme on Public Administration for the 1950s that should “coordinate” the various public administration training programmes authorized by the earlier General Assembly resolutions. This recommendation was acted upon by the General Assembly in late 1949 by its approving an Expanded Programme of Technical Assistance, which was launched in the middle of 1950. It included all public administration activities that were originally authorized by the General Assembly in its December 1948 resolution.<sup>7</sup>

## **Establishment of a Programme on Public Administration: 1953-1966**

Public administration activities in that period included training, expert advisory services, fellowships, seminars and publications. The management of these activities was reflected in the establishment of a separate administrative division of the Secretariat, and in the formation of periodic special committees to review the activities. Finally, the General Assembly, in 1953, approved the Revised Programme on Public Administration, which, for more than a decade, became the new legislative and programmatic basis for United Nations technical assistance projects in public administration. The resolution “formally recognized the status of public administration as a separate field in which technical assistance was to be provided”, and directly linked this type of technical assistance to “the purpose of promoting economical and social development”.<sup>8</sup> During this period, three activities were carried out. First, direct technical assistance was provided to countries that requested technical cooperation projects. Second, several regional and national public administration centres were established. Third, a variety of seminars and workshops were organized and many technical publications were published for the benefit of all Member States. Activities established during this period continue today, albeit transformed as necessary.

## **Substantive components of the Programme on Public Administration**

The main substantive components of the Programme remained unchanged, and public financial management was added in 1974. However, the emphasis on specific administrative topics shifted with subsequent legislative mandates. Broadly speaking, these topics included: governmental organization and administrative reforms, personnel administration and training, decentralization and local government, and supervision and management of information systems. As previously noted, since 1974 the topics of government budgeting, taxation and public financial management were also included in the Programme, when it was renamed the United Nations Programme on Public Administration and Finance.

### ***Review of the Programme by the Group of Experts and the Committee of Experts***

Before 1967, United Nations public administration activities were reviewed either on an ad hoc basis or as a part of reviewing overall United Nations technical cooperation activities. For example, a Special Committee was formed in 1950 by the Director-General of Technical Assistance Administration to study the role that the science of administration and administrative principles and practices could play in assisting United Nations agencies to help developing countries and specifically “to prepare a document which can serve as a guide for surveying the status of the public administration of an underdeveloped country; for identifying the steps that can be taken by a newly organized country in establishing its administration; and for determining the measures which might be considered by an older and more established country in endeavouring to improve its administrative system.”<sup>9</sup> The Committee produced its report in 1951, published under the title *Standards and Techniques of Public Administration*, which served as the main guide for the next 10 years for the Programme and its experts as well as academicians and practitioners all over the world.

In 1967, the Programme was formally assigned the status of a United Nations regular programme of research and analytical work, such as programmes on development planning, population and statistics, thereby requiring regular and formal review of its activities. Thus, a Group of Experts was established to review the Programme formally every two years and to submit recommendations to ECOSOC. Except for some broad guidelines, the selection of members for the Group was left open in the expectation that the broadest possible representation would be sought from leading administrative systems of the world as well as from diverse types of government agencies. The Expert Group was a subsidiary body of ECOSOC and the Group’s recommendations were submitted to ECOSOC. In 2002, this Group was replaced by the Committee of Experts on

Public Administration (CEPA). ECOSOC passed a resolution in January 2002 to transform the “Group of Experts of the United Nations Programme on Public Administration and Finance” to the “Committee of Experts on Public Administration”, which would continue to be a subsidiary body of ECOSOC without any change to its mandate. This resolution also mandated that the biennial meetings would be replaced with annual meetings.

## **The United Nations General Assembly session of 1996**

In 1995, the members of the African Group submitted a proposal to the United Nations to hold a world conference devoted to the theme of “public administration and development” to highlight the importance of public administration in the implementation of the commitments made by Member States at the various world conferences and summits held in the preceding years, such as the 1992 Earth Summit of Rio de Janeiro, and the Beijing Conference on Women and the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development, both held in 1995. In response to that proposal, the fiftieth session of the General Assembly met in a resumed session in 1996 to bring to the fore the importance of public administration in development. The session, opened by the then Secretary-General of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, was attended by a large number of high-level officials, including prime ministers and ministers of public administration. The landmark resolution 50/225 of 19 April 1996 of the resumed fiftieth session provided a stronger conceptual and operational basis for the United Nations Programme on Public Administration.

In strong contradiction to the prevailing theories of the new public management, the Assembly emphasized the important role of the public sector in the development process and underscored that public administration systems should be well equipped with the appropriate capacities and capabilities. Therefore, it invited Governments to “strengthen their public administrative and financial management capacities through public-sector administrative and management reform, with emphasis on enhanced efficiency and productivity, accountability and responsiveness of the public institutions, and encourage[d], where appropriate, decentralization of public institutions and services”.<sup>10</sup>

It was a message that openly contradicted the wisdom of the structural adjustment programmes in vogue with lending institutions. This message, as proven by subsequent developments, set in motion a process of rethinking the structural adjustment policies on the part of some financial institutions, particularly the World Bank. In fact, in the following year, 1997, the World Bank devoted its annual World Development Report to the topic “The State in a changing world”, in which it echoed a number of the messages sent by the General Assembly.<sup>11</sup>

## Other programmatic mandates: 1999-2002

The Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM) was entrusted by the United Nations General Assembly in late 1999 to bring public administration into cyberspace by developing the **United Nations Public Administration Network (UNPAN)**.



*Dr. Asha-Rose Migiro, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, speaking at the opening ceremony of the United Nations Public Service Awards, 23 June 2008, New York.*

The General Assembly resolved in December 2002 to designate 23 June as **United Nations**

**Public Service Day** to celebrate the value of public service to the communities and in recognition of the importance of a competent, knowledgeable and experienced public service in implementing national development strategies and attaining the Millennium Development Goals.

In 2002, ECOSOC expanded the role of the United Nations Programme on Public Administration to include the establishment of the **United Nations Public Service Awards** “to recognize and encourage excellence in public administration” and “reward innovation, motivate future initiative and selfless public service, and promote dissemination and replication of public administration knowledge and good practices”. It also decided that the United Nations Public Service Awards were to be bestowed annually on Public Service Day “for contributions made to the cause of enhancing the role, prestige and visibility of public service”. The awards were to be given in three categories: (a) improving transparency, accountability and responsiveness in the public service; (b) improving the delivery of services; and (c) application of information and communications technologies (ICT) in government and e-government.



*Mr. Guido Bertucci, Director of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management, addressing the International Conference on E-Government for Development at Palermo, Italy, 2002.*

## **Integration of mandates for public administration with other United Nations mandates**

The United Nations requires its diverse departments and divisions to manage their programmes in the light of the overall goals of security and socio-economic development. For example, the legislative mandates for public administration required the Programme to align its activities with the themes of all United Nations “development decades” as expressed in the Programme for International Economic Cooperation of 1960 and the International Development Strategy in 1970, 1980 and 1990 and in the United Nations Millennium Declaration in 2000. The Group of Experts and, more recently, the Committee of Experts on Public Administration suggested ways of integrating these themes into the Programme’s work and subsequently reviewed the results and submitted their recommendations to ECOSOC and the General Assembly.

By examining the legislative mandates of the United Nations concerning public administration, it is possible to discern the concern of Member States about the central role of a capable, effective and intelligent State in galvanizing the efforts and resources of all sectors, including civil society and the private sector, for sustainable development.



## Section III. Analysis and expert advice on public administration

The Group of Experts (after 2002 called the Committee of Experts on Public Administration), which is a subsidiary body of ECOSOC, performs the following functions: (a) reviews the issues, challenges and trends under the subject area globally, with special attention to developing countries; (b) identifies and recommends critical areas for priority action by Member States or its various groups to deal with these challenges; (c) suggests both broadly and specifically what activities the Programme can undertake to assist the Member States, especially the less developed ones; (d) makes recommendations and suggested resolutions for ECOSOC; (e) reviews the activities of the Programme to assess how the earlier decisions and resolutions have been implemented; and (f) recommends revisions and changes in future Programme activities, including their focus and priorities.

### Organization of the meetings of experts

From 1967 to 2000, 15 meetings of the Group of Experts took place about every two years, alternating locations between the United Nations Headquarters in New York and the Palais des Nations in Geneva, and synchronizing with the time frame of the United Nations biennial budgetary process.<sup>12</sup> These meetings lasted initially for two weeks. However, because of time constraints of the experts as well as budgetary considerations, the duration became limited to six to seven working days. The experts were invited in the name of the Secretary-General and acted in their individual expert capacity. The first meeting had 15 experts, but in subsequent meetings the numbers were raised to 20 and above to ensure representation from leading political and administrative systems as well as from countries in different stages of development. Most experts were senior government officials from both central, system-wide ministries (such as personnel, finance and administrative reform) and individual, operational ministries (education, health etc.) with the occasional inclusion of well-known academicians. Attention was given to select experienced experts in line with the agenda of a meeting, focusing on specific areas of activity and/or regions.

The staff of the Secretariat administrative unit dealing with public administration managed all aspects of the meetings, including selecting experts, preparing documents, organizing the agenda, presenting the final reports to ECOSOC

and implementing ECOSOC resolutions. They used several practical considerations in choosing the countries from which experts would be invited and selecting specific individuals. Typically, one third of the experts had previous meeting experience in order to provide some continuity. New members were chosen on the basis of the relevance of their current work experience to some agenda items, the record of their past experience and publications, and recommendations from relevant countries.

As the Programme was tasked with coordinating public administration activities within the United Nations system, representatives of specialized agencies, other organizations of the United Nations system, and regional and interregional public administration and finance organizations attended the meetings. These representatives met one or two days before the main meeting and presented reports on their agencies' activities. They then prepared a report together at an informal inter-agency meeting, later presented to the full meeting.

### ***Documents for the meeting and its actual operation***

Usually, the Secretariat staff prepared the background papers, covering the topics of each agenda item for discussion by the experts. However, in special cases, additional papers were drawn from specialized consultants or reports from previous seminars and workshops. There were occasions when individual experts also brought papers reflecting their experiences in dealing with specific agenda items. Usually, they were on specific administrative reforms and especially on innovative techniques and themes. The documents also included the report from the informal inter-agency working group comprising representatives of the regional commissions, specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system. The report included recommendations for strengthening mutual collaboration.

The meeting elected its own officers, who were supported in their deliberations by the Secretariat staff, who provided technical support and also worked as resource persons as required. These officers usually included one Chairperson, several Vice-Chairpersons, depending on the need to reflect regional and individual interests, and one Rapporteur. Together, the office holders worked as the bureau for the meeting. Occasionally, the bureau also created ad hoc subcommittees for specific issues. The Rapporteur usually prepared the draft of the meeting report, including the reports of any ad hoc subcommittees, with the support of the Secretariat staff. The draft report was circulated among all participants and reviewed, line by line, before its recommendations were adopted at the final session of the meeting.



## ***Presentation of the report***

Usually, the Director of the Division presented the report of the Group of Experts to ECOSOC for its consideration and subsequent adoption of a resolution. There were occasions when the Chairperson of the Group of Experts joined the Director in presenting the report of a meeting. Once approved, the resolution and the accompanying report become the legislative basis of the future work under the Programme.

It may be noted that these reports and the supporting documents are substantive in their approach and contents. They are published and distributed widely. More recently, reports of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration are uploaded on the UNPAN website. Each report represents a time-specific snapshot of the status of public administration from the perspective of United Nations Member States and provides guidance about how various Member States, especially the less developed ones, can improve their systems of governance and public administration in their social and economic development.

## ***A case study of a meeting of the Group of Experts***

The seventh meeting of the Group of Experts on the United Nations Programme on Public Administration and Finance was convened at the United Nations Office in Geneva from 17 to 27 October 1984. The meeting had the following terms of reference:

- (a) To review and discuss challenges and constraints in public administration in developing countries in the 1980s;
- (b) To analyse the specific needs of developing countries, particularly the least developed, especially in the field of training and institution-building;
- (c) To review the support of and assistance from the United Nations system for technical cooperation among developing countries in the development of public administration and finance;
- (d) To review the United Nations work programme on public administration and finance;
- (e) To recommend new modalities of technical cooperation that would increase the effectiveness of United Nations activities in the field of public administration and finance.

The meeting was attended by 24 experts from as many countries. The representatives of several United Nations bodies and specialized agencies and other non-governmental organizations attended the meeting as observers. A selected group of administrative and technical staff provided the secretariat services for the meeting.

The meeting had before it two documents prepared by the Secretariat: “Development administration: scenarios and search for effectiveness” (ST/SG/AC.7/1984/L.2) and “United Nations Programme on Public Administration and Finance” (ST/SG/AC.7/1984/L.3). The meeting also decided to adopt, as part of its report, two other sets of recommendations: (a) a statement entitled “Public administration in developing countries: priorities and recommendations” and (b) “Sub-Saharan Africa: action programme in public administration”.

## **Analysis and recommendations by the meetings of experts: 1967-2000**

In total, 15 meetings of the Group of Experts were held from its inception in 1967 to 2002, when the Group of Experts was replaced by the Committee of Experts. One common focus of all the meetings was to review the role that the Programme on Public Administration played in contributing to the goals of the United Nations development decades. The following paragraphs highlight the specific contribution of the meetings of the Group of Experts to each of the decades.

### ***First United Nations Development Decade: 1961-1970***

At its first meeting, the Group of Experts noted the significance of public administration, its scope and contents and identified some priority areas that required special attention under the Programme. The Group acknowledged that effective administration was the crucial element in the formulation and implementation of development plans and programmes to advance economic and social conditions, particularly in developing and newly independent countries. It also noted that deficiencies in organization and management at all levels of government created major obstacles to progress in fulfilling national aspirations and goals. It emphasized that public administration was an essential vehicle for formulating and implementing national policies and plans. Unless public administration was greatly modernized, progress would be even slower in reaching national goals.<sup>13</sup>

The Group recommended that public administration should be understood as the totality of the administrative processes of government, since it covered

areas that were not sometimes associated with “general administration”, such as judicial administration, and administrative services within the legislative branch. The experts also noted that development involves not just economic and social change, but the transformation of whole societies. As such, public administration should be viewed as an essential instrument for managing and implementing this process of transformation.

The Group further noted that the two major inputs in administrative processes— personnel administration and financial administration—required the special attention of the United Nations. Furthermore, the Group emphasized that decentralization and local government were crucial to the success of development programmes, because measures to improve administration at the local level would increase the participation of the people in development activities and would thereby accelerate economic and social progress.

### ***Second United Nations Development Decade: 1971-1980***

Four meetings of the Group of Experts were organized during the Second Development Decade, in 1971, 1975, 1977 and 1980, hereafter referred to as “the meetings”. The highlights of these meetings included elaboration of technical assistance activities under the Programme, broadening the substantive scope of the Programme by including public finance components, aligning the activities of the Programme to achieve the goals of the new international economic order, and organizing the review of Programme activities under new formats: changes and trends in public administration and finance and the role of the public sector in the economic development of developing countries. A midterm review of the contributions made by Programme activities towards achieving the goals of the International Development Strategy was undertaken as well, launching the preparatory activities for the next development decade.

The second meeting identified seven major areas under which the Programme would continue to provide technical cooperation projects for developing countries. They were: (a) major administrative reform; (b) administrative aspects of planning and plan implementation; (c) personnel administration; (d) training; (e) organization and methods; (f) supervision and management of public enterprises; and (g) decentralization and local government.

In assessing the achievements and shortcomings during the previous decade (1960-1970), the meeting noted with regret that the role of public administration in development was still not well appreciated. Recalling the shortfalls in the implementation of development plans in the 1960s, the meeting agreed that far greater effort would be needed in the 1970s to increase the adminis-

trative capability of national and international institutions if the next decade was to become a decade of achievement. Accordingly, it expressed the hope that ECOSOC and the General Assembly would emphasize the strategic role of public administration in accelerating the pace of economic and social development.

The third meeting reviewed the activities of the United Nations Programme on Public Administration during the previous four years (1971-1974) and their contribution to the midterm review of the progress made in implementing the relevant provisions of the International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade. In this context, it was noted that three major developments had occurred during this period: (a) the reorganization of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to establish the new Division of Public Administration and Finance; (b) the Declaration on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order; and (c) the adoption of the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States.

In 1973 and 1974, the administrative unit implementing the United Nations Programme on Public Administration was reorganized in line with the recommendation of the second meeting of experts in 1971. As a result of this reorganization, three components of public finance were grouped together under the Division of Public Administration and Finance: (a) government budgeting and financial management; (b) tax administration; and (c) development of financial institutions, which hitherto had been the responsibility of the Public Finance and Financial Institutions Division. Accordingly, the substantive scope of the third meeting of experts was extended to cover the entire work programme of the reconstituted Division.

As a result, the Programme on Public Administration was divided into five major substantive components: (a) personnel administration and training; (b) organization and management services; (c) development programme management; (d) government budget and financial management; and (e) development of financial institutions.

The meeting also identified critical areas for improvement with detailed suggestions on topics including: personnel administration; public administration training and management development; manpower planning for the public service; management techniques; administration of major development sectors, programmes and projects; public finance; government budgeting; tax administration; financial institutions; public enterprises; and research in public administration and finance.

The fourth meeting reviewed progress in public administration and finance in developing countries and recommended additional measures appropriate for public administration and finance techniques aligned with the development of a new international economic order. It also reviewed the feasibility of the development of pertinent objectives in public administration and finance for the 1980s; and, in the light of the foregoing, reviewed the integrated United Nations Programme on Public Administration and Finance. It also reviewed the progress of the Programme between 1974 and 1977 and the proposed work programme for the biennium 1978-1979.

The fifth meeting identified the changes and trends in public administration and finance for development, especially as part of preparations for a new international development strategy for the 1980s; reviewed the role of the public sector in the economic development of developing countries; recommended substantive priorities for the 1980s in order to assist Secretariat officials in the formulation of future medium-term plans and programmes; and, finally, reviewed the modalities of implementation of the Programme in the light of the changing circumstances. In doing the above, the meeting discussed the Secretary-General's report on public administration and finance for development: an action agenda for the 1980s, and the publication *Strengthening Public Administration and Finance for Development in the 1980s: Issues and Approaches*, which incorporated the report of the Secretary-General on the role of the public sector in promoting the economic development of developing countries.

### ***Third United Nations Development Decade: 1981-1990***

Four meetings of the Group of Experts were held during this decade, in 1982, 1984, 1987 and 1989. The dominant issue that confronted the developing countries was the "fiscal crisis". The challenge was how to assist Governments that were trying to reduce an overblown public sector without sacrificing basic services and hurting the most vulnerable groups in the societies. Other associated issues reviewed during this decade included critical and explicit evaluation of past Programme results; clarification of the role of the meetings in studying administration at the country, regional and international levels; assigning a greater priority to the performance and productivity of current public administration units than to the creation of new structures and expansion of public administration systems; and cutbacks and privatization. The meetings also noted that improving administrative measures required adopting policy changes.

In the sixth meeting, the experts were more critical and explicit in the evaluation of past results of the Programme on Public Administration and Finance in the previous two decades. For the first time, there was open recognition that

some of the objectives, goals and recommendations included in the General Assembly resolutions of 1974 on the new international economic order and the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States could not be fulfilled in exactly the same manner in all developing countries.

The meeting's report also included a dispassionate and objective enumeration and description of the various "difficulties", "failures", "deficiencies", "delays", "cost overruns", "deviations" and "conflicts and tensions" faced or generated while trying to implement some of the recommended projects and activities of the Programme on Public Administration and Finance in many developing and least developed countries.

While casting serious doubts about the ability of international agencies, including the Programme, to bring about desired changes, the meeting emphasized that significant efforts should be expected from the developing countries themselves, vis-à-vis the international community and the United Nations. The latter was expected to play a supporting and secondary role, functioning more as a "clearing house", by collecting and disseminating information of a comparative nature about the different public administration and finance reform efforts and their successes and failures, leading to a compilation of success stories.

The meeting showcased specific issues that were becoming relevant for social and economic development. Since most developing countries had established special commissions or departments of administrative reform, the meeting discussed country experiences in undertaking major administrative reform strategies and problems. The experts also showed continued interest in discussing management development and service delivery issues as well as the management of major development programmes. For the first time, the Group discussed regulatory administration in detail, highlighting the importance of combating corruption. The Group further noted the importance of studying the efficiency and performance of public enterprises.

The seventh meeting undertook a midterm review and noted the emergence of a dilemma in the role of public administration in development. It acknowledged that public administration systems in developing countries, which had expanded concomitantly with the pace of economic and social development, were facing a number of difficulties, emanating from both external and internal causes. In the face of these difficulties, most developing countries might have to review their present policies and strategies critically, and develop rational approaches and actions to deal with these constraints. The meeting noted the importance of moving ahead rationally and with objective data, rather than reacting to

crises in a knee-jerk manner and suffering the negative consequences of hasty actions. The meeting recommended that priority be given to the improvement of performance and productivity of existing institutions, instead of to the creation of new ones and further expansion of systems.

To illustrate such expansion and the onset of fiscal crisis, the meeting noted that several developing countries had gone too far in the creation of new parastatal institutions. This proliferation of parastatals was leading to duplication and the creation of overlapping institutions, often in the same economic and social sector. The concomitant overstaffing and elevated current expenditures exacerbated the fiscal crisis by further increasing the internal fiscal deficits and the external debt of most of the developing and least developed countries.

The growing fiscal crisis and the conflicting pressures under which many developing countries were muddling through began to raise questions concerning the role and efficiency of public administration in dealing with the emerging crisis. At the same time, several Western developed democracies (for example, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, New Zealand, Canada and the United States of America) undertook drastic civil service reforms with a focus on results and value for money that included significant cutbacks, privatization, deregulation, de-bureaucratization and decentralization. Against this background, the eighth meeting of experts dealt with the issues facing the developing countries and made four recommendations for the United Nations Programme. It pleaded for new and innovative policy options to be explored and for public administration to be flexible enough to accommodate and work with the private sector and civil society institutions.

First, the Group of Experts and the Secretariat accepted the fact that, no matter how just and desirable it might appear to the majority of United Nations Member States, no single model or set of recommendations was applicable in the same manner or sequence to all developing or least developed countries.

Second, the Group reaffirmed that the meeting should focus primarily on measures to be adopted at the national level, and only secondarily on proposals for supportive measures at the international level.

Third, the Group noted that many countries were experiencing a decrease in the availability of funds for public expenditures, thereby raising the ratio of current public consumption to investment and generating demands for cutbacks and economies in such expenditures. This development had given the international

financial institutions grounds to advocate cutbacks in public consumption, retrenchment in public services and a greater role for the private sector.

Fourth, as a result of the problems described in the above paragraph, there was a debate about the proper role of public administration in relation to other institutions of society—the private sector and civil society, among them. This debate, in turn, provoked many countries to raise questions about the role and efficacy of public administration as an instrument of development. As doubts about the performance of government institutions increased, demands increased for the privatization of selected activities hitherto performed by public organizations, particularly in mixed-economy countries. The meeting recognized that public administration needed to be oriented towards working cooperatively with various societal groups and to focus more on public management rather than being preoccupied with following only traditional approaches and methods.

By the time the ninth meeting was convened in early 1989, it had become abundantly clear to the experts that the most critical issues to be addressed should be how to resolve the economic problems related to the fiscal crisis that had been affecting most of the developing countries in the previous few years. The substantial growth of expenditures, followed by increasing gaps in the availability of resources, contributed to higher fiscal deficits and to rising debts, internal and external, resulting in a fiscal crisis in many countries.

The experts recognized that many countries faced “severe economic and social hardships and serious impediments to growth and development”. The situation was so serious in some cases that the priority issue was no longer how to advance but rather how to prevent future decline. In many situations, Governments had lost the policy initiative and could only react to demands and pressures from society and from external institutions. Most countries reacted with austerity measures in their attempt to improve economy, efficiency and productivity in government. This crisis was especially urgent for public enterprises that were considered important contributors to budget deficits and crippling external debt obligations.

A trend in many cases pointed towards reducing the scope and depth of the State’s direct intervention in the economy and reaffirming the role of private entrepreneurship. Governments of different political views adopted policies to transfer public enterprises to the private sector, and many more were considering orderly divestiture and privatization. In any case, there was a growing interest in the use of policy instruments as opposed to administrative controls, and policy options that often included privatization.



## ***Fourth United Nations Development Decade: 1991-2000***

Six meetings were held during the decade, in 1991, 1993, 1995, 1997, 1998 and 2000. The highlights of review and advice offered by the experts included a reorientation of public administration to incorporate public management and governance principles, acceptance of such new realities as globalization, needs for transparency and accountability, the urgency of observing the rule of law and honouring human rights, and exploring new ways of defining the role of public administration and appropriate ways of carrying out its functions. The experts recognized that changed circumstances called for redesigning the State to face the new challenges and exploring ways in which States could develop and enhance the capacities of their various agents, including public administration, in carrying out their roles and functions effectively. These issues were further recognized during the fiftieth resumed session of the United Nations General Assembly that was held in 1996 to discuss public administration and development. The issues and challenges confronting States and their public administrations in the last decade of the twentieth century were similar to those that were noted in the decades of 1950s and 1960s. For better or worse, the context had changed dramatically, both globally and internally within each State. Furthermore, because of austerity measures and structural adjustment policies, public administration was no longer the exclusive agent of the State. The issues and the recommendations made by the expert group meetings are very briefly noted below.

The tenth meeting recognized that the 1990s presented extraordinary and difficult challenges to public administration and finance systems throughout the world. The meeting emphasized that public management innovations could play a vital role in national development. Countries experiencing radical transformation were seeking new roles and functions for government in order to attain new social and economic levels, in spite of current proposals to reduce the role of government in order to decrease the proportion of national resources consumed by the public service. The meeting noted that the new roles required modern management approaches and techniques and new skills for public administration and finance to undertake improvement programmes.

The eleventh meeting of experts accepted the new concept of “governance” as one way of reviewing the issues and challenges facing public administration. Most of their recommendations centred on the potential benefits of “good governance in two practical ways”. The first concerned the delivery of high-quality services to the public and the devolution of such activities to the private sector, either through “outsourcing” or “performance contracts” or by privatizing the public enterprises. This included “value for money in achieving the effective

implementation of policies”, implicitly suggesting that the State or government’s new role should be that of establishing public policies and devolving the operative responsibilities to “civil society”—the “steering rather than rowing” principle of the new public management paradigm.

The second “practical way” of understanding “good governance” had to do with the fair and equitable treatment of all citizens under the law. Safeguards for individual freedom and openness in the conduct of government business were important means to guarantee a more effective participation in public affairs. The meeting further stated that the important hallmarks of “good governance” were: (a) a willingness to let individuals and communities develop and realize their full potential; (b) the encouragement of public participation in government affairs; (c) openness in reviewing and reporting government achievement at the local and national levels; and (d) the development of a stable economy.



*From left to right: Mr. Nitin Desai, former Under-Secretary-General of UNDESA; Mr. Bengt Säve-Söderberg, President of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA); Mr. Richard Soudriette, President of the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES); and Mr. Harry Neufeld, Administration and Cost of Elections (ACE) Project Coordinator, during the launching ceremony of the ACE website ([www.aceproject.org](http://www.aceproject.org)) developed by the Division for Public Administration and Development Management of UNDESA, IDEA and IFES, 22 October 1998, United Nations Headquarters, New York.*

Other “governance”-related issues discussed at the eleventh meeting of the Group of Experts included accountability, performance, and information technology for public management. While discussing financial decentralization and revenue mobilization issues, such as devolution and its financial challenges, the meeting recognized that the existence of important differences in the stages of development, not only among developing countries, but also within its regions and localities, was a crucial factor to be taken into account. The meeting also noted that one of the most serious economic problems faced by many Governments in developing countries was how to make their public sector enterprises efficient and cost-competitive in global markets and how to develop the nascent private sector so that it could assimilate public sector enterprises after privatization.

The twelfth meeting was held to provide inputs, through ECOSOC, to the consolidated report of the Secretary-General on public administration and development, to be discussed by the General Assembly at its resumed session of April 1996. The Group of Experts recommended that national and regional representatives examine the role and capacity of public administration prior to the beginning of the resumed session of the General Assembly. To ensure follow-up of the resolution expected at the General Assembly session, the meeting recommended that the Group of Experts on Public Administration and Finance, a subsidiary body of ECOSOC serving in an ad hoc advisory capacity, be converted into the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration. This conversion to a full-fledged subsidiary of ECOSOC would provide a more stable platform for follow-up and implementation of the recommendations of the resumed session of the General Assembly on public administration and development.

In the context of the resumed session of the General Assembly on public administration and development in 1996 and its resolution 50/225 of 19 April 1996, the thirteenth meeting was held in 1997 with the focus on redesigning the State for socio-economic development and change. Within the theme, five specific issues were identified as particularly relevant: promoting an enabling environment for sound governance; enhancing the professionalism and ethical values and image of the public service; rethinking the State for socio-economic development; creating an enabling environment for private sector development; and strengthening governmental capacity in the mobilization, management and accountability of financial resources.

The reconfiguration of the administrative State emerged from the discussion as an overarching concern and global need. The meeting shared the view that,

far from representing two adversarial forces, strong markets and strong States were truly complementary and necessary conditions for economic prosperity and social justice. A major trend throughout the world was that Governments and people were redefining the roles of the State and the public sector and changing the nature of governance. A parallel trend was that globalization was gathering momentum and rapidly changing the ways in which national economies operated. Another trend was the progress of science and technology, which constantly transformed the methods of production, service delivery, transportation, communications and information management. Yet another salient trend noted by the meeting was the emergence of a vibrant civil society as a dynamic partner in the conduct of public affairs and economic activity, nationally and internationally.

De-bureaucratization, decentralization and devolution of power to lower-level actors and to civil society had gained new prominence on the agendas of administrative reform. Experience showed, however, that wide diffusion of power was not without its problems. While promoting efficiency and popular participation, it had sometimes led to unregulated corruption at local levels, tendencies to be biased towards clients and the increased power of local elites. Furthermore, deregulation of the private sector led to instances of fraud, waste, abuse and corruption. To yield beneficial results, decentralization and deregulation needed to be combined with measures that promoted transparency and accountability in order to support honesty, integrity and professionalism in the management of all sectors. Only then could administration and management be expected to foster the realization of social, people-centred and people-driven development.

The experts felt that only a strong, proactive State could promote social justice, ensure universal access to high-quality services, and safeguard the rule of law and respect for human rights. A strong State was required to lobby for the poor and for the future, neither of which had a voice. The need to redesign a stronger and more strategic State did not need to result in “big government”. A strong State was fully compatible with mechanisms that encouraged cost-consciousness, fiscal responsibility and sound financial management. What it required, however, was a properly organized and duly equipped public administration system, encompassing structures and policies, which could attract, retain, develop and motivate high-calibre personnel. Professionalism, merit and an enforceable code of ethics were the essential ingredients of a much-needed strategy to restore and enhance the image of the public service. In turn, such a strategy called for capacity-building activities—a judicious combination of institution-building and human resources development.

The meeting recommended that, as a core component of the economic and social sector of the United Nations, the Programme on Public Administration should focus on promoting and monitoring the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/225 of 19 April 1996, advancing global strategies and country-specific approaches that contributed to sound governance, strengthening institutional capacity and management development, and enhancing ethical standards and professionalism in the public service. To those ends, the Programme should not only provide advisory services and technical support to Governments but also serve as a hub and forum for a global exchange of information on policies, best practices and methods among Governments and intergovernmental and non-governmental institutions and also provide advisory services to interested Governments.

Some members and the Secretariat staff realized that the issues of public policy development and implementation, as called for by the landmark General Assembly resolution 50/225, had not been fully discussed in the previous meeting. Hence, within one year, the fourteenth meeting of experts was convened in 1998. This meeting explored current issues of governance, public administration and finance, and reviewed the work programme in those areas in the light of the resolution. The meeting called for an effective response to the challenges faced by the governance and administrative systems of all countries and for a focus on efforts to develop their capacity to implement commitments made at major global conferences organized by the United Nations during the current decade. Specifically, in relation to the developing countries or countries with economies in transition, the meeting recommended that the Programme focus attention on four broad areas of need:

- (a) **Management of change.** The State must be in the forefront of implementing change and smoothing the path for progress. This entailed proactive measures to develop enabling policy frameworks, promote the use of new technologies, set up performance measurement and evaluation systems, overhaul administrative structures and design adequate patterns for the collection of internationally comparable, reliable and accurate data for policymaking processes.
- (b) **Institution-building and administrative reform.** In the light of current trends, bureaucratic structures were no longer working effectively. De-bureaucratization and decentralization must go in tandem with new approaches to management, emphasizing not only openness, adaptability, participation, flexibility, diversity and responsiveness but also the taking of measures that rein in fraud, waste, abuse and

corruption. Many new tasks of governance required public authorities to act as mediators, advocates or promoters, actively seeking partnerships with business and non-governmental organizations, or otherwise endeavouring to engage civil society in the pursuit of developmental objectives.

- (c) **Human resources development.** To staff institutions effectively required constant upgrading of skills, developing leadership qualities, facilitating change in skill profiles and fostering career structures that emphasized mobility, the importance of integrity and professionalism, and the overriding claims of merit in the recruitment, placement and promotion of public servants.



*Participants of the Working Group on the African Public Sector Human Resources Management Network, during a meeting in Kampala, Uganda, 7-11 April 2008.*

- (d) **Information.** The timely availability of reliable, accurate and relevant data had become a sine qua non not only for sound policymaking but also for the measurement, monitoring and evaluation of public sector performance. The United Nations Programme on Public Administration was expected to play a vital role in mobilizing and disseminating



information of vital importance to government, notably through the projected information clearing house.

The fifteenth meeting of the Group of Experts on Public Administration and Finance was held in 2000. Given the unique position of the United Nations in addressing the issue of globalization, the Group of Experts deliberated on the effects of globalization on the role and functioning of the State and its responses—institutional and managerial—to attain maximum benefits and minimal negative consequences. In further consideration of the marginalization effects of globalization, the Group of Experts also addressed the process that affects national and global economic governance systems. The meeting also made the following key recommendations with respect to the United Nations Programme on Public Administration:

- (a) The proclamation of a **United Nations Public Service Day** to celebrate the value of service to the community at the local, national and global levels, with prizes to be awarded by the Secretary-General for contributions made to the cause of enhancing the role, prestige and visibility of public service;



*Former Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs Nitin Desai, presenting the 2003 United Nations Public Service Award to the winner. Next to him is Mr. Guido Bertucci, Director of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management.*

- (b) The preparation of a recurrent **publication on the state of the public sector**, which would contain basic data on the public sector, country public administration profiles and analysis of emerging issues relating to the public sector, as well as appropriate analysis of changes and trends;
- (c) The drafting of the plan of action for the development of a project on the **United Nations Public Administration Network (UNPAN)** of regional

institutions for capacity-building in public administration as a mechanism for cooperation, utilizing information technology in this field, and, in order to deepen the impact of the project, the strengthening of the capacity of national ministries and national schools and institutes of public administration in developing countries and countries in transition to access data, information and training.

## **The Committee of Experts and the Millennium Declaration: 2001-2015**

In 2002, following an earlier recommendation of the Group itself, ECOSOC restructured and revitalized the former Group of Experts on the United Nations Programme on Public Administration and Finance by renaming it the Committee of Experts on Public Administration. Unlike the Group of Experts, which provided advice to the Secretary-General and had a weak relationship to ECOSOC, the Committee was designed to provide formal advice to ECOSOC. The number of experts was increased to 24, who would now “be nominated by the Secretary-General, in consultation with member States, and approved by the Economic and Social Council”. The new Committee of Experts on Public Administration was to maintain the same status of the former Group of Experts as a “subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council, without change in its [original] mandate”.<sup>14</sup> The Committee would meet annually and its members would serve for four years.



*The seventh session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration celebrates the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations Programme on Public Administration, 16 April 2008, United Nations Headquarters, New York.*



The Committee met seven times from 2002 to 2008 and provided direction and detailed guidelines on dealing effectively with public administration issues related to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. These guidelines focused on enhancing the capacity of public administration, identifying specific areas needed for revitalization, including human resources, a partnership-building approach, support for innovations in governance and public administration, and participatory governance and citizens' engagement. The guidance provided under each of these areas is briefly reviewed hereinafter.

### ***Guidelines for the Programme on Public Administration***

The Committee of Experts at its first session made the following fundamental proposals and recommendations that would guide the Programme for the next four-year period:

- The United Nations Programme should focus on priority areas identified by the Committee regarding public administration issues related to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration;
- The United Nations Public Service Day should coincide with the African Public Service Day, that is, 23 June;
- A subcommittee should be established to review and refine a proposal prepared by the Secretariat on monitoring changes and trends in each national public sector in order to enhance the value of the World Public Sector Report;
- The role of UNPAN in providing advisory services and training should be enhanced and expanded to strengthen the capacity of national institutions of public administration;
- The analytical documents prepared under the Programme should be short, action-oriented and focused on the necessary conditions to ensure the successful implementation of good practices, and for that reason "a compendium of best practices should be prepared and disseminated to Member States";
- The Programme should provide substantive support to the Global Forum on Reinventing Government;
- The Programme should provide inputs concerning e-government to the forthcoming World Summit on the Information Society;
- ECOSOC should consider authorizing annual meetings of the Committee in order to follow the progress of Member States and the United

Nations in enhancing the capacity of public administration to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

### ***Enhancing the capacity of public administration***

The Committee at its second session discussed how to enhance the capacity of public administration to implement the United Nations Millennium Declaration, the collection of basic data on the public sector and United Nations activities in public administration. The Committee recognized that the need to revitalize and revalidate public administration to enable the State to better serve citizens is an overarching priority for all countries. It noted that recent major international conferences and summits on topics of global concern laid emphasis on the central role of governance systems and institutions in promoting economic and social development; increasing the access to services for the vast majority of the poor; enforcing human rights legislation; enhancing the participation of women in the development process; and protecting the quality of the environment. Given the importance of efficient public administration systems for the attainment of social development goals, it also recommended that ECOSOC establish linkages between the work of the Commission for Social Development and the work of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration.

The Committee recommended that ECOSOC bring the issue of governance and public administration to the forefront of the development agenda and suggested that the Council might wish to devote its next high-level segment to this topic. It further recommended that public administration issues become an integral part of the process of follow-up to conferences and suggested that the Committee itself could serve as a valuable source of advice to the intergovernmental machinery in that respect.

As mandated, the Committee reviewed and made recommendations on the United Nations Programme on Public Administration. In particular, the Committee recommended that the Secretariat continue to provide, upon request from Member States, technical advisory support in enhancing the quality of personnel in the public sector, strengthening governance and public administration systems and institutions, and fostering transparency and accountability, as well as reconstructing public administration in post-conflict countries. It also recommended that the Secretariat undertake additional work to analyse further and delineate the role of the State as enabler and user of knowledge and technology in order to support and encourage innovation throughout public administration and society as a whole.

The Committee noted the World Public Sector Report as being a valuable tool for policymakers and practitioners in Member States; recommended that the Secretariat should focus, in its next issue, on human resources development; and advised the Secretariat of the usefulness of having the publication translated into other languages. Finally, the Committee stressed the importance of capitalizing on the success of the United Nations Public Administration Network (UNPAN) by expanding its reach to the subregional level in order to strengthen the capacity of subregional institutions with regard to public administration.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Revitalizing public administration***

The Committee at its third session dealt with the following substantive items: (a) revitalizing public administration: (i) the role of human resources in revitalizing public administration; (ii) the role of the public sector in advancing the knowledge society; and (iii) strengthening public administration as a means of achieving the Millennium Development Goals through a partnership-building approach; (b) public sector institutional capacity for African renewal; (c) analysis of existing data on the public sector; and (d) review of the United Nations activities in the area of public administration.

The challenges of revitalizing public administration are complex and multi-dimensional, as technical issues are intertwined with the political dimension of defining the scope and role of the State. Revitalizing public administration entails bringing back the concept of the “public interest” and the practice of public participation in public administration processes. The purpose of revitalizing public administration must be linked to its overall purposes, namely, to support the goals of the State in promoting economic development, improving social conditions and overall well-being, and strengthening the rule of law. Improving services to citizens is crucial to revitalizing public administration. Yet, there is a large and increasing gap between public demands and what the public sector can do.

In dealing with the issue of human resources, the need for a holistic approach to reform, within a coherent context of policy, organization and leadership, should be stressed. The Committee noted the five building blocks needed to reform human resources management: (a) appropriate legal, policy and regulatory frameworks; (b) identifying common values, attitudes and professional standards; (c) developing a competency framework for core professional groups; (d) designing effective capacity development strategies; and (e) institutionalizing human resources planning.

Within the overarching agenda of revitalizing public administration, the Committee agreed that the issues related to the role of knowledge in a society and to public administration as a consumer and producer of knowledge were of great importance. The Committee stressed that a knowledge society must be productive, sustainable and socially coherent. In this context, the issue of human rights and freedom is important to ensure that the pervasiveness of the use of information and communications technologies in government should not lead to encroachment on the human right to privacy.

The Committee noted that the development of institutions of governance and public administration in Africa was critical in responding to the momentous challenges of achieving the Millennium Development Goals in general, and poverty eradication and sustainable development in Africa in particular. Without overcoming obstacles in governance and public administration, Africa would continue to lag behind in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

On the basis of its discussion, the Committee produced a set of recommendations for consideration by ECOSOC, Member States and the United Nations Secretariat.

### ***Strategic directions for the future***

The Committee of Experts at its fourth session in 2005 was primarily concerned with reviewing strategic directions of the Programme for the future and discussed the following issues: (a) emerging issues in revitalizing public administration; (b) searching for a bottom-up approach and methodologies for developing foundations and principles of sound public administration; (c) promoting and rewarding innovation and excellence for revitalizing public administration and service delivery: the introduction of United Nations Public Service Awards; and (d) review of the activities of the United Nations Programme on Public Administration.

The Committee accepted a conceptual framework set in the context of the Millennium Declaration, which identified three strategic directions for revitalizing public administration: (a) improving economic and social decision-making institutions and processes; (b) strengthening integrity, transparency and accountability; and (c) reconciling security requirements with demands for social service delivery.<sup>16</sup> In the case of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), it was clear that capacity deficits in institutions and institutional processes adversely affect all the other areas of development. Therefore, in order to achieve the MDGs, it was critical to work simultaneously on all fronts to ensure that a vir-

tuous circle developed. For example, strengthening institutions has a positive effect on integrity, transparency and accountability, which in turn improves policy options, service delivery and human security. The institutions and institutional processes that are called upon to support market-based development are also expected to provide equitable distribution of the benefits of growth to all citizens.



*Sitting in the front row, Mr. Alexei Tikhomirov (centre) and Ms. Almaz Atnafu Woldekidane (third from right), together with the participants of the Regional Seminar for Central European Countries on Leadership, Ethics, Accountability and Professionalism: Capacity-building for Public Officials, Turkmenistan, November 2007.*

For many developing countries, the existing public administration capacities seemed inadequate to mainstream poverty reduction within macroeconomic policy frameworks. In that regard, the challenge was to ensure that public administration structures were more pro-poor and MDGs-oriented. There was a need to look afresh at integrating the policy requirements of pro-poor policies with concerns regarding integrity, transparency and accountability. Accordingly, the development of poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) offered an opportunity to create space for an accountable and participatory process that would be aligned with the objectives of the MDGs. The PRSP process could promote a stable macro-environment, a robust role for the private sector in line with

developmental objectives, and dialogue with civil society to influence public policy directly.

The Committee observed that the best assurance for human security was the realization of the commitments contained in the Millennium Declaration, and specifically the MDGs. In that regard, the issues of human security, articulated through the MDGs, needed reaffirmation. Otherwise, there was a risk that security would be interpreted and implemented within too narrow a focus without an appreciation of the wider context of the development challenges that critically affect security concerns. Of particular importance in that context was the need to ensure coherence between various domestic sectoral policies, as well as coherence between domestic and international agendas. The Committee concluded that a clear interdependence among those emerging challenges must be recognized as critical in achieving the goals of the Millennium Declaration.

The Committee recognized the United Nations Public Service Awards, launched in 2003 and presented on United Nations Public Service Day, as an effective means for recognizing outstanding achievement of public service institutions. The Committee endorsed continuation of the Awards programme with further attention to refinement of the scope of the work and its selection process.

### ***Innovations in governance and public administration***

The Committee agreed that identifying good practice and effective innovation would be important to break with “business as usual” and engage in innovative ways of designing public policies, delivering public services and organizing the way they function and deploy their resources. Sharing knowledge on innovations and successful practices could provide Governments with a set of concrete and workable options on how to achieve internationally agreed goals.

The Committee pointed out that political and cultural conditions outside and within the public sector, as well as wide acceptance from stakeholders in specific policy areas, determined whether an innovation was successful. It noted that innovations in the public sector depended on three critical factors: the willingness to change and take risks; managerial capacity to lead change and take risks; and the resources needed for such change.

The Committee shared the view that a single universal model of participatory governance was unrealistic, considering cross-cultural differences, but noted the important linkage between good governance and citizen participation. While there was only anecdotal evidence that citizen participation

leads to better performance by government and greater citizen satisfaction, the Committee shared the general view that the strengthening of participatory institutions and opportunities and mechanisms would go a long way towards building citizen trust in government. The Committee identified areas in which citizen participation was considered critical, such as decentralization, public policy design, implementation and evaluation, public service delivery, budgeting, project monitoring and assessment, performance auditing and expenditure tracking.



*Sitting in the first row (centre), Ms. Haiyan Qian, Chief of the Knowledge Management Branch, with the participants of the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Forum on City Informatization in the Asia-Pacific Region, capacity-building workshop on back office management for e/m-government in the Asia and Pacific Region.*

The Committee agreed on the need for a common language to facilitate communication on public administration issues brought before the Council and other United Nations entities. The development of a lexicon of clarified public administration terms, especially those frequently used in United Nations documents, would be highly valuable in the effort to reduce misunderstandings.



## ***Participatory governance and citizens' engagement***

The Committee of Experts at its sixth session in 2007 dealt with the following substantive items: (a) participatory governance and citizens' engagement in policy development, service delivery and budgeting; (b) a compendium of basic United Nations terminology in governance and public administration; (c) review of the activities of the United Nations Programme on Public Administration; and (d) the public administration perspective on the theme of the annual ministerial review during the 2007 high-level segment of ECOSOC, "Strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, including through the global partnership for development".

The Committee encouraged Member States to reaffirm and deepen participatory governance and citizen engagement and initiate necessary capacity-building initiatives. In addition, the Committee noted the need to continue including cross-cutting issues of governance and public administration, particularly participatory governance, on the ECOSOC agenda relating to the implementation of internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration.



*Mr. Yoshinobu Yonekawa, Project Coordinator of the development account project entitled Poverty-Environment Nexus, during the Regional Workshop on Building Institutional Capacity, Partnership Development and Participatory Governance, Hue City, Viet Nam, 23-25 May 2006.*



With regard to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, the Committee noted that key interventions needed to be made on many levels. They included: (a) developing international financial and trade policies for economic growth; (b) formulating national-level redistributive policies for social objectives; (c) mobilizing and deploying resources for implementing new programmes and strengthening existing ones; and (d) making governance and public administration more responsive, efficient and effective in implementing poverty alleviation initiatives.

The Committee encouraged the Division in charge of the Programme to support the work of the working group on the Compendium of Basic United Nations Terminology in Governance and Public Administration, in collaboration with other United Nations and external bodies that are involved in similar work and those that are in a position to provide support.

Finally, the Committee concurred on a draft resolution for its consideration and adoption. The Committee also recommended that a policy brief outlining the recommendations on the main substantive themes be prepared by the Secretariat after every session in consultation with the lead speakers and approved by the Committee Bureau. The policy brief would be a follow-up document to the current and future sessions for consideration by Member States.

## Section IV. The evolution of the United Nations Programme on Public Administration

The preceding section analysed the periodic review work carried out by the experts in guiding and overseeing the activities of the United Nations Programme on Public Administration. These experts, numbering about 24 and representing all regions of the world, work as a subsidiary unit of ECOSOC, the United Nations legislative body in social and economic matters. As noted earlier, this subsidiary unit, which was originally named the Ad Hoc Group of Experts and which met biennially, was later replaced by a Committee of Experts, which meets annually. This section will review the activities carried out under the Programme, following the periodic review and guidance offered by the experts, as provided in the reports of the Committee to ECOSOC.

While the periodic review and guidance by experts and the work of the Programme are dealt with separately in two sections as a demand-and-response framework for analytical purposes, in reality they are closely intertwined. In most cases, the initiative in developing ideas and proposals for Programme activities is taken by the professional staff responsible for directing and managing the Programme, and those items are submitted to the meeting of the Group of Experts for review, approval and recommendations. A continuous process of interaction and collaboration among the Programme professionals, interested country delegates, experts, relevant officials in the United Nations agencies and other national, regional and international public administration and governance institutions supports the development of initiatives and proposals that evolve into legislative mandates. It would be safe to say that the process through which the mandates for United Nations public administration activities have been developed, the way they have been carried out and reviewed, and finally the process through which old activities have been revised and new mandates given have truly reflected the concerns and needs of Member States, especially those of countries requiring help from the Programme. The nature, scope and number of the various activities under the Programme have been so diverse and vast that it is difficult and unnecessary to summarize them. This section will identify and briefly describe the categories of activities that have been carried out to assist Member States that have requested assistance. This section will also include a brief description of the structure and professional profile of personnel that have been responsible for planning and implementing the Programme activities, as well as a brief note on the budgetary cycle and the country programme formulation and review process.

## Activities under the Programme

Initially, the activities were divided into two general categories. The first took the form of specific assistance to individual countries, including assistance in establishing and strengthening administrative institutions, major administrative reform, advisory services, and training and fellowships activities. The second category included normative activities, the benefits of which were equally available to all Member States, such as research, seminars and working groups, and the wide dissemination of the conclusions of such research and seminars. The first group of activities dominated the Programme during the first 15 years, after which research and analytical work were added in order to transform the Programme from a purely technical assistance activity to a substantive activity financed through the United Nations regular budget.

The earlier technical assistance programme had three basic components: (a) country programmes; (b) regional programmes; and (c) the interregional programme. The country programmes comprised three main categories: the provision of experts for advisory services; the provision of operational executive and administrative personnel (OPEX); and the provision of fellowships and equipment. The regional programmes comprised research at the regional level, assistance in building regional and subregional institutions, the organization of regional seminars and other regional projects, and the rendering of advisory services by regional advisers. The interregional programme comprised research at the global level, the organization of interregional seminars and projects, the backstopping of country projects (as well as regional projects where appropriate) and the rendering of advisory services by interregional advisers.

## Evolution of the Programme

During its 60-year history, the Programme, along with other programmes of DESA, such as statistics, has been remarkably consistent and coherent in its activities. Four stages in the evolution of this stable, low-key and least controversial programme are noted. The first stage, from approximately 1948 to 1965, concentrated on the training of civil servants and on the establishment of training institutions. Cooperation in establishing and strengthening schools or institutes of public administration had been the only type of major country projects during that period, the remainder being individual expert missions to provide advisory services on various aspects of public administration. In addition, fellowships and, to a very limited extent, equipment and supplies were provided to recipient Member States.

During the period from 1966 to 1971, the Programme entered its second stage of development with the convening of the first meeting of experts in

1967. The main focus of work was to link public administration directly with national development, especially economic and social development, and to adopt a broader and more comprehensive approach to public administration by adding research and analytical work. During this period, the technical cooperation country projects were of larger size and longer duration and were no longer limited to training projects. They included projects of major administrative reforms, management improvement (including the use of modern management techniques), personnel administration, administrative aspects of development planning, public enterprise management, and the improvement of local government administration. Research and analytical work, synthesized from or reviewed by workshops and seminars, were also carried out on the above topics, some of which were published and widely distributed.

With the change in the nature of United Nations technical cooperation projects, there had also been changes in the magnitude of the Programme and in the quality of experts and training facilities required. The Programme had grown in size, from about \$US 2.5 million at the end of the first stage to over \$US 4 million at the end of the second stage. As many developing countries began acquiring substantial administrative experience and expertise, they began needing advice and assistance of a more sophisticated nature than in the past, often in more advanced specializations and more complex projects, which were often management-intensive. In order to support those developments, the United Nations strengthened its regional and interregional projects. Public administration units were established in all regional economic commissions in the developing regions, as well as in the Middle East. The system of regional advisers in public administration, which had first been established in Africa, was extended to Asia and to Latin America.

In 1971, the ground was laid for a third stage. The second meeting of experts on the United Nations Programme on Public Administration, held in January 1971, recommended a comprehensive framework for the Programme by including financial administration, comprising budgeting, tax administration, accounting and auditing. This inclusion was completed in 1974, and the Programme was renamed the United Nations Programme on Public Administration. This would greatly strengthen the capability of the Division to deal with problems of administrative reform and improvement in an integrated manner. During 1971, the foundation had been laid for the establishment of a network of regional and interregional centres to bring public administration expertise closer to the grass roots.

The fourth and the last stage can be identified at the beginning of the 1990s, with critical questioning of the role of development aid and of the public sector in development. There was a call for increased reliance on trade and private

sector investment to assist less developed countries. Specifically, in the area of public administration, this stage can be identified by the increasing recognition of governance, human rights and the rule of law as substantive concerns and the issues of transparency and accountability as fundamental management concerns. For the United Nations Programme, this stage can be officially marked by the General Assembly debate, exclusively on public administration, at the fiftieth resumed session in 1996. The subsequent resolution reaffirmed the role of public administration, giving specific direction to the contents of the Programme and the methods of carrying them out. While emphasizing the enhancement and effectiveness of public administration in development and calling for increased cooperation between the United Nations Secretariat and its specialized agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions (including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the International Finance Corporation), the General Assembly directed the Programme to focus on certain specific areas. They included the strengthening of government capacity for policy development, administrative restructuring, civil service reform, human resources development, public administration training, the improvement of performance in the public sector, financial management, public-private interaction, social development, the development of infrastructure and the protection of the environment, government legal capacity, post-conflict rehabilitation and the reconstruction of governmental machinery, and the management of development programmes.

## **Broad grouping of activities under the Programme**

While recognizing the limitations of grouping the diverse activities that have been carried out during the last six decades, the following categories can be used to facilitate the reader's understanding: (a) servicing the United Nations legislative bodies (ECOSOC and the General Assembly) and collaborating with the relevant United Nations departments, agencies, regional commissions and Bretton Woods institutions; (b) developing and backstopping technical cooperation projects mostly for the benefit of individual developing countries through the provision of experts, fellowships and equipment; (c) supporting the establishment of public administration centres at the country, regional and international levels; (d) undertaking research, organizing seminars, workshops and working groups and issuing publications on both perennial and emerging topics; (e) representing and collaborating with (i) Member States, public administration and affiliated institutions at the country, regional and interregional levels and (ii) United Nations departments, agencies and other United Nations-related bodies; (f) undertaking clearing house functions with modern technology; and (g) engaging in exchange of experiences and cooperation on public administration topics. The importance and emphasis laid on each of the categories of work have changed over time, and will be discussed in the brief review made of each of them.



*The opening session of the Euro-Mediterranean Conference on Redesigning Public Administration Training to Deal with the Global Development Agenda, 13-14 October 2008, Rome, Italy. From left to right: Prof. Allan Rosenbaum, President of the Board of Management of the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration; H.E. Mr. Renato Brunetta, Italian Minister for Public Administration and Innovation; Dr. Valeria Termini, Director of the Italian School of Public Administration; and Ms. Almaz Atnafu Woldekidane, Senior Governance and Public Administration Officer of UNDESA.*

### ***Servicing United Nations legislative bodies and collaborating with other United Nations departments and agencies and regional commissions***

In a democracy, the executive agencies are required to provide information and reports and participate formally as well as informally in hearings and discussions to facilitate the work of the legislature in performing its functions, including law-making. Similarly, at the United Nations, servicing the legislative bodies by the administrative unit responsible for the United Nations Programme on Public Administration took three forms: (a) preparation and presentation of reports; (b) preparation of and follow-up on budgets and other necessary documents; and (c) analysis and elaboration of public administration issues under discussion at Headquarters and in the field. The main document required by ECOSOC for the Programme has been the report of the Group of Experts beginning in 1967 and that of the Committee of Experts from 2002 on. Prior to 1967, ECOSOC and the General Assembly received reports on public administration that

were usually included in the comprehensive report dealing with technical assistance activities (except for one report on public administration matters prepared by a special committee in 1951). As mentioned earlier, the organization and servicing of the Group, and later of the Committee of Experts, the preparation of reports and their submission to ECOSOC and follow-up thereto were matters of expressed concern. This was the case especially after 1975, when the third meeting of experts recommended the Programme staff to “provide better services to the legislative bodies in the context of changing international concerns”.

Other reports requested from the Secretary-General and prepared under the Programme included the report on the role of the public sector in promoting economic development of developing countries and the report of the Ad Hoc Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters. These two reports were prepared biennially during the period (1974-2002) when public finance was included in the Programme. The preparation of these reports required contact with relevant United Nations departments, funds, agencies and regional commissions to seek their input and hold discussions. Programme staff also contributed public administration inputs to the reports requested from other programmes on such topics as elections and post-conflict reconstruction.

Besides reports, the Programme staff serviced the legislative bodies by preparing biennial programme budgets. Internally, this preparation involved meticulous work within the Division and follow-up with the relevant units responsible for budget in the Department. Externally, it involved informal discussion with several key groups, including delegates from countries interested in the Programme, to identify activities to be pursued and to elaborate their implementation plans. As noted earlier, the biennium budget provides the integrative framework for reflecting the advice given by the Group/Committee of Experts, decisions delivered by the legislative bodies and, finally, the transformation of policy recommendations into programmes to be implemented.

In addition to submitting reports and preparing budgets, there were frequent calls from the legislative bodies and the various subsidiary bodies for the Programme staff to participate in discussions on issues relating to the role and capacity of public administration. Some of these meetings dealt with environmental issues, social development, reconstruction in post-conflict situations, promotion of elections, dealing with refugees and rehabilitation.

### ***Technical assistance activities for developing countries***

As mentioned previously, the United Nations Programme of Technical Assistance was initiated at the first session of the General Assembly in 1946. The



General Assembly decided to assist in the promotion of social welfare through the provision of experts, advisers, fellowships and scholarships, demonstration projects, technical publications and seminars, as requested by countries. Two years later, in 1948, the General Assembly resolved to appropriate funds for public administration to support four specific technical assistance activities: (a) sending teams of experts to countries to provide advice on their economic and social development activities; (b) training abroad of local experts through fellowships in mostly developed countries; (c) using outside experts for the training of local personnel and the organization of technical institutes; and (d) arranging seminars to assist Governments on special problems in economic development in order to provide them with the most efficient administrative methods available and to enable individual Governments to make practical use of the principles and technical resources of the science of administration. In 1949, an expanded Programme of Technical Assistance was approved, and the United Nations Secretariat created in 1950 the Technical Assistance Administration (TAA) and appointed its first Director-General. In the middle of 1950, a Director of the Public Administration Unit was designated to coordinate the Programme of Technical Assistance in Public Administration that had been approved in 1948. By the end of 1950, the “first experts were sent on missions, the first fellowships were granted and the first training seminar on Personnel Management was held at the United Nations Headquarters”.<sup>17</sup> By 1952, public administration began to be considered at the United Nations “on a par with economic development and social welfare”.<sup>18</sup>

Technical assistance projects followed priority concerns and areas. In the 1950s, it was the Latin American countries and in the 1960s it was the African countries that received the most technical assistance from the United Nations. The focus was on both total administrative systems and specific systems such as planning, budgeting, supervision and monitoring and local government as well as such specific areas as civil service training, organizational restructuring, decentralization, information management, tax administration, financial management, and improvements of methods and procedures. The modalities of assistance changed very little over time, always focusing upon experts, fellowships for training abroad, local training and needed administrative equipment. Funding came initially from United Nations extrabudgetary sources and, later, mostly from funds allocated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Technical assistance from the United Nations was provided through projects with definite time periods, sources of funding (usually UNDP) and the assignment of executing agency responsibilities.

For most public administration technical assistance at the country, regional and international levels, the Programme’s expert advisers and professional staff



provided technical support to projects. This modality continued for almost three decades. As the administrative system and capacity in many countries began to mature and professional skills and resources improved, there was less demand for outside experts and training abroad. Along with those improvements came the devolution of most UNDP programming and funding decisions to the country level, which weakened the formerly strong linkage between the Programme and UNDP. The Programme continues to provide advisory services requested by specific countries at a more reduced level, and supported by the regular United Nations programme of technical cooperation.

Specific examples of two main components of technical assistance—experts and fellowships—that have been undertaken under the United Nations Programme are noted below.

### ***Advisory services***

One of the earliest expert missions was sent to Bolivia at the request of the Government in 1949 to survey the country's needs and resources, including public administration requirements.<sup>19</sup> “In the early years, most of the experts served in Latin American countries. In 1950 and 1951, over 90 per cent of the experts' work was devoted to the Latin American region. Africa began to receive experts in public administration from the United Nations in 1953. Since then, the percentage of experts' work devoted to Latin America had decreased to an average of less than 25%, while the percentage devoted to Africa had risen to an average of over 50%.”<sup>20</sup> This shift reflects the relative maturity of Latin American systems of government and the increased number of failed States and rising poverty levels in Africa.

From 1951 to 1959, “some 700 experts in public administration, including fiscal administration, were assigned to forty countries”.<sup>21</sup> In the 1960s, “the United Nations experts in public administration came from fifty-one countries, and they served in seventy countries”.<sup>22</sup> The number of experts financed by the United Nations in the 1960-1969 period was 2,145, which represented an increase of 310 per cent compared to 691 between 1950 and 1959.<sup>23</sup>

In order to meet the pressing demands from developing countries, and particularly from newly independent countries, which found themselves without trained personnel for operational, executive and administrative posts, a new modality of expert advice was introduced in 1958/59. It took the form of provision of operational, executive and administrative personnel that was later to be known as the OPEX programme. Under the programme, the United Nations recruited international experts, at the request of a Government and subject to

its approval, who actually assumed operational posts in the recipient countries until local personnel were trained to take over such duties.

Since the 1990s, the provision of advisory services has transitioned from basic to more specialized advice in such areas as information technology. While the project-based long-term advisory services and short-term consultancies have declined significantly, the traditional advisory services provided by the Division's in-house experts and short-term and long-term consultants have continued. Since 2001, the Division has been providing online advisory services through the United Nations Public Administration Network (UNPAN).

### ***Fellowships and scholarships***

Initially, the main purpose of the fellowship programme in public administration was to assist developing countries to improve their administrative capabilities by creating opportunities for public servants to obtain training abroad. The programme provided overseas training for senior civil service personnel and in-country study programmes for junior personnel at universities or institutes of public administration. Fellowships were not awarded for the purposes of obtaining a degree but to provide additional training.

From 1951 to 1958, “approximately 900 fellowships were awarded to nationals of over fifty countries and territories in the field of public administration”.<sup>24</sup> During the 1960-1969 period, 2,752 fellowships were awarded under the Programme on Public Administration, which represents a 57 per cent increase in the 10-year period, compared with the 1,170 fellowships awarded during the 1950-1959 period.<sup>25</sup>

With the establishment of in-country institutes and/or schools of public administration in several developing countries as well as regional centres, the importance of the fellowship programme has diminished in recent years. Currently, the emphasis is on group training programmes, such as training seminars and workshops, rather than individual training/fellowship programmes.

### **Establishing public administration centres**

One of the major activities of the United Nations Programme on Public Administration has been the establishment of public administration centres, mostly for training purposes, at the national and regional levels. During the first half of the 1950s, several national and regional training centres and institutes of public administration were created. Some examples of this type of United Nations technical assistance projects include the help given from 1951 to 1956 to the

Government of Brazil in the establishment and management of the Brazilian School of Public Administration (in Rio de Janeiro); the assistance given to the Public Administration Institute in Turkey; and the Advanced School of Public Administration in Central America (ESAPAC), in San José, Costa Rica. Preliminary advice and assistance were also given to other regional undertakings, such as the newly formed Eastern Regional Organization for Public Administration in South-East Asia.

The United Nations Programme also cooperated with the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya in the establishment of a School of Government Accountants, enlarged and transformed in 1956 into an Institute of Public Administration. Technical assistance was also provided to Egypt for the transformation of its Institute of Public Administration into a regional training institution. In Ethiopia, the Imperial Institute of Public Administration opened in 1956. The establishment of training institutions in Argentina, Burma, Colombia, El Salvador, Iran, Nepal, Peru, the Sudan and Venezuela soon followed. In 1959, the Vancouver Training Centre was opened in Canada with the joint support of the United Nations, the University of British Columbia and the Canadian Government.

By the end of the 1950s, over 40 national institutes of public administration were already active worldwide, and at the beginning of the 1960s, their number had already doubled to almost 80. The United Nations provided assistance to 24 of the 80 institutes, roughly one third of those in existence.

Working in the belief that strengthening public administration could be best achieved through the establishment of regional centres, the United Nations provided support in setting up several centres, starting first with the African Training and Research Centre in Administration for Development (CAFRAD), which was established in 1964. The scope of its operations went beyond training to include research and comparative studies, documentation and publication, meetings and seminars, and consultancy services. Following CAFRAD, a similar centre was established in Asia: the Asian Centre for Development Administration (ACDA), which became operational in 1973. The Governments of Mexico, Peru and Venezuela signed an agreement at the end of 1972 establishing the Latin American Centre of Administration for Development (CLAD) and, in following years, an Arab Centre for Development Administration (ARADO) was established as one of the Arab League subsidiary organizations.

The United Nations also facilitated the establishment of a subregional centre in Africa, entitled the East African Community Management Development Institute, in 1974. At the interregional level, the International Centre for Public

Enterprises in Developing Countries (ICPE), originally created in 1974 as a national Yugoslav institution, became an international centre in 1978. It was established as a joint institution of developing countries with the participation of more than 30 countries, under the Economic Cooperation among Developing Countries (ECDC) principle, proposed by the United Nations Programme on Public Administration and Finance. The philosophy of economic cooperation among developing countries (ECDC) and technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) is based on the concept of self-reliance and capacity-building through a collective effort of developing countries.

## **Conferences, seminars, workshops and working groups**

Another form of technical assistance in public administration on which Governments have put emphasis was the holding of international and regional seminars and workshops and the creation of working groups. These gatherings provided an opportunity to examine the state-of-the-art literature on the topic of the meeting, in the light of several country experiences, and to develop conclusions and guidelines for improvement and reform for use by individual countries. The reports of these meetings were published and widely distributed among policymakers, relevant government agencies, training and research centres and academia. In addition to seminars, the professional staff of the United



*Participants of the 28<sup>th</sup> African Association of Public Administration and Management (AAPAM) Annual Round Table Conference in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, 4-8 December 2006.*

Nations Programme on Public Administration carried out research on specific topics with support from the regular United Nations budget. The findings of such research were also subjected to review in working groups and workshops and were published and distributed. The annexes on seminars and publications illustrate examples of the linkage between research, review meetings and publications.

In 1950, the first seminar on personnel administration was organized and was held at United Nations Headquarters. During the next decade, the Programme organized eight seminars and working groups on the following topics: budgetary classification and management; organization and management of public enterprises in the industrial field; organization and training of personnel for public service; industrial management in developed countries; training projects in public administration; organization and methods; public administration problems involved in community development programmes; and public industrial management in Asia and the Far East. In the field of fiscal and budgetary administration, the Programme sponsored a Technical Assistance Conference on Comparative Fiscal Administration. In 1955, 1957 and 1960, several workshops were held in Bangkok on problems of budgetary classification and management in cooperation with the United Nations Commission for Asia and the Far East. In 1956, a similar workshop was held in Santiago, Chile, with the cooperation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America.

From 1960 to 1970, the Programme organized 21 seminars, conferences and workshops in different countries on more diverse and specific topics. The subjects included: public administration problems in rapidly growing towns in Asia; administrative aspects of decentralization; administrative problems of rapid urban growth in the Arab States; central services to local authorities; organization and administration of public health services; African conferences of directors of central personnel agencies; administrative aspects of planning; personnel systems for local authorities; organization and administration of public enterprises; appraisal and improvement of administrative capacity in developing countries; development of senior administrators in the public service of developing countries; administrative aspects of urbanization; and measures for improving performance of public enterprises in developing countries.

From 1971 to 1980, the United Nations Programme on Public Administration organized numerous seminars. For example, one seminar was organized in the United Kingdom on major administrative reforms in cooperation with the Institute of Development Studies in Brighton. The main objectives of the seminar were: (a) to analyse national efforts for major administrative reform designed



to accelerate economic and social development in developing countries; (b) to identify factors both conducive and inimical to the success of administrative reform efforts; (c) to develop criteria for the appraisal of administrative reforms; and (d) to prepare guidelines for the formulation and effective implementation of administrative reform programmes under different economic and social conditions.

Since 1971, hundreds of national, subregional, regional and interregional conferences, meetings, seminars, workshops and working groups have been organized by the Programme on Public Administration. As was the case for the Brighton seminar, topics were often cross-cutting, thereby contributing to the linkage of public administration and finance with socio-economic governance and management. In almost all cases, when such meetings were held outside United Nations Headquarters, there was at least one co-sponsoring agency hosting and/or organizing them. The Programme continues to partner with national and international agencies in illuminating important topics of public administration.



*Sitting in the first row, Dr. John-Mary Kauzya, Chief of the Governance and Public Administration Branch (left), and Ms. Valentina Resta (fourth from left), Coordinator of the Project on Africa Governance Inventory (AGI), together with participants of a workshop on AGI in 2004.*

## Technical publications

Currently, the United Nations Programme on Public Administration produces several online publications dealing with a wide range of subjects in the area of governance and public administration, socio-economic governance and management using the United Nations Public Administration Network (UNPAN). Some of these publications are also made available in hard copies. The list of publications is available in the annexes contained on the CD-ROM. A few of the flagship publications between 1951 and 2002 are mentioned below in order to demonstrate the evolution and emphasis of the United Nations Programme on Public Administration.

### ***Standards and Techniques of Public Administration (1951)***

In 1950, the Director-General of the newly established Technical Assistance Administration (TAA) appointed a Special Committee on Public Administration Problems to prepare a study. In 1951, the Committee produced a report entitled *Standards and Techniques of Public Administration with special reference to Technical Assistance for Under-developed Countries*. The main objective of the report was to serve public administration experts who might be called upon to assist Governments under the technical assistance programmes of the United Nations. From the time of its publication and for the next 10 years, the report was considered an invaluable tool for experts, academicians and practitioners all over the world. It has been out of print for many decades now, but some of its analysis, concepts and recommendations are still valid.

### ***A Short International Bibliography of Public Administration (1953)***

In compliance with General Assembly resolution 723 (VIII) of 23 October 1953, the Division started to publish different kinds of technical studies and guides related to public administration. The first one was *A Short International Bibliography of Public Administration*. That same year, the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS), with a small amount of financial assistance from the Programme, began the publication of a trilingual, bimonthly professional review, entitled *Progress in Public Administration*. After 1956, the review was merged with the professional quarterly *International Review of Administrative Sciences*.

### ***A Handbook of Public Administration (1961)***

The United Nations Programme on Public Administration published *A Handbook of Public Administration: Current Concepts and Practice with special reference to Developing Countries* in 1961. This handbook was addressed primarily to

government officials, who were shouldering the heavy burden of promoting the economic, social and administrative development of their countries. This book was so thorough and comprehensive that it was considered a classic guide for senior government officials and experts interested in improving public administration systems. It had three major parts, each with several chapters: (a) public administration and national development; (b) contemporary concepts and practices; and (c) technical assistance in public administration.

### ***Public administration newsletter (1966)***

The Programme created a reference unit in its structure in the 1960s. One of the products of the unit was a newsletter on the activities of the Programme and other related information. The newsletter, which varied from 10 to 16 pages, was issued at least every six months. It was widely distributed among United Nations departments, agencies and specialized bodies, public administration centres and institutes around the world, and government agencies, especially in developing countries. More specifically, the newsletter was mailed to all the experts and other participants who attended various expert group meetings, seminars and workshops. To date, over 100 volumes have been issued since the launch of the first issue in February 1966.

Today, the newsletter contains several substantive pieces prepared by the professional staff, dealing with activities of the Programme. In addition, it includes staff news, a calendar of events and notes on publications. As the newsletter deals with substantive issues and activities in a concise and easily readable form, it serves as a useful vehicle in keeping the constituency of the Programme well informed and makes the global networking on public administration work more interactive and effective. Currently, the newsletter is issued in electronic form through UNPAN at [www.unpan.org](http://www.unpan.org).

### ***Appraising Administrative Capability for Development (1969)***

A methodological monograph, prepared by the International Group on Studies in National Planning (INTERPLAN), entitled *Appraising Administrative Capability for Development*, was published by the Programme. This monograph became a useful tool for United Nations experts who were advising developing and newly independent countries in overall planning issues during the 1970s. It contained specific suggestions related to two of the then generally accepted priorities in the field of public administration for development: (a) the formulation and implementation of economic and social development plans, programmes and projects; and (b) the administrative reform programmes needed to guarantee the viability and success of the former.



### ***Development Administration: Current Approaches and Trends (1975)***

The 1975 publication *Development Administration: Current Approaches and Trends* was considered at the time a “state-of-the-art” review in the field. It reviewed the development of public administration studies and approaches since the end of the Second World War and analysed a wide spectrum of themes and concepts, such as development administration; efficiency, effectiveness, productivity, profitability and performance evaluation; public policy-making; plans, programmes and budgets; programme budgeting; performance indicators; evaluation and control; regulatory administration; public enterprises; unitary ministerial coordination and sectoral units; macro and micro administrative reforms; and the systems approach.

### ***Rethinking Public Administration: An Overview (1998)***

Both the “new public management” paradigm that was proposed at the beginning of the 1980s, and the new concept of “governance” consolidated in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, were finally integrated into a more balanced model. This model recognizes the critical role of the State in the establishment of a “democratic, legal, legitimate, modern, effective, efficient, market-oriented but also social and people-centred” government and public administration, particularly in developing countries. It is described in the recent United Nations handbook entitled *Rethinking Public Administration: An Overview*.

Rhetoric about the role of public administration has been influenced by both historical legacies and development concepts. In most developing countries, the traditional function of public administration was limited to the maintenance of law and order, the provision of basic services, and revenue collection. With the advent of newly independent countries and their commitment to modernization, public administration came to be viewed as development administration—a force for promoting and sustaining dynamic change throughout society. This thinking had many unintentional consequences. For example, great attention was given to the transfer of skills and technologies from developed countries to the newly independent countries, but little effort was made to appreciate or understand how they could be applied in the context of the special circumstances of specific developing countries.

Similarly, law and order, as well as revenue administration, which had been closely associated with colonialism, were neglected subjects for several decades. They were generally excluded from national movements to reform public administration and from international technical cooperation programmes. The distaste for discussing law and order and revenue administration led to the

neglect and general de-professionalization of these fields, thereby leading to a lack of security and underfinancing of government operations.

In shifting from law-and-order administration to development administration, many developing countries neglected the more traditional and basic tasks of government—the maintenance of peace and security, the provision of basic services and the collection of revenues, which should be carried out within the wider framework of respect for the rule of law. Development goals are difficult if not impossible to achieve in conditions of ongoing uncertainty and basic inequities. When the police and the military are feared, courts do not uphold the law, and legislatures do not represent their constituents, development gains are less likely to benefit the most vulnerable in society.

During the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, many developing countries believed that central planning, command economies and public production were the best means for promoting national development. Since the 1980s, the debate has been centred on the role of the State in national economic development as one of facilitator and enabler. No longer the dominant actor, the State is now viewed as one of many actors participating in development. Decentralization of power and authority away from the centre and the liberalization and privatization of the national economy are important facts in the new mix of conditions.

New public management approaches the traditional functions of the State with a view to introducing market principles in the production, management and delivery of basic goods and services. For example, it is contended that the invisible hand of the market can bring about a better allocation of resources and coordinate competing demands much more efficiently than the visible hand of bureaucracy. While adherence to market principles does not preclude public ownership and management of enterprises, market principles do reorient the ways in which they operate.

Developing countries were under great pressure to allow a wider scope to the development of private sector economic activities. As “enablers and facilitators”, Governments are encouraged to free up credit, ease restrictions and offer tax incentives to develop the private sector. Small-enterprise development, in particular, is encouraged as a way to bring small-scale entrepreneurs into the economic mainstream in both urban and rural settings. However, *Rethinking Public Administration* warns that “while theoretically markets are considered an efficient mechanism for economic management, they are not perfectly efficient in the real world”.

While experimenting with the privatization of public enterprises, countries also need to reform and improve the management of those enterprises that remain in the public sector. In their diversity, developing countries present a richness of experience in grappling with the challenges of both governance and modernization. Public administration has been an integral part of this experience. Some have viewed public administration as the agent of modernization and governance, and others have chosen to blame public administration for the failures to develop. *Rethinking Public Administration* provides an excellent opportunity for those interested in political and public administration issues to adopt a more informed position regarding these fundamental and defining issues.

### ***World Public Sector Report (2001)***

In 1967, the first meeting of the Group of Experts on Public Administration proposed “the preparation of a periodic report on progress in public administration, comparable to the economic and social reports issued by the United Nations”.<sup>26</sup> At the time, financial limitations impeded this project from being implemented as planned. Thirty-nine years later, the Programme on Public Administration published the first World Public Sector Report, an important research and analytical tool to be produced every two years starting in 2001. By the end of 2007, four World Public Sector Reports had been published.

The purpose of the World Public Sector Report is to provide policymakers, scholars and civil society with relevant research findings, information and data on issues related to the public sector. The Report reviews the most current issues and trends in public administration and public economics and analyses the challenges Governments are facing in reforming particular areas of their public sector. It is also intended to facilitate the discussion of relevant public sector issues under the agenda of the United Nations intergovernmental bodies, such as ECOSOC. The Report is presented in two main parts. The first part is devoted to a specific theme relevant to public administration and development covering different regions and countries. The second part elaborates the conceptual issues and the measurement of different dimensions of the public sector.

The theme chosen for the inaugural issue of the Report was “Globalization and the State”. This choice was “dictated partly by the controversy that still surrounds the extent and impact of globalization, and partly by the need to underscore the importance of strengthening the State and its institutions in a globalizing world. The Report is a confluence of inputs from many different sources. It has drawn on the work and views of prominent world personalities and institutions, as well as the reports of the Meetings of the Committee of

Experts on Public Administration, which brings together a representative group of eminent practitioners and scholars from every part of the world.”

## **The role of public administration in the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration (2002)**

In December 2001, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to keep the trends in the field of public administration and development under constant review, and to highlight changes and trends as well as successes in this area. There was to be a particular emphasis on the role of public administration in the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration and a summary of findings in a report to be submitted to the Assembly through ECOSOC.

According to the report, one of the main conclusions that could be extrapolated from the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the “road map” of the Secretary-General was that reinforcing State capacity and promoting good governance is a crucial factor in implementing the Millennium Declaration goals. The report recognized that many of the problems that developing countries and countries with economies in transition face result from State capacity deficit, weak institutions and inefficiently run public administrations. The report also stated that despite the progress made by many developing nations in building healthy institutions and protecting human rights, countries in some regions of the world are still fragile and their institutions too weak to ensure effective governance.

Reinforcing governance and fostering an efficient public administration are, arguably, among the most important elements in the promotion of a country's national development agenda. Improving and reforming governance systems and institutions—including strengthening public sector capacity—are crucial in alleviating poverty, making globalization work for all, enhancing public participation at all levels of governance, protecting the environment, promoting sustainable development and preventing and managing violent conflicts. The Secretary-General's “road map” clearly underscored that “the primary responsibility for guaranteeing the protection and well-being of the individual rests with the State”.

The report pointed out that since “the problems facing humanity are closely intertwined, and . . . each tends to complicate the solution” for others, Governments must adopt a coordinated and holistic approach to development. In order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), multisectoral programmes that tackle each of the goals simultaneously must be established.

The role of public administration in the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration is to emphasize the vital importance that an effective public administration plays in achieving the development goals set out in the document, and to present priority issues and strategic and programmatic recommendations for institutional and human resources capacity development, public sector financial management and information technology capacity-building.



*From left to right: Mr. Michael Hogan, Queensland Department of Communities; Ms. Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, currently the Executive Director of Realizing Rights—The Ethical Global Initiative; Mr. Jomo Kwame Sundram, Assistant Secretary-General of UNDESA; and Mr. Neil Doyle, Queensland Department of Main Roads, at the International Conference on Engaging Communities, held in Brisbane, Australia, 14-17 August 2005.*

## **Redefining the role of public administration in development in the twenty-first century**

The primary challenge requiring a redefinition of the role of the State arises from the increasing relevance of the market-based economy. The State, under conditions of the comprehensive market-based economy, redirects its role away from production functions and towards policy and regulatory functions. This shift generally results in State machinery that is less heavy and less bureaucratic. However, it is increasingly understood that less-than-perfect market mechanisms lead to the need for government-developed and -enforced regula-

tory frameworks to monitor private sector operations and to reduce the excesses of fraud, waste, abuse and corruption in the private sector.

At the same time, there are some fundamental functions, such as peace and social justice, protection of the environment and good governance, that cannot be privatized. Given the importance of peace, social justice, protection of the environment and good governance, public administration must be strengthened. It is equally certain that when markets fail, as they often do, even in those countries with a strong market orientation, or when markets create an unhealthy business climate, public administration will have to maintain its role of policymaking and regulation.

The more likely scenario in reshaping and redefining the State and public administration will be one in which the State involves its citizens in governance through encouraging greater input into government functions, and greater transparency and accountability of government operations towards its citizens. If public administration is to continue to provide leadership in the process of achieving sustainable development, it must earn the trust and confidence of the public. In order to earn this trust and confidence, Governments need to improve service delivery, establish an enabling framework for socio-economic activities, provide an impartial and fair framework for social and economic interactions and, most of all, be completely transparent and accountable to their citizens.

Critical factors for restoring public confidence are leadership, commitment to change and flexibility. Commitment to change includes the ability of the public sector to respond to changing circumstances by facilitating economic growth, extracting resources for current services and new demands and, at the same time, maintaining current services without increasing the cost of government activities. These challenges for public administration systems require administrators, not only to keep pace with change, but also to respond to and anticipate change. A responsive public administration system, therefore, needs to be flexible and future-oriented.

The knowledge and skills needed for administration and management in this changing global context are different from those needed for relatively isolated nation-States. When information and resource exchanges transcend national boundaries and initiate interactions between individuals in different nations, administrators are required to be open, flexible and able to deal with complexity. No longer are societies, Governments, economies and public administrations isolated and affected only by national needs. With the conditions of global interaction changing at a rapid pace, public administration systems need

to be both responsive to citizens' changing needs and proactive in imagining future scenarios. Public administration systems in development must, indeed, be managers of change.



*An expert group meeting entitled “Managing Knowledge to Build Trust in Government”, held during the 7<sup>th</sup> Global Forum on Reinventing Government, 26-29 June 2007, Vienna, Austria.*

While country-specific systems will differ, there are three central ideas that guide public administration in developed, developing and transition economies. They are:

- (a) Rapidly changing domestic and international conditions and demands for services will require innovative policies at the strategic level and improved service delivery systems at the operational level. Creativity and flexibility to respond to rapid change will be a main “core requirement” for development administration and governance;
- (b) Public administration will continue to fulfil critical functions in development, moving from supporting measures for economic growth to protecting the environment, to determining the relationship between the public and the private sectors, to reducing poverty and illiteracy and to carrying out sustainable social development activities. There-



fore, exceptional capacities to govern for development are essential for public administration;

- (c) To fulfil critical future-shaping functions, public administration must promote dynamic people-oriented systems through strategic restructuring and outstanding professionalism and by attracting top-quality people into administration. Public administration as the centre of administrative and management excellence will require radical thinking and corresponding changes in service conditions, career patterns, and the ethos of public service.

The imperatives of development require bold and imaginative initiatives to strengthen the capacity of public administration in developing countries and economies in transition. The allocation of adequate staff resources and financial resources is essential to undertake and encourage innovations at the organizational and governmental levels in different fields of administration. Social services and development projects have withered away in some States where administrative capacity has been weakened or has never been adequately developed. Sound administrative capacity is a sine qua non for all sectoral programmes.

## **Networking within the United Nations family and outside**

The level and frequency of demand for United Nations public administration activities in various forums has changed over time. From a minimal demand in the early years, when the Programme focused on assisting specific developing countries, the Programme's networking function has increased substantially as it has sponsored many public administration centres and professional associations around the world. Within the United Nations system, increasing collaboration of the Programme with other programme elements is sought in order to deal with diverse emerging global concerns. There was constant urging from the meetings of the Group of Experts for active participation of the Programme's professionals in the work of various public administration centres. Recognizing the diversity of public administration problems and issues, the first meeting of experts, held in 1967, noted that "there should be a constant endeavour on the part of the United Nations to ascertain the felt needs of countries and a readiness to adjust its activities to its needs . . . the Public Administration Branch (of the Secretariat) should be enabled to strengthen its active links with the appropriate organizations in the countries". The meeting advised that "an effective communication system would enable the Branch to keep abreast of developments and problems . . . and it would help in passing down the results of research and the dissemination of ideas and information".<sup>27</sup>



Internally, as the United Nations had to deal with various emerging problems including environmental degradation, the restoration of governance in post-conflict countries, the introduction of democracy and elections in countries emerging from long dictatorial rule, and other similar situations, the demand on the United Nations Programme on Public Administration rose significantly. Externally, the United Nations Secretariat and the Programme officials receive scores of invitations, sometimes from high-level public officials, to attend their formal meetings, such as the annual gatherings or important conferences or meetings of such organizations as the Arab League, the Eastern Regional Organization of Public Administration and the Arab Administrative Development Organization, among others. Depending on the level and nature of the meeting, sometimes high-level United Nations officials, including the Deputy Secretary-General, may represent the United Nations. It is important to note that although representation both internally and externally is taxing and demands much time from the Programme staff, it is nonetheless important in the proper functioning of the global network as well as in maintaining the Programme's relevance and linkage to national realities and needs.

Government officials, academics and students from throughout the world meet with Programme staff at United Nations Headquarters. They avail themselves of publications and the opportunity to debate public administration issues with Programme staff, and visitors learn about Programme



*A joint activity of the International Labour Organization and UNDESA geared towards strengthening the skills of diplomats in communication and negotiation in the Caribbean countries.*

activities. Furthermore, Headquarters is a resource for members of United Nations delegations and officials, government agencies, institutes and centres, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, donor countries and other similar organizations. Programme officials use proximity to the official missions to seek comments and suggestions on Programme activities. The interactions resulting from these visits and meetings usually lead to greater understanding of the needs of countries and to the better design of the Programme. Such functional levels of personal and institutional linkages promote future cooperation.

## **Virtual clearing house functions—UNPAN since 2001**

Since its beginning, from 1950 onwards, the United Nations Programme has always provided clearing house facilities in varying degrees for public organizations and training and research institutions around the world. This information-sharing function focuses on the wide variety of successful systems, methods and practices, as well as linkages with experts and training facilities. With the advent of the Internet, this role has been formalized in a more structured form with appropriate systems, processes and resources. The Division for Public Administration and Development Management of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations was entrusted by the General Assembly in late 1999 to develop and implement an important programme entitled the United Nations Public Administration Network (UNPAN).

UNPAN is designed to help countries, especially developing countries and countries in economic transition, to respond to the challenges that Governments face in bridging the digital divide between the “haves” and the “have-nots” and to achieve their development goals.

The immediate objective of UNPAN is to establish an Internet-based network linking regional and national institutions devoted to public administration, thereby facilitating information exchange, experience sharing, and training in the area of public sector policy and management.

The long-term objective of UNPAN is to build the capacity of these regional and national institutions so that they can access, process and disseminate relevant information through up-to-date information and communications technologies (ICT) for the promotion of better public administration.

UNPAN provides users with a wide range of interactive and participatory online services based on Web 2.0 tools, including:

- ◆ Information services, such as information on United Nations programmes/projects on public policies, public administration and finance; information on the best practices and relevant experiences at the international, regional and national levels; and information on education and training activities of interest in universities, research institutes and academic institutions;
- ◆ Online training programmes, materials and facilities;
- ◆ Advisory services, interactive “Questions & Answers” and the UNPAN help desk;
- ◆ Conferences and workshops;
- ◆ Worldwide directories in public administration (including subject matter experts, training, institutions, journals and public administration links);
- ◆ News on public administration.



*Ms. Angela Capati-Caruso, Senior Governance and Public Administration Officer of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management, in discussion with participants during the Third Meeting of the Caribbean e-Government Working Group, held in Bridgetown, Barbados, on 21 April 2004.*

## Innovation in public administration

In today's information society, sharing of knowledge and best practices in public administration is a very powerful tool for capacity development. "Disseminating information about innovations in government, and most importantly, transforming this information into knowledge so that it may benefit countries looking for effective solutions to governance problems, is a challenge that the United Nations has taken up very seriously. Although there are no 'one-size-fits-all' solutions to complex issues, sharing successful experiences offers an opportunity for innovation in governance and public administration. . . . Sharing information and transferring knowledge on innovations are important tools for stimulating and inspiring governments in their reform efforts toward more inclusive development. In fact, learning from other countries' experiences in reinventing government can save time, inspire new reforms, and in some cases help countries to leapfrog stages of development."<sup>28</sup>



*Recipients of the 2008 United Nations Public Service Award, 23 June 2008, United Nations Headquarters, New York.*

With this in mind, the Division for Public Administration and Development Management carried out analytical and comparative work on innovation in public administration, culminating with the publication of a book in 2006 entitled

*Innovation in Governance and Public Administration: Replicating What Works.* Moreover, the Division is implementing the Programme on Innovation in Public Administration in the Mediterranean Region (InnovMed), which is geared towards providing Governments with effective solutions to concrete governance problems and challenges. The Programme on Innovation has helped bridge the theory and practice of innovation in governance through publications highlighting administrative challenges, priorities and achievements; through the establishment of a Network of Innovators made up of practitioners and experts in governance within the region; and through a series of relevant forums and meetings. In order to replicate the results achieved by this programme, the Division is in the process of setting up other similar regional networks to strengthen communication and cooperation among United Nations Member States in the area of governance and public administration. The novelty of the programme and the Network of Innovators is a shift in the way technical cooperation is implemented. Instead of providing expertise on specific subjects through advisers, the programme offers Governments a menu of innovative options to choose from and facilitates the process of knowledge-sharing and the transfer of innovations, enhances ownership and makes capacity development a much more holistic process.

Finally, the entire United Nations Public Service Award competition is an important tool in promoting and exchanging innovation in public administration.

## Section V. The Public Administration Division

In the preceding section, a brief review was made of the United Nations Programme activities in public administration over the past 60 years. In this section, based on information available, a picture of the administrative structure and the categories of personnel who have been responsible for the United Nations Programme on Public Administration will be presented. In addition, a more extended description of the current activities of the Programme and the structure of the Division through which the activities are carried out has been presented for a better understanding of the role of the Programme in the United Nations system.

### **Organizational structure and personnel of the Programme**

The various activities mentioned in the preceding sections were planned and implemented by a group of professionals and advisers, working within the framework of an organizational structure within the United Nations Secretariat. It is widely accepted that Programme staff play a critical role, sometime decisive, in formulating proposals and programme contents. In the United Nations system, where many members of the legislative bodies that make final decisions on various Programme activities change almost every year, the permanent staff provide continuity and experience, comparable to permanent civil servants in national government systems.

#### ***The structure***

Since the beginning, the Programme was placed in a “Division” framework—a main unit in the United Nations system usually headed by a well-regarded professional in the area of operation. The name of the Programme started as the United Nations Programme on Public Administration and changed only once to the United Nations Programme on Public Administration and Finance when public finance activities were added to the Programme in 1974.

While the name of the Programme changed only once, the name of the Division that carried out the activities changed several times, reflecting either the orientation of the Programme or other major activities within the Division. The first name of the Division was the Public Administration Division (PAD); which changed to the Division of Public Administration and Finance (DPAF) in 1974; which changed to the Development Administration Division in 1982 (DAD) to highlight the orientation of work; which changed to the Division of Governance, Public Administration and Finance (DGPAF) to reflect focus on governance in

1997; which changed within one year to the Division of Public Economics and Public Administration (DPEPA), when economic topics were added in late 1998; and finally which changed to its current name, the Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM), in 2002.

Internally, the Division was subdivided into Branches along specific specializations. Historically, all the programme activities were usually located in two Branches of the Division—for example, from 1974 to 2000, there was one Branch on public administration and another on public finance. Today, the Division comprises three Branches: (a) Governance and Public Administration; (b) Socio-economic Governance and Management; and (c) Knowledge Management.

In the United Nations system, all Divisions have to be a part of a Department or Office, which is usually headed by a political appointee at the level of Under-Secretary-General, who reports directly to the Secretary-General. The location of a Division within a Department has important implications, as the Department's orientation, leadership and management group exercise considerable budgetary, personnel and financial control over the Programme resources. As the name of the Division changed over time, so did its location in Departments. The Public Administration Division was originally in the Technical Assistance Administration, which was abolished in 1959. It was assigned to be part of the Bureau of Technical Operations, and then moved to a new Department, named the Department of Technical Cooperation for Development (DTCD). Later it was briefly part of the Department for Development Support and Management Services (DDSMS), before it was moved into its current place, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).

### ***Personnel of the Division***

While there have been some changes, noted above, in the name of the Division and its location in a Department, there have not been many changes in the number and type of personnel who staff the Programme. From the beginning, there were at least three types of personnel working in the two Branches:

- (a) **Regular professional staff**, with specialization in specific fields such as personnel, training, organization, management, information systems, financial management, budgeting, taxation and similar others. Each Branch would have a number of such staff responsible for analytical work and for organizing seminars and workshops.
- (b) **Interregional advisers (IRAs)**, financed by the United Nations regular programme of technical cooperation and placed within the Divi-



sion. These advisers offer short-term advisory services to Governments upon their request. They are usually high-level experts with considerable practical experience in such broad fields as administrative organization and reform, personnel and training, information systems and financial management. Their curricula vitae are widely distributed among Governments of Member States, first in book form and more recently under UNPAN. The Member States select from the portfolio of advisers in requesting advisory services. Often advisory services include needs assessments and the formulation of technical assistance projects to follow up on their recommendations. Because they are physically located and supervised by Division directors and Branch chiefs, they also participate in the analytical and seminar activities of the Programme.

- (c) **Special Technical Advisers (STAs).** These are experts who have had experience in working in technical cooperation projects in assistance to developing countries. Based on their performance in the field, they are brought to Headquarters temporarily to provide specialized expertise for technical cooperation projects. Often these country-level and regional projects are funded by UNDP and backstopped by these advisers on behalf of the Division, which serves as an executing agency of UNDP. Like the IRAs, the STAs are also placed within the overall management of the Division for coordinating its analytical, seminar and technical cooperation work.

In reality, all three types of staff have been working seamlessly, each offering services and making contributions in the areas in which they are best qualified and experienced. Thus, regular professional staff funded by the regular budget would sometimes go on short-term advisory missions and undertake backstopping technical cooperation projects. Similarly, both IRAs and STAs would prepare and organize seminars in the field of their own expertise. It is such interchangeability and regular interaction, encouraged and carefully nurtured by the Division leadership, that have provided the dynamism and motivation of the limited number of staff available to the Division to carry on the ever-increasing load of the Programme.

## **Division for Public Administration and Development Management**

Remembering the shifting scope and functions of public administration over the past 60 years, it is easy to understand the enormous challenge of making public administration relevant to the future. In the late 1990s, the scope of United Nations public administration activities was widened and culminated

in General Assembly resolution 50/225 of 19 April 1996. This enlargement included more emphasis on the relation between public administration and governance. Another change affecting activities in public administration has been the declining role of the conventional way of delivering technical assistance at the country level by United Nations departments and agencies with funding from UNDP. This has changed the role of the Division from that of project execution to that of project formulation and implementation. Finally, opportunities provided by Internet technology spearhead a major reorientation in the way the Programme outputs—including analytical work, consultancy and advisory services and publications—are planned, delivered and made available to the wider public administration community.

Yet another change that can be noticed is the recognition that the historical focus of the Programme on developing countries has to be modified to accommodate emerging realities on the ground. These include the growing realization that public administration concerns are becoming more common and similar across countries. It is no longer unusual for both developed and developing countries to be implementing similar public administration reform strategies and techniques. Many developing countries have made significant improvements in their administrative systems; and a regional focus that encourages horizontal sharing of information and experiences is becoming increasingly relevant. And as many regional and national public administration centres have developed substantially and as public administration concerns are expanding within the United Nations system, the United Nations Programme needs to play more of a coordinating role and less of a direct service delivery role. Fortunately, this shift is paralleled by the technological means available to coordinate with partners and deliver services virtually.

The Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM) is currently entrusted by the General Assembly to implement the United Nations Programme on Public Administration, and serve as a coordinating entity in this area. The Division works in partnership with relevant United Nations departments and agencies as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. DPADM's competitive advantage lies in its ability to identify and respond to the emerging global trends while maintaining a strong and substantive presence in the traditional areas of public administration.

The mission of DPADM is “to assist Member States in ensuring that their governance systems, administrative and financial institutions, human resources and policy development processes function in an effective and participatory manner by fostering dialogue, promoting and sharing information and knowledge, and

providing technical and advisory services”. This mission is implemented by the Division along the following core thematic areas:

The *governance and public administration* area covers cross-cutting factors that facilitate the management of programmes that can lead to achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), namely, poverty reduction and sustainable development. The issue of building the requisite capacities of governance and public administration becomes more pronounced as the world focuses more and more on MDGs, the achievement of which will lead to improvement in human life. It becomes more important as globalization poses more and more challenges and provides opportunities.



*From left to right: the Under-Secretary-General of UNDESA, Mr. Nitin Desai; Mr. Guido Bertucci, Director of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management; and Mr. John-Mary Kauzya, Chief of the Governance and Public Administration Branch, on the occasion of the first United Nations Public Service Awards ceremony, held on United Nations Public Service Day, 23 June 2003, New York.*

Consequently, there are emerging issues in governance and public administration that require intergovernmental attention and focused debate; exchange of information and innovative, successful experiences among countries; and technical cooperation in public administration capacity-building. In order to address these issues, the Governance and Public Administration Branch focuses on the following core thematic areas: government institution and systems; public service reform and management innovations; ethics, transparency and accountability in the public service; strengthening leadership and human resource capacity in the public service; decentralized governance for poverty reduction; and reconstructing governance and public administration in post-conflict situations.

The *socio-economic governance and management* area covers the following sub-themes: pro-poor institutions and institutional arrangements; pro-poor public

finance; social capital and public policy; social accounting and service delivery; domestic resource mobilization; and aid management and accountability. A conceptual framework of the key elements of the socio-economic governance products and services includes: intergovernmental and research work in the area of pro-poor governance and development; capacity-building of social and economic institutions relevant for the MDGs; production of tools, techniques and strategies that contribute more directly to supporting the MDGs; strategies and institutional options to link social capital to development management to pursue the “engaged governance” process for citizen-based dialoguing and advocacy for policy change; and building capacities in the pro-poor budgeting process, participatory audits, monitoring and evaluation.

The *knowledge management and e-government* area deals with sub-themes that include: governance of the knowledge society; knowledge management and knowledge creation; e-government/e-governance; use of information and communications technologies (ICT) to facilitate participatory democracy; knowledge innovation for economic development; and the role of ICT to improve local government (local e-government). In particular, focus is placed on: (a) the role of



*From left to right: Mr. Jorge Hage Sobrinho, Minister of the General Comptroller's Office (Brazil); and Mr. Adil Khane, Chief of the Socio-economic Governance and Management Branch, during the High-level Panel of ECOSOC entitled “Public Accountability: The Role of Public Accountability in Good Governance” , 14 July 2008, New York.*



*Ms. Haiyan Qian, Chief of the Knowledge Management Branch, addressing participants at the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Forum on City Informatization in the Asia-Pacific Region, capacity-building workshop on back office management for e/m-government in the Asia and Pacific Region.*

ICT in promoting *knowledge-based government for development (k-government)*, more specifically, enhancing government capacity through ICT to generate, acquire, manage, disseminate and apply knowledge resources towards nationally defined development goals in support of the United Nations development agenda; and (b) the role of *electronic and mobile government (e/m-government)* not only as one component of building a smart system to stimulate knowledge creation and facilitate knowledge resource management but also as a tool for meeting public sector reform and good governance objectives.

## **Services provided by the Division**

In line with its mission statement, the Division for Public Administration and Development Management provides the following services to Member States.

### ***Support for intergovernmental processes***

The Division assists the United Nations intergovernmental policy deliberations by providing information on and policy-oriented analysis of the role of public

administration, public finance and governance in the development process through the Committee of Experts on Public Administration. It contributes to the identification of options, mechanisms and practices that are instrumental in strengthening key governance institutions, in promoting the rule of law, in increasing the participation of citizens in the decision-making process and in creating an enabling environment for public sector effectiveness.

### ***Comparative policy and research analysis***

The Division undertakes research and analysis on governance systems and institutions; decentralization; the changing role of the State and civil service reform; integrity, transparency and accountability systems; public economics and public policy; public finance and financial administration; the use of information technology in government; and capacity for conflict prevention and managing diversity. The types of publications and outputs include analytical reports, case studies, country profiles, technical project reports, statistical databases, training materials, major development/trend reports and newsletters.

### ***Advocacy***

The Division takes the opportunity of national, regional and global meetings and events to convey the messages and opinions emerging from the intergovernmental discussions on public administration and from its own research and analysis. In particular, the Global Forum on Reinventing Government is the primary advocacy event to highlight the importance of governance and public administration for development as well as other emerging issues.

### ***Information-sharing and the exchange of experiences***

The Division assists Governments through its United Nations Public Administration Network (UNPAN) in improving public administration and governance systems by facilitating access to information, customizing and disseminating good practices and providing an international forum for the exchange of experiences.

### ***Technical cooperation and training programmes***

The Division helps to strengthen the capacity of Governments of developing countries and countries with economies in transition, at their request, by providing information, methodologies, assessments and policy proposals concerning governance systems and institutions, public policy, public finance and financial administration, the use of information technology in government, and capacity for conflict prevention and managing diversity.



## ***Coordination of development assistance in public administration***

The Division works in partnership with national and regional institutions; United Nations agencies and programmes and financial institutions, including the World Bank and regional development banks; networks of parliamentarians, mayors and civil society organizations; and other global and regional institutions.

## **The “flagship products” of the Division**

The ***United Nations Public Administration Network (UNPAN)*** is a one-window access point to worldwide, multilingual resources on public administration and public sector policy, and is today the only such public administration web portal in the world ([www.unpan.org](http://www.unpan.org)).

***United Nations Public Service Day*** is celebrated on 23 June, as designated by United Nations General Assembly resolution 57/277 of 20 December 2002.<sup>29</sup> United Nations Public Service Day intends to celebrate the value and virtue of public service to the community; highlight the contribution of public service in



*Celebrating United Nations Public Service Day, at the first United Nations Public Service Awards ceremony, held at United Nations Headquarters in New York, 23 June 2003.*



the development process; recognize the work of public servants; and encourage young people to pursue careers in the public sector. Africa's Public Service Day also falls on 23 June.

The **United Nations Public Service Awards** are presented to the annual competition winners each year on United Nations Public Service Day. The United Nations Public Service Award is the most prestigious international recognition of excellence in public service. It rewards the creative achievements and contributions of public service institutions to a more effective and responsive public administration in countries worldwide. Through an annual competition, the United Nations Public Service Awards promote the role, professionalism and visibility of public service ([http://www.unpan.org/dpepa\\_psaward.asp](http://www.unpan.org/dpepa_psaward.asp)).

The **World Public Sector Report** is produced by the Division every two years as a research and analytical tool to provide policymakers and civil society with relevant research findings and information on issues related to the public sector. Four reports have been published so far, entitled *Globalization and the State* (2002); *E-government at the Crossroads* (2003); *Unlocking the Human Potential for Public Sector Performance* (2005); and *People Matter: Civic Engagement in Public Governance* (2009) ([http://www.unpan.org/dpepa\\_worldpareport.asp](http://www.unpan.org/dpepa_worldpareport.asp)).

The **Global Forum on Reinventing Government** is the largest international platform for ministers and senior government officials to discuss good practices and



*Participants of the Regional Forum in Africa, a preparatory meeting for the Annual Forum on Reinventing Government: Building Trust in Government, held in June 2007, Vienna, Austria.*

innovations in public administration and governance. The Forum is organized biennially by the Division with the support of an institutional partners group.

## **Evaluation of the work of the Division**

In 2004, the United Nations Programme on Public Administration was the subject of a major substantive evaluation by the Office of Internal Oversight Services. The evaluation highlighted the important work done by the Programme and made useful recommendations on how to better focus the work of the Division in view of the limited resources. The triennial review report on this evaluation, which was completed in March 2007, concluded that the Division “has taken adequate measures towards implementing the Committee’s recommendations on the in-depth evaluation of the programme on public administration, finance and development”.<sup>30</sup>

## Section VI. The way forward<sup>31</sup>

Public administration in the years to come will continue to be the main instrument of the State to define policies, to implement programmes and to ensure that security, safety and quality services are provided to its citizens. It will also be a key factor in enabling countries to accelerate their economic and social development and to meet their development goals.

In order to maintain its relevance and usefulness to Member States in the next decades, the United Nations Programme on Public Administration needs to advise on and provide solutions to crucial issues facing public administrations around the world, especially those relevant for developing countries. It must also deal with challenges internal to the functioning of the economic and social sector of the United Nations.

One challenge for the Programme will be to re-emphasize this important role of public administration and to ensure that the study and practice of public administration are given the proper space within the economic and social sector of the United Nations.

In this very book, it is mentioned that by 1952 public administration began to be considered by the United Nations on a par with economic development and social welfare. Today, unfortunately, there is a danger that the centrality of public administration in development is undervalued in an environment dominated by economists and social scientists. To counter this trend, stronger cooperation with the other divisions within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and with the regional commissions should be developed with a view to better link their analytical work on economic and social policies with the analytical and operational work of the United Nations Programme on Public Administration, in particular with its capacity development initiatives.

Empirical research has shown that public administration capacity is crucial for the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals (IADGs). It is therefore essential for the Programme to maintain its strong focus on building the capacity of governance and public administration systems and institutions.

To this end, the Programme must sharpen its ability to convert its rich analytical products and its vast knowledge base into useful, practical tools for Governments and public administration officials. The policy briefs resulting from the work of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration are an important

step in this direction. They should be supplemented by similar briefs resulting from the work of the Secretariat. The rich collection, documentation and analysis of successful practices should be converted into operational tools to be put at the disposal of Governments and also of UNDP country offices, with which linkages should be strengthened.

In terms of content, the main challenge is to promote the revitalization of public administration and reassert its crucial role in development while capitalizing on the important lessons of the new public management and governance movements.<sup>32</sup> The Programme should thus assist Member States in establishing, developing and strengthening the core institutions, values and practices of public administration.

The protection of the rights of individuals and the provision of a secure and safe environment for human activities are at the core of the function of government and public administration. Particularly in situations of conflict, crisis or natural disaster, public administration should be the anchor for ensuring the continuity of the State and the provision of services. The Programme must develop capacity development tools to help public administration face these challenging circumstances.

The Programme should also maintain its strong presence in the area of accountability and transparency, where it has acquired a solid knowledge base and can thus help Governments and public administration to combine efficiency and effectiveness with a strong commitment to be accountable to their citizens and be open to scrutiny in their operations.

The Programme, during its long history, has always been instrumental in the development of human resources in the public sector. In today's rapidly changing world, the demands placed upon the public service are growing and constantly changing. A new professionalism, enhanced knowledge and global thinking are required of the human resources operating in the public sector. The Programme has assisted and should continue to assist Member States in developing the public service which a modern State requires now and will require in the future.

But the important message that the Programme should disseminate is that public administration today cannot function in a traditional way. The push by the new public management movement to make administration more efficient, less costly, more flexible and results-oriented should be incorporated into systems and methods of work of modern public administration.

The same administration must operate within the context of a wider governance paradigm and learn to interface with the private sector and civil society in the setting of goals, in the delivery of services and in accounting for its actions.

The Programme has a crucial role in helping Governments incorporate these principles into the institutions, organizations and practices of public administration. It has done so by providing the introduction of information and communications technologies in public administration and in focusing on e-government policies and practices. The leading role of the Programme in this field should be further strengthened by enriching its knowledge base and converting it into practical advice for policymakers and practitioners.

Similarly, the groundbreaking analytical work in the area of “civic engagement” should be further developed and converted into practical tools for Governments to engage civil society in policy development, budgeting, service delivery and accountability.

Today’s advancements in the economy and in society are spearheaded by scientific and technological innovations. Public administrations must not be left behind; they must constantly strive to reinvent and transform themselves through innovation. The Programme has pioneered analytical work to understand the process of innovation in public administration and has set in motion a global innovation movement in public administration, exemplified by the United Nations Public Service Awards. Member States and individual government agencies count on the Programme as a key hub for the identification, documentation and sharing of innovation. That role should be not only maintained but enhanced as the changes in today’s world become ever more rapid.

One of the other characteristics of today’s world is the growth of relationships and networks, as no one actor can master the exponential growth of knowledge or can address the multiplicity of challenges. The strength of the Programme in the future will lie not only in its own knowledge, capacity and accomplishments, but also in the ability to bring together those of many other organizations whose objectives and roles are synchronized with its own. The United Nations Public Administration Network (UNPAN) has the potential to grow even wider and stronger and to serve as a platform, not only for sharing knowledge but also for capacity development.

Throughout the years, the Programme has built a vast and strong constituency among government agencies, local entities, public administration schools and institutes, universities, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organi-

zations. This constituency expects the United Nations to continue providing global leadership in the field of public administration and development. The Programme should provide the intellectual and operational contribution to this constituency, as expected from it.

In looking towards the future and in plotting the direction of its work, the United Nations Programme should never lose sight of the underlying objective of its mandate, namely, that of placing public administration at the service of economic and social development, at the service of the poor and disenfranchised. The development of knowledge, systems and technologies per se has no value if they do not ultimately help to improve the living conditions of the people whom public administrations serve.

## Endnotes


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- <sup>2</sup> United Nations (1996), General Assembly resolution 50/225 of 19 April 1996, *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session*.
- <sup>3</sup> Charter of the United Nations, signed on 26 June 1945, Preamble.
- <sup>4</sup> United Nations (1948), Economic and Social Council resolution 132 (VI) of 24 February 1948, “International facilities for the promotion of training in public administration”, *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Sixth Session*.
- <sup>5</sup> United Nations (1948), General Assembly resolution 246 (III) of 4 December 1948, “International facilities for the promotion of training in public administration”, *Official Records of the General Assembly, Third Session*. See also United Nations (1967), United Nations Programme in Public Administration: report of the Meeting of Experts, p. 53, para. 6.
- <sup>6</sup> United Nations (1951), *Standards and Techniques of Public Administration with special reference to Technical Assistance for Under-developed Countries*, report of the Special Committee on Public Administration Problems (New York) (United Nations publication, Sales No. 1951.II.B.7), p. 39, para. 113. See also United Nations (1967), United Nations Programme in Public Administration: report of the Meeting of Experts, p. 53, para. 7.
- <sup>7</sup> United Nations (1949), General Assembly resolution 304 (IV) of 16 November 1949, “Expanded programme of technical assistance for economic development of under-developed countries”, *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fourth Session*.
- <sup>8</sup> United Nations (1953), General Assembly resolution 723 (VIII) of 23 October 1953, “Technical assistance in public administration”, *Official Records of the General Assembly, Eighth Session*.
- <sup>9</sup> United Nations (1951), *Standards and Techniques . . .*, p. 1, para. 1.



- <sup>10</sup> United Nations (1996), General Assembly resolution 50/225 of 19 April 1996, . . . , para. 9.
- <sup>11</sup> Bertucci and Alberti (2005), loc. cit., p. 342, para. 3.
- <sup>12</sup> The reports of the recent meetings and sessions may be accessed at *www.unpan.org*. Hard copies of the reports dating back to the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s may be obtained from the United Nations Library.
- <sup>13</sup> United Nations (1967), United Nations Programme in Public Administration: report of the Meeting of Experts, pp. 6-9.
- <sup>14</sup> United Nations (2001), Economic and Social Council resolution 2001/45 of 20 December 2001, *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council*, annex, paras. 1 and 2.
- <sup>15</sup> United Nations (2003), *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2003, Supplement No. 44*, document E/2003/44-E/C.16/2003/6, "Committee of Experts on Public Administration: report on the second session (7-11 April 2003)", p. iv.
- <sup>16</sup> United Nations (2005), *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2005*, document E/C.16/2005/2, "Revitalizing public administration: directions for the future: report of the Secretary-General", p. 1.
- <sup>17</sup> United Nations (1967), United Nations Programme in Public Administration: report of the Meeting of Experts, p. 54, para. 8.
- <sup>18</sup> United Nations (1951), *Standards and Techniques . . .*, foreword.
- <sup>19</sup> United Nations (1961), *A Handbook of Public Administration: Current Concepts and Practice with special reference to Developing Countries* (ST/TAO/M/16) (United Nations publication, Sales No. 61.II.H.2), p. 117, para. 36. See also United Nations (1967), United Nations Programme in Public Administration: report of the Meeting of Experts, p. 83, para. 78.
- <sup>20</sup> United Nations (1967), United Nations Programme in Public Administration: report of the Meeting of Experts, p. 78, para. 67.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71, table 2. See also United Nations (1961), *A Handbook of Public Administration . . .*, p. 113, para. 15.

- <sup>22</sup> United Nations (1967), United Nations Programme in Public Administration: report of the Meeting of Experts, p. 77, para. 65.
- <sup>23</sup> United Nations (1971), United Nations Programme in Public Administration: report of the Second Meeting of Experts (ST/TAO/M/57), p. 103, table 2.
- <sup>24</sup> United Nations (1967), United Nations Programme in Public Administration: report of the Meeting of Experts, pp. 157-162.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 157, table 4. See also United Nations (1971), United Nations Programme in Public Administration: report of the Second Meeting of Experts . . . , p. 108, table 4.
- <sup>26</sup> United Nations (1967), United Nations Programme in Public Administration: report of the Meeting of Experts, p. 33, para. 95 (a).
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 4, para. 11.
- <sup>28</sup> Foreword by Guido Bertucci (2006) to “Innovations in governance and public administration: replicating what works”, ST/ESA/PAD/SER.E/72, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, p. iii.
- <sup>29</sup> United Nations (2003), General Assembly resolution 57/277 of 20 December 2002, *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session*.
- <sup>30</sup> *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2007*, document E/AC.51/2007/3, “Report of the Office of Internal Oversight on the triennial review of the implementation of recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination at its forty-fourth session on the in-depth evaluation of the Programme on Public Administration”.
- <sup>31</sup> This section was prepared by Guido Bertucci, Director of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management.
- <sup>32</sup> Bertucci and Alberti (2005), loc. cit., p. 345, para. 3.





The United Nations Programme on Public Administration, Finance and Development is celebrating its sixtieth anniversary in 2008. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs is commemorating the anniversary by, among other things, publishing this book accompanied by a CD-ROM to highlight the broad historical background and path that the Programme has gone through since its establishment in 1948 by United Nations General Assembly resolution 246 (III), to the present-day activities of the Division for Public Administration and Development Management. The book cascades through the debate and global trends in public administration as well as the resolutions and decisions of the United Nations that have accompanied the world experts and practitioners in their moving from concepts and practices of “traditional public administration” to those of “good governance”, having gone through “public management” and “new public management”.

For those who are interested in looking more deeply into the history of the Programme, a CD-ROM is provided along with this publication that contains several reports pertinent to the Programme, such as the reports of the biennial meetings of the Group of Experts on the United Nations Programme on Public Administration held between 1967 and 2000 and the reports of the annual sessions of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) since 2002, as well as a number of selected declarations, decisions and resolutions. Most of the documents on public administration and finance that have been published after 2000 are now available electronically on the website of the Division, [www.unpan.org](http://www.unpan.org).

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