

## **African regional workshop on effective governance for sustainable development: putting principles into practice**

Co-organized by UNDESA and AU/APRM in collaboration with UNDP

30 October to 1 November 2019, Pretoria, South Africa

### **CONCEPT NOTE**

#### **Introduction**

The confluence of economic, social and environmental trends – such as demographic shifts, growing inequalities, evolution of the digital economy, rapid urbanization and climate change – are reshaping the governance landscape at all levels. There is an increased demand for institutions that are able to design and deliver policies and programmes that integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development, informed by engagement with all relevant stakeholders. Bold public sector transformation will be essential, along with serious efforts to combat corruption which gets at the heart of public confidence in government and the rule of law and significantly limits the beneficial impact institutions can have on the everyday life of individuals.

Building effective institutions for achievement of the SDGs at all levels is more than an aspirational idea. Rather it requires close attention to:

1. *Ensuring that institutions are equipped with sufficient expertise, resources and tools to carry out their mandates, inter alia through public sector workforce and leadership development, performance management, effective financial management, revenue administration and investment in digital government;*
2. *Pursuing evidence-based policymaking in an increasingly interconnected world with a focus on strengthening integrated policy-making, policy coherence, foresight, impact analysis, data and statistics, monitoring and evaluation, science-policy interface and risk management;*
3. *Enabling and sustaining cooperation among diverse constituencies so that institutions at all levels of government and in all sectors work in harmony with one another and with non-State actors including through coordination and collaboration mechanisms, stakeholder engagement, SDG awareness-raising, multilevel governance and partnerships;*
4. *Strengthening transparency, accountability and corruption prevention efforts with a focus on independent oversight mechanisms, access to and freedom of information, social audits, participation and consultative processes.*

With the intent of helping countries move from principles to practice and in advance of the 2019 HLPF review of the implementation of SDG 16, the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) took stock of the institutional aspects of SDG 16 at its 18<sup>th</sup> session in April 2019. Taking into account important linkages between Goal 16 and all SDGs, CEPA examined the core 2030 Agenda elements of effectiveness, accountability and inclusiveness in some depth. A key message of the session was that in-depth reviews of the institutional aspects of SDG 16, including by individual institutions within

countries, could be enhanced with stronger evidence of governance capacities and analysis of trends in many areas.

The Committee also stressed that building institutions should not be seen as a technocratic efficiency exercise, which risks reinforcing the status quo, but in the spirit of the 2030 Agenda and as an integral part of efforts to leave no one behind, reduce inequalities, tackle environmental degradation, promote well-being for all and address other national and subnational sustainable development priorities. Member States are committed to lifting the level of ambition of national responses to the implementation of the Agenda in this respect, inter alia by strengthening institutions for more integrated solutions and to better equipping institutions to bring about transformative change in governance and public policy.

### **Building strong institutions in Africa**

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is part of the African Union family of organizations which is dedicated to promoting good governance for socio-economic development among the African Union member states. The APRM is Africa's homegrown and pioneering self-monitoring tool for sharing best practices and experiences, identifying deficiencies and assessing capacity-building needs to ensure that the policies and practices of participating states conform to African Union shared values and Africa's integration. Encouraging peer-learning among African Union countries is a crucial objective of APRM's mandate and activities.

Based on the decision of Heads of State during the African Union Summit in January 2017, the APRM has further been tasked with supporting the African Union member states in playing a role in monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Taking due cognizance of the congruence between the SDGs and the African Union's Agenda 2063, the APRM in collaboration with other intergovernmental and multilateral institutions in Africa has embarked on an ambitious strategy to domesticate and integrate the two frameworks into national development plans and strategies.

Given its commitment to promoting good governance across the continent, the APRM focuses on follow-up to Aspiration 3 of Agenda 2063 calling for "An Africa of good governance, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law" which is closely related to SDG 16 of the 2030 Agenda. The APRM is also engaged with the United Nations system and pan-African organizations to ensure coherence between the global and continental development agendas for Africa. Furthermore, the mechanism has organized continental workshops to prepare the African Union Member States and share experiences between African peers on the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) for the high-level political forum as well as share best practices of VNRs on the implementation of the SDGs.

The APRM participates in the annual sessions of CEPA as an observer organization. The United Nations Economic and Social Council has encouraged CEPA to continue to engage the relevant United Nations organizations, regional organizations and professional and academic communities in building strong institutions for the implementation of the SDGs in an inclusive manner, together with all relevant stakeholders.

### **UN CEPA principles of effective governance for sustainable development**

Institutions play a crucial role in the achievement of all SDGs and SDG targets. But public sector reforms needed to achieve the SDGs remain a major and vexing challenge in many countries. The ECOSOC-endorsed [principles of effective governance for sustainable development](#) point to a way forward based on the advice of independent global experts.

Developed by UN to help interested countries, on a voluntary basis, build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, they apply to all public institutions, including executive and

legislative organs, public entities in the security and justice sectors, independent constitutional bodies and state corporations, among others.

The principles are coupled with 62 commonly used strategies, many of which have been recognized and endorsed over the years in various United Nations forums, resolutions and treaties. Applying the principles and associated strategies to all public institutions can accelerate efforts to introduce pragmatic ongoing improvements in national and local governance capabilities to achieve the 2030 Agenda and other international agreement, including Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

The first three principles focus on effectiveness. They are: competence, sound policy-making and collaboration. Three more principles address accountability: integrity, transparency and independent oversight. Five principles focus on inclusiveness: leaving no one behind, non-discrimination, participation, subsidiarity, and integrational equity.

This workshop aims to promulgate the principles of effective governance for SDGs among African countries in partnership with the APRM in its capacity as a regional mechanism for follow up on the implementation of SDG 16 in Africa.

### **Rationale for the workshop and expected outcomes**

The joint UN-African Union workshop is specifically designed to support countries in assessment of gaps in the institutional application of each of the 11 principles of effective governance with a view to strengthening institutions for implementation of the SDGs at all levels. Government-led assessments initiated at the workshop may serve as a precursor to more specific in-depth reviews, as appropriate, and/or lead directly to formulation of Government-led reform policies in priority institution-building areas.

The workshop is also expected to foster policy coherence by encouraging alignment of institution-building efforts related to the 2030 Agenda with the Agenda 2063 objectives of the African Union. As observed by CEPA, the African Union and other regional actors could be valuable partners in supporting related capacity development at the national and subnational levels, and in reviewing and monitoring the use of the principles by interested countries.

UN CEPA has further stressed that research by academic networks and others could focus on the application of the principles in various development contexts and that engaging tertiary and professional training institutes and communities could be helpful. Similarly, raising awareness of the principles through civic education in schools and other educational institutions could be considered. To promote such synergies, members of the African Research Universities Alliance and related networks will be encouraged to attend.

It is expected that the workshop will lead to:

- A common understanding of principles of effective governance for sustainable development, methods of analyzing gaps in their institutional application in Africa and strategies to address them;
- Enhanced collaboration among national, regional and global actors in building strong institutions for achievement of the SDGs and aspirations of the Agenda 2063, inter alia, through engagement of African Union organs in the application of the principles in African contexts;
- Sharing of knowledge on approaches to building strong institutions for achievement of the SDGs at all levels in different development contexts, as well as SDG monitoring and evaluation in Africa, through peer-to-peer learning, discussion of toolkits and lessons learned from the Voluntary National Reviews;

- Incorporation of issues related to the evaluation of institution-building for the SDGs in research agendas of African universities.

### **Format**

A three-day meeting consisting of working sessions with introductory remarks by key experts on the main issues and themes in building strong institutions for implementation of the SDGs at all levels. Participation at the workshop will be by invitation only, and a registration process will be put in place.

Senior public officials from centre of government, ministries of planning and public administration or equivalent will be invited with a particular focus on APRM member countries and others that may be active in SDG review, as well as their regional counterparts supporting African countries in building strong institutions at all levels for achievement of the SDGs and Agenda 2063. Financial support will be provided on a case-by-case basis.

Resource persons from the UN system, AU organs and other international organizations will also be invited to contribute along with high-level representatives of the Government of South Africa and selected representatives of African university research networks.

Presentations/papers/remarks will be made available online.

### **Date and venue**

The workshop will be held from 30 October to 1 November 2019 in Pretoria, South Africa.

### **Working languages**

Simultaneous interpretation during the working sessions will be provided in English, French and Portuguese. Workshop materials will be circulated in English.

### **Contact details**

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