

## **Transforming institutions and governance to build forward better towards 2030**

### **Contribution by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration to the 2022 high-level political forum on sustainable development**

#### **Key messages and recommendations**

##### **1. Building back after the COVID-19 pandemic requires building forward stronger, more effective, resilient and credible public institutions for achieving the SDGs.**

Building back better from the coronavirus disease, while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development calls for building of stronger, more effective, resilient and credible public institutions at all levels – global, regional, national and subnational – contributing to building and, where necessary, rebuilding trust in institutions. This requires political will, a change of mindsets, transformational leadership, sound management of public funds and a renewed commitment to advancing the SDGs. Effective cooperation among all countries is imperative, including in the areas of data- and information-sharing, digitalization, widespread vaccination, testing, and access to medication, education, and training. Exchanges among countries of lessons learned from the unprecedented global crisis will provide an invaluable source of resilience and capacity building of government machineries.

##### **2. Countries should work together in making their public institutions, their societal and physical infrastructures, and their economies, more resilient and agile, not only against COVID-19 but also against all potential future shocks. This is in the interest of all nations.**

None of the institutional-building objectives to support the SDGs can be attained without ensuring that COVID-19 has been well-contained, at least in the short run, and that the plight of the poor within and across countries is adequately addressed. Starting now, measures are needed that are geared toward recovery, which entail a focus on reopening and rebuilding economies in a sustainable manner. Such measures would include stimulating countries in their continued efforts to achieve the SDGs and respond to and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, including by helping them manage their debt levels and inflation, rebuild their economies and improve particularly their health sector, where needed. It is also clear that reaching the end of the global pandemic will only be possible by supporting the weakest countries and leaving no one behind. A balanced recovery that puts the SDGs back on track requires attention to those who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

##### **3. There is a need to invest more in the public sector workforce to bring competences and values in line with the challenges ahead.**

We need better risks and crisis management strategies to overcome the current pandemic and address current and future disruptions. Institution building must be complemented by investment data infrastructure and in the competencies of the public sector workforce to foster implementation of the SDGs. Related competences and values must be strengthened among the public workforce, which includes, among others, upgrading technical skills necessary for climate change policies. Awareness of the SDGs, the critical importance of

collaboration for policy coherence and the role of leadership are key elements for training existing members of the workforce and hiring qualified new staff.

**4. Digitalization should be mindful of inclusiveness, sustainability, ethics, and humanity to be truly at the service of the people.**

The pandemic has accelerated the digital transition. If managed in an inclusive, fair and ethical manner, it is perhaps the biggest transformative variable on the way development choices and pathways can be rethought. It represents a unique opportunity to leapfrog development, improve government efficiency, transparency and effectiveness in service delivery, and recast state-citizen relations in a more dynamic, responsive and accountable manner. However, to achieve its potential, the digital transition needs to be inclusive, respect individual rights and mitigate the risks of a widening digital divide, keeping in mind that more than 3 billion people in the world are not connected to the Internet, including a majority of people in Africa. Digitalization of the public sector requires resources, talents and infrastructure, taking into account the specificities and needs of each country, combined with efforts to enable the meaningful participation of all stakeholders in public policymaking so as to better align policies with people's needs. In addition, whereas social media are powerful tools to connect people and promote the SDGs, the growing role of unregulated social media in undermining democratic institutions calls for attention.

**5. Global institutional cooperation and solidarity are critical, and all countries should work together to fight the virus and ensure equitable vaccine distribution, while ensuring that no one – and no country - is left behind.**

Global cooperation and solidarity involve all countries and include comparing lessons-learned from the pandemic, data- and information-sharing. Furthermore, the cross-border nature of COVID-19 implies that a given country's short-term effort, not taking into account other countries' efforts or lack thereof, might not serve its long-term interest. In this regard, there is a need for coordination and effective monitoring of responses to the pandemic by global and regional organizations, in order to engender effective cooperation that is conducive to an equitable recovery. Expanded efforts to develop and adopt international norms and standards on managing fiscal stimulus packages and fiscal policy in times of crisis are necessary enablers, in particular for ensuring adequate levels of transparency, accountability and participation.