

Outcome Document

First International Ministerial Roundtable on Public Administration

1-2 April 2019

Ramallah, Palestine

Initiated by the General Personnel Council of the State of Palestine under the auspices of His Excellency, Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, and in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Ministers of Public Administration from 35 countries and representatives of nine international public administration organisations met in the **First International Ministerial Roundtable on Public Administration** in the city of Ramallah, Palestine, on 1 April 2019, as part of Palestine’s role as Chair of the G77 and China for 2019. The roundtable meeting aimed at concerting efforts of the international community and various institutions towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The meeting was organised in the context of increasingly shifting nature of the political, economic, social and cultural landscape and in light of the rapid pace of technological advancements, which has had a significant impact at a global level.

Country representatives and international organisations outlined major economic, social and environmental challenges that face developing countries from the perspective of administrative development, particularly in relation to SDGs 5, 16, and 17 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Participants discussed the best ways to address these challenges by setting key priorities, which can be collectively implemented to enhance public administration performance in participating countries. **Participants adopted the “Palestine Declaration” of Public Administration, which recognises that public administration reform is a critical prerequisite for countries around the world to achieve SDGs, eliminate all forms of poverty and discrimination, and move forward to promote development and welfare of citizens.**

1. Participants stressed the importance of Palestine’s initiative to hold this meeting, which brought together Ministers of Administrative Development and international public administration actors, to build global partnerships and common strategies. This in turn will support the realization of the SDGs, particularly in relation to administrative development within the framework of SDGs 5, 16, and 17. It will ultimately lead to disseminating successful best practices and exchanging expertise, with a view to expediting action towards achieving the SDGs in relation to public administration:

- ❖ **SDG 5:** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- ❖ **SDG 16:** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
- ❖ **SDG 17:** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development.

2. Ministers and representatives of international organisations indicated that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was launched over three years ago and despite the tireless efforts made, the pace of implementation is far from achieving sustainable development for all and leaving no one behind. Participants emphasised their commitment to continue working on a participatory basis in order to realise the objectives stated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
3. Participants highlighted that the need still exists to introduce substantial transformation and long-term reforms to public administration systems. These reforms should inherently be directed at promoting effective policy-making, evidence-based decision-making, and common development strategies to actualize the SDGs.
4. Participants reiterated that strong public administration system in countries around the world, was a main leverage for public policy-making to support stability of political, economic and social apparatuses in these countries. Participants noted the need to link relevant public policies to SDGs by boosting new roles of public administration in light of the technological advancement and open governments within limited resources.
5. Participants firmly believe that a periodic roundtable would advance new and innovative ideas on a global level, ultimately contributing to the acceleration in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Periodic roundtables will also provide a platform for dialogue to overcome difficulties and challenges to achieving SDGs and promote an optimal use of ICT, exchange of expertise, success stories and best practices. It will also identify the most significant intervention priorities of international organisations and institutions, consolidate cooperation, and build bilateral and multilateral partnerships between all countries and international actors.
6. Participants reviewed key challenges in the implementation of SDGs 5, 16, and 17 from the perspective of public administration in participating countries. These challenges were identified in a series of local, regional and international preparatory meetings, which brought together public administration experts and representatives from participating countries. Challenges were highlighted in the outcome of Arab, regional and international conferences held over the past three years (2016-2018), as well as in actionable decisions of the following nine institutions: International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS), International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA), Latin American Group of Public Administration (LAGPA), Middle East and North Africa Public Administration Research (MENAPAR), Arab Organization for Administrative Development (ARADO),

African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM), United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (UNESCWA), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

Goal 5: Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but also an essential pillar for peace, prosperity and sustainably around the world.

5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere, including under regulations, laws and policies.

5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.

5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life

7. Participants agreed that **key challenges**, developing countries face, in implementing **SDG 5** as pertain to public administration include:
 - a. Constraints on employment opportunities for women, inadequate social protection, limited representation, and inability to effectively and actively express women's needs.
 - b. Discrimination against women in public institutions, disregard of gender issues in legislative frameworks and laws, and inadequate women's participation in national plans to implement SDGs.
8. Participants highlighted **key recommendations to address those challenges** from the perspective of public administration:
 - a. Ensure that civil service and public administration sector strategies, legislative frameworks, laws, and public policies are responsive to gender issues.
 - b. Empower women to play leading and administrative roles to ensure they exert influence on the decision-making process.
 - c. Promote control over administrative and legal processes to ensure non-discrimination against women, gender equality, and respect for human rights.
 - d. Involve male and female civil servants and public administrative staff, on an equal level, in developing and adjusting public policies and laws on civil service and public administration.
 - e. Ensure the public budget is gender sensitive through public finance management, guarantee continuity of the public budget even at times of political crises and wars between countries, and promote cooperation between states and international

- organisations to fund and support the maintenance of financial resources and implement activities that promote gender equality.
- f. Develop gender responsive statistical databases for civil service and public administration with a view to serving decisions and public policies of the State.

Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. This is the backbone of public administration and a key principle of good governance.

16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all

16.5 Substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms

16.6 Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels

16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels

16.8 Broaden and strengthen the participation of developing countries in the institutions of global governance

16.10 Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements

9. Participants agreed that **key challenges**, developing countries face, in implementing **SDG 16** as pertain to public administration include:
- a. Inflexible public administration and limited responsiveness to global economic and political changes.
 - b. Widespread corruption is a phenomenon that impacts social, cultural and administrative life in states. Manifestations of corruption has many forms, ranging from political, moral, administrative and financial corruption in the form of bribes, nepotism, favouritism, extortion, misappropriation of public funds, money laundering, obstruction of justice, etc.
 - c. Rigid leadership in public administration, complicated regulations, laws and administrative processes of public administration, and resistance to change have been intrinsic in the culture and conduct of public institutions.
 - d. Political instability obstructs state building efforts in vulnerable and conflict-affected States despite interventions aimed at establishing stable public administration systems. Political instability involves government inability to successfully handle crises and manage conflicts within societies, which sometimes feature political violence.
 - e. Unfocused public administration reform prioritisation and weak confidence in public administrative capacities. Trust between the regime and authority on one

- hand, and citizens and society on the other, is enhanced by good governance, citizens' right of access to information, particularly public records, engagement in public administration reform priority setting, and promotion of social justice and development programmes for the benefit of marginalised and vulnerable groups, such as the youth and women. Public confidence is also improved by maintaining fundamental freedoms and empowering public oversight of the government as well as relevant activities and programmes. All of which will be consolidated by providing needed guarantees for public oversight.
- f. Excessive centralisation in administrative functions and public institutions and failure to engage community groups to contribute to policy- and decision-making with a view to implementing SDGs.
 - g. Spiralling violent conflicts in many countries around the world over the past few years. These conflicts have directly and indirectly impacted the course of development and economic growth. Most often, conflicts result in long-term grievances that last for generations. Sexual violence, crime, exploitation, and torture also prevail at times of conflict or in the absence of the rule of law. Hence, States must take measures to ensure protection of the most at-risk groups.
 - h. Failure to enforce laws and court decisions, resulting in inequality before the law and lack of accountability of senior staff.
10. Participants highlighted **key recommendations to address those challenges** from the perspective of public administration:
- a. Ensure that public administration is responsive to changes by developing risk management plans, ensure other alternatives are available, strengthen existing capacities and national workforce. In addition to improving staff skills and capacities, human and technical resources: Restructure the local economy to improve productivity and returns. Improve work methods, management and production in a manner that is dynamic, flexible and capable of responding to changes. Additionally, a methodology of strategic thinking, foresight and prediction of changes, using ICT and the internet, creativity, innovation and excellence in public administration should be encouraged, including automation of regulatory framework, processes, legislation, and administrative bylaws.
 - b. Fight corruption, enhance performance of the government and administrative apparatus, develop policies, processes, and legal and judicial frameworks that support the anti-corruption activity, achieve social justice, promote community participation to eliminate corruption, develop principles of financial and administrative control, consolidate the principle of judicial independence, promote the role of the media in the detection of corruption cases, and facilitate and place access to information within the framework of clear laws. In addition, public budgets should be improved, using international budgeting standards and

- invigorating a participatory approach to preparing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating these budgets to ensure effective and prioritised use of resources, and to eliminate corruption and waste of resources.
- c. Set reform priorities so as to cover institutions, political structures, financial and administrative regulations. Reform should promote institutional capacities, enhance technical and administrative competences, release potential, fulfil urgent humanitarian needs, rehabilitate physical infrastructure, audit resources, improve the quality of government services, and establish the principles of transparency and accountability.
 - d. Integrate the youth in political, economic and development life, promote investment in the youth as development actor, engage the youth in policy-making, monitoring and accountability in sustainable development issues, work towards consolidating and scaling up administrative leaders within creative programmes, set clear and transparent standards to select leaders, and adopt a leadership model based on a participatory and integrative approach to exchange expertise between leading activists and decision-makers. This approach will be responsive to national and international changes and developments.
 - e. Maintain political stability by building mutual trust and confidence between all parties within the State to ensure advancement and development, work towards setting democratic code of ethics in the policy-making process, allow room for dialogue, and reduce gaps between citizens, appreciate citizens' needs in order to achieve targeted development in States and, ensure citizens' satisfaction.
 - f. Promote citizenship values, safeguard fundamental freedoms, and allow public control over the government and its activities and programmes with a view to creating an enabling environment of political systems in States. In addition to ensuring everyone's right of access to information and justice, this will promote social justice and development programmes in favour of marginalised and vulnerable groups. The government will also focus on improving mechanisms for dialogue and communication with the people and promoting institutional responsiveness.
 - g. Confront conflicts by consolidating the rule of law, enforcing main principles of domestic laws, implementing court decisions, eliminating the flow of illegal weapons, and adopting interim solutions and policies on various development aspects. International efforts will focus on promoting peace, reconstructing affected countries and areas, and supporting humanitarian and development initiatives in countries that face crises arising from displacement.
 - h. Engage relevant stakeholders in various levels of decision-making. Society from across the spectrum should participate in setting strategies and priority and participate in policy-making. An inclusive and participatory approach will be

embraced to problem-solving, decision-making and resource allocation at local and national levels.

Goal 17: Partnership for the Goals

Revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

17.6 Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms, in particular at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism.

17.9 Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the sustainable development goals, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation.

17.16 Enhance the global partnership for sustainable development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, in particular developing countries.

17.18 By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.

11. Participants agreed that **key challenges** developing countries face in implementing **SDG 17**, as pertain to public administration, include:

- a. Weak administration of public service delivery, inadequate public-private-civil society coordination and cooperation in managing common relations in line with a clearly defined and specific mechanism for partnership. Political will is lacking so as to enforce values and principles of civil service and public administration.
- b. Insufficient coordination and cooperation between public administration institutions among developing countries to help achieve the SDGs, and a development gap between regions in developing countries exist due to maladministration of national planning and budgeting processes.
- c. Lack of data and analysis capacity, inadequate statistics needed to set national priorities, goals and objectives in line with States' conditions and aspirations.

- d. Sustainable development funding challenges, requiring international partnerships. These are not limited to formal development aid provided by developed countries, but also involve recruiting and promoting direct foreign investment and partnerships with the private sector.
12. Participants highlighted **key recommendations to address those challenges** from the perspective of public administration:
- a. Scale up cooperation between various sectors, develop clear and specific partnership mechanisms, consolidate a South-South, North-South real participatory approach to action - on the level of public administration - in science, technology and innovation; exchange know-how, and promote the development, dissemination and distribution of environmentally friendly technologies to assist countries in implementing relevant priorities under the Sustainable Development Agenda.
 - b. Promote strategic administration of national planning and budgeting processes, consolidate mechanisms for partnership with all relevant stakeholders, and secure funding to realise SDGs. This relies on developing the economy to contribute towards strengthening capacities, fair distribution of wealth, tax reforms, and support productive sectors.
 - c. Work towards managing dialogue between all parties, including governments and representatives of the private sector, civil society, and international organisations on the current context of and challenges to development. A roadmap, including development alternatives, can be developed to improve the quality of services provided to citizens.
13. Ministers and international organisations reaffirmed that achieving the SDGs would require renewed and strengthened global partnerships, which bring together governments, civil society, private sector, United Nations, and other actors. It also requires the mobilization of all available resources. Promoting support to developing countries, particularly the least developed ones, is key to scoring fair progress for all.
14. Participants reiterated the **importance of public administration in economic, social, political, environmental and cultural policy-making and use of technology** to achieve the SDGs within the following frameworks:
- a. Promote the role of public administration as a development pillar and priority in public policy making to support and consolidate good governance in States.
 - b. Strengthen international support to provide effective and specific capacity building to developing countries in support of national plans to implement all SDGs, including in North-South and among South-South countries.
 - c. Improve the legal and policy making environment.

- d. Develop national sustainable development strategies, based on short-term plans for immediate implementation as well as long-term post-crisis plans, as is the case in some neighbouring countries.
- e. Develop action plans at the country level for the implementation of the SDGs.
- f. Engage the private sector and civil society as partners in achieving the SDGs.
- g. Promote partnerships and organise joint activities between all regional and international actors in relation to sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- h. Establish international and national bodies to follow up on implementation of the SDGs.
- i. Create a regional network to influence public policy making and implementation.
- j. Expand and promote participation of developing countries in global governance institutions.
- k. Reactivate statistical bodies in countries to establish indicators and monitor progress towards achieving the SDGs.
- l. Consolidate partnerships between states and exchange experiences arising from the ministerial roundtable meeting in the State of Palestine.
- m. Engage the private sector and civil society in setting and implementing development plans and programmes at the national level.
- n. Promote a democratic participation pattern in managing development programmes and activities within states.
- o. Raise awareness and consolidate concepts and discourse through intergovernmental cooperation and coordination to ensure handling and interacting with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as an integrated development programme.
- p. Highlight the role of volunteers, young people and women in the achievement of development goals.
- q. Focus on media, awareness raising and communication with all stakeholders to promote the SDGs.
- r. Support education policies in states with intellectual concepts on the importance of achieving the SDGs.
- s. Integrate the SDGs in education and capacity development programs and strengthen public administration institutions to be able to support the implementation of the SDGs and provide quality assurance of educational programs.
- t. Promote cooperation in science, technology and innovation, including North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation.
- u. Create an enabling environment to develop ICT and promote communications/ ICT networks, applications and services.

- v. Provide human and institutional capacity building, provide data and statistics, capitalise on digital inclusion, and provide focused assistance to countries with urgent needs.
 - w. Strengthen the capacity of states to develop ICT strategies and solutions to cope with increasing challenges.
 - x. Provide capacity building to states to integrate ICT innovation into national development plans and disseminate innovative management awards in the public sector.
 - y. Promote the role of governments and all stakeholders to enhance ICT for development.
15. Participants reiterated the importance of integration between the three dimensions of sustainable development, namely, sustainable and inclusive economic development, social integration, and environment protection. Integration will be balanced, without focusing on a dimension at the expense of another.
16. Ministers and international organisations welcomed the progress made by developing countries towards implementing the SDGs at a national level. However, they emphasised that achieving the SDGs would require stronger partnerships and cooperation at the global, regional and local levels and more financial support directed towards building capacities in developing countries.
17. Participants noted that the high-level political forum on sustainable development is assigned to provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations on implementing sustainable development commitments. The forum plays a pivotal role in supervising the monitoring and review processes of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at a global level.
18. Participants agreed that this ministerial meeting would be a global platform of public administration, cooperation, and experience sharing and agreed to meet periodically once every two years, in a host member country. Participants stressed the need to work on a joint action plan to improve cooperation and strengthen partnerships among participants on the implementation of the SDGs. Inter-partnerships in public administration will be built to benefit from relevant experiences, achievements and expertise in light of successive global and regional changes. Progress against the action plan is proposed to be evaluated on a biannual basis in periodic meetings of the platform. Recommendations of this, and subsequent, meetings will be submitted to the high-level political forum on sustainable development.
19. Finally, participants expressed their sincere thanks to the State of Palestine for hosting this First International Ministerial Roundtable on Public Administration,

which marks a first step to improve partnerships and cooperation among participating countries and institutions towards promoting public administration and achieving the SDGs. Participants expressed their best wishes of success for Palestine in leading the G77 and China, in 2019.

20. Participants resolved to hold the next meeting in 2021 in *****, the capital of *****.

List of participating countries and international organisations:

- African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM)
- Arab Organization for Administrative Development (ARADO).
- Arab Planning Institute, State of Kuwait.
- Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
- International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA).
- International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS).
- Islamic Republic of Mauritania.
- Kingdom of Bahrain
- Kingdom of Eswatini
- Kingdom of Denmark
- Kingdom of Lesotho
- Kingdom of Morocco
- Kingdom of Tonga
- Latin American Group of Public Administration (LAGPA).
- Middle East and North Africa Public Administration Research (MENAPAR).
- Montenegro
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
- Oriental Republic of Uruguay.
- Republic of Chad
- Republic of Estonia
- Republic of Ethiopia
- Republic of Ghana
- Republic of Ireland
- Republic of Kazakhstan
- Republic of Lithuania
- Republic of Maldives
- Republic of Malawi
- Republic of Moldova
- Republic of Namibia
- Republic of Niger
- Republic of Peru.
- Republic of Poland
- Republic of Romania
- Republic of Serbia
- Republic of Sierra Leone
- Republic of Southern Sudan
- Republic of Sudan

- Republic of Tunisia
- Republic of Uganda
- Republic of Vanuatu
- Slovak Republic
- United States of America
- United States of Mexico
- United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (UNESCWA).
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).