What makes effective governance

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How does one know when countries have implemented good governance? Although a cornerstone of all developmental efforts and the sine qua non of sustainability, governance is often nebulous. As a concept, it is hard to decipher. As a practice, it is hard to pin down. We can debate endlessly over the different elements that can go into its conceptual foundations. We can apply all kinds of elaborate models of analysis to get to the bottom of it. All efforts will surely and squarely lead to our pure dazzlement by the richness of its multifarious applications around the world.

Principles of effective governance for sustainable development, developed by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) and endorsed by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) last July in New York, aim to tackle precisely these features of governance: how to lucidly operationalize it so that everyone can find common ground when talking about its scope and scale; and of course, how to integrate it organically into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development so that no one is left behind.

These eleven Principles of effective governance are:

- **Effectiveness**: 1) competence; 2) sound policy making; and 3) collaboration;
• **Accountability:** 4) integrity, 5) transparency and 6) independent oversight; and
• **Inclusiveness:** 7) leaving no one behind, 8) non-discrimination, 9) participation, 10) subsidiarity and 11) intergenerational equity.

The principles bring together commonly applied strategies, many of which have been recognized and endorsed over the years in various United Nations forums, resolutions and treaties. To be exact, CEPA has identified sixty-two such strategies; and its next challenge is to weave them together in coherent and cohesive ways so that the global tapestry of governance can be made more visible and legible for everyone.

Our next step in our staunch commitment to supporting ECOSOC in its vision to promote sustainable development with human dignity is to operationalize the principles so that effective governance and public institutions can directly and vigorously feed into SDG16 and the rest of the Goals.

In its eighteenth session last month in New York, CEPA outlined a three-pronged roadmap for progress: First, efforts should be channeled towards collecting further evidence of what works and what does not, under different sets of circumstances. Second, all relevant stakeholders should be engaged in formulating and upgrading the principles. And thirdly, principles backed up with evidence-based governance indicators must form the analytical basis for assessing impact of reforms.

It is heartening to see that Member States, such as Ecuador, have expressed interest in adopting the principles towards strengthening public institutions for partnerships and effective SDG implementation. CEPA will continue its cooperation with prominent organizations in the field such as the Praia Group on Governance Statistics and The International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) Development Initiative.

Governance is humbling in a way. There is no one right answer. Effective governance, on the other hand, is empowering. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is clear in its vision and objectives. Transformative pathways towards sustainability are many, but our steadfast commitment as humanity to march along them towards peace and progress is one.

For more information:

[Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA)](http://www.cepaa.org)