

Meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the
Chairs of the Functional Commissions and Expert Bodies
2 February 2021, 10:00 am – 1:00 pm
Virtual platform
Speaking points for Ms. Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi
Chair of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration

Contribution to the HLPF review of the theme for 2021

- The theme of the CEPA session this year will be: “Building inclusive, effective and resilient institutions for sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and timely implementation of the SDGs”.
- The 2021 theme is quite broad. CEPA will try to touch on all aspects, for example by examining the impact of COVID-19 on effective governance for sustainable development. We also continue our reflection on the critical issue of leaving of no one behind, among other matters.
- A preparatory working group has drawn attention to five overarching policy measures for building an inclusive and effective path for achievement of the 2030 Agenda.
 - The first recommended policy measure involves a recommitment to solid structures and processes for sustained and multilateral consultation, coordination and cooperation.
 - The second refers to a pressing need to reallocate priorities, redirect resources and reconsider policies, which have proved both dysfunctional and counterproductive, leaving countries unprepared to deal with major crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - The third is to focus on the long-term in public policymaking.
 - Fourth, there is much to be gained from recognizing that building effective public institutions is not just a technical matter linked to administrative overhead but an important, strategic policy area in itself.
 - Fifth, there is a need to bring renewed attention to Government as the provider of first and last resort if public trust is to be restored.
 - We will elaborate on all these points in our forthcoming input to the 2021 HLPF and in our deliberations at the 20th session of the Committee from the week of 16 April 2021.

Utilization of contributions of the subsidiary bodies to the HLPF and the work of ECOSOC

- I would like to recall what we have said before on this subject. CEPA, as an expert body, has flexibility in responding to the needs of ECOSOC and in providing policy advice in support of the follow-up, review and implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- In the outcome of the Integration Segment, or in its resolution on the report of CEPA, ECOSOC could consider making specific requests of the subsidiary bodies when important linkages are identified (for example in relation to CEPA discussions on public financial management and the work the Committee on International Cooperation on Tax Matters). Early guidance on the needs of the Integration Segment and HLPF would be helpful in preparing relevant outputs. Depending on the inputs needed by ECOSOC, the analytical requirements could be substantial.

- Not all interactions have to take place during the formal ECOSOC segments or at HLPF. Noting that the VNR presentations during the HLPF may not allow sufficient time to discuss all aspects of SDG implementation in depth, CEPA has initiated the practice of inviting interested VNR countries to engage in a dialogue directly with the experts on institutional aspects of SDG 16 during the Committee's annual session. CEPA members have also engaged with Government officials in informal VNR labs on issues related to institutions during HLPF.

Key initiatives to realize the Decade of Action

- CEPA agreed on a set of 11 principles of effective governance for sustainable development, building with the essential elements of SDG 16 (namely, effectiveness, accountability and inclusiveness) at its core. The principles, endorsed by ECOSOC in its resolution 2018/12, highlight the need for pragmatic and ongoing improvements in national and local governance capabilities to achieve the SDGs.
- To this end, the principles are linked to a variety of commonly used strategies for operationalizing responsive and effective governance, many of which have been recognized and endorsed over the years in various UN forums, resolutions and treaties.
- ECOSOC has encouraged Governments at all levels to consider applying the principles of effective governance for sustainable development to all public institutions and in support of the implementation of all SDGs taking into account different governance structures, national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities.
- ECOSOC also encouraged CEPA to continue to identify and review related technical guidelines to operationalize the principles and took note of the Committee's initiative to associate a set of agreed global Goal indicators with each of the principles.
- Further elaboration of the principles framework and collaboration with regional organizations to promote operationalization of the principles are among the main activities of CEPA. CEPA agreed that the principles of effective governance for sustainable development provide a useful cross-cutting framework for its future work.
- At the 20th session, we will discuss the findings of a baseline study undertaken by the African Peer Review Mechanism of the AU on the status of the principles in the African region, and a second study undertaken by the Moscow State Institute of International Relations focusing on countries of the former Soviet Union.

Implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/305

- Placing the work of ECOSOC within the context of the 2030 Agenda provides a useful point of reference for all entities in the system.
- Silo-thinking at all levels has hampered the holistic implementation of the SDGs, including cross-cutting challenges such promoting effective governance for sustainable development, addressing inequalities and leaving no one behind.
- CEPA has had productive interactions in the past with the Population Commission on demographic trends and CDP on leaving no one behind, as well as the Statistical Commission on governance indicators.
- More recently, CEPA taken up the invitation of the ECOSOC Bureau to contribute to the work of the Peacebuilding Commission. In our analysis, we look at strengthening the capacity of State institutions and re-establishing credible governance and public administration institutions and systems in countries affected by conflict.
- CEPA is open to collaboration with others throughout the ECOSOC system. This interaction may be most productive when considering a specific issue and in connection with an ongoing process.

- CEPA has placed the 2030 Agenda at the centre of its work. In examining institutional aspects of SDG 16, the Committee considers linkages with all SDGs and stresses that building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels is both a Goal in itself and enabler of implementation of all SDGs.
- CEPA takes an action-oriented approach as reflected in its work on principles of effective governance for sustainable development and commonly used strategies for their operationalization.
- CEPA supports engagement of civil society organizations, regional organizations and other relevant stakeholders by inviting a wide range of observers to its annual session. Observers are invited to participate in the deliberations while giving precedence to the expert members of the Committee.
- The Bureau continues to explore other modalities of engagement. CEPA has included ongoing review of working methods in the programme of its annual session.

Strengthening multilateralism to address today's challenges

- ECOSOC and the subsidiary machinery are part of the multilateral system so one could ask how ECOSOC itself can be strengthened and made more inclusive. It is a perennial question.
- Strengthening multilateralism comes down to (1) relevance of international organizations; (2) capacity of countries to engage on an even footing; (3) a focus on shared problems both at the national level and with respect to the global commons; (4) openness to the voices of non-Members; (5) willingness to collaborate and, when needed, compromise to address problems of common interest.
- If ECOSOC and the subsidiary bodies are already working towards these ends, as many are, then the Council is on track. Attributes such as these could be seen as performance measures.
- By placing the 2030 Agenda at the centre of its work and making an active contribution to ECOSOC and HLPF, CEPA continues to focus on the big issues of the day – even as a technical body.
- Impact is more difficult to assess but we are taking steps in that direction as well by emphasizing the need to put the ECOSOC resolutions on public administration into practice – and especially the UN CEPA principles of effective governance for sustainable development.
- CEPA is an expert body – a forum for study, discussion and the sharing of experiences. It must count on the resources of the UN system, and especially UN DESA, to get the message out and assist with follow-up.

Contribution to United Nations peacebuilding architecture

- We are pleased to have been invited to contribute to the work of the Peacebuilding Commission. At its upcoming session, CEPA will again consider issues pertaining to building strong institutions for the SDGs in countries affected by conflict and appreciates that development, peace, security and human rights are mutually reinforcing.
- At our 2020 session we advised that:
 - Strong institutions are a crucial element of peacebuilding
 - There is a significant risk that shortages of infrastructure to deal with the pandemic, as well as lockdowns and the digitalization of work, could make vulnerable populations even more vulnerable, especially in conflict affected settings.
 - Inclusive responses to the pandemic could provide an opportunity to create a sense among affected populations that inclusiveness is an important guiding principle of government.

- Promoting national ownership and enhancing governance at all levels are pivotal, since interventions are needed at all levels to address conflict-affected situations. Yet, the role of local governance in conflict-affected situations has been insufficiently examined and calls for greater attention.
 - Many conflict-affected countries rely on external actors for funding and there is concern that donor countries have shifted support towards short-term objectives rather than what may appear to be more elusive institution-building activities over the long term.
 - Key enablers of public administration reconstruction include the curbing of illicit financial flows, tax evasion and money laundering, all of which divert funds from the public treasury and undermine the provision of essential public services.
- A focus on the needs of the affected populations is what matters most.