



United Nations  
Public Service  
Forum **2017**  
22 - 23 June  
The Netherlands

## Aide-Memoire

**The Future is now:  
Accelerating Public Service Innovation for Agenda 2030**



The United Nations Public Service Forum will take place from 22 to 23 June 2017 in The Hague, Kingdom of the Netherlands, under the theme “The Future is Now: Accelerating Public Service Innovation for Agenda 2030”.

The Forum, which is held in honor of the United Nations Public Service Day, is organized by the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations of the Netherlands and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA), Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM). It will include the ceremony on the UN Public Service Awards, an Award that promotes the role, professionalism and creativity of public service and governments’ response to the challenges of the SDGs, especially in the area of delivery of services.

The ultimate goal of the Forum is to contribute to developing the capacity of governments to anticipate the various challenges posed by the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and respond in innovative ways, drawing from the strategies different countries are implementing and the related successes, challenges and difficulties.

The Forum will allow Ministers and other senior decision makers to reflect on how best to mobilize the public service and accelerate innovation for realizing the vision of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs and to leave no one behind. It will be a moment to reflect on common challenges and exchange lessons learned from the new approaches and innovations that are being experimented worldwide.

The Forum will also provide the opportunity to promote international and regional cooperation. It will allow participants to identify good practices for public services delivery and plans for adapting them to their national situation through peer-to-peer learning and cooperation. Participants are expected to go home inspired by fresh ideas, original answers, new insights and connections and feeling empowered to drive change.



## 1. Sub-themes

The Forum will provide the opportunity to discuss public administration innovations in key SDGs areas such as health or energy and distill lessons learned on how to promote leadership and capacities for innovative government; strengthen transparent, accountable and participatory institutions; overcome challenges through technology and enhance policy coherence and integration as well as promote transparency, and accountability for sustainable development.

### (a) leadership and capacities for innovative government

Today's governments are faced with rapid and unprecedented changes. They have the key responsibility to lead the implementation of the SDGs. This calls for new knowledge, skills and behaviour of the public servants. Public servants are becoming agents of change and need a renewed sense of purpose, new capacities, collaborative and consultative mindsets, and a motivation and capacity to innovate and try new approaches.

### (b) transparent, accountable and participatory institutions

A stable and open society needs a stable and open government that engages people in decision making, as called for by the SDGs, and understands their needs. To empower people to fulfill their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment, the decision making and decisions of government must be transparent and informed by a keen understanding of people's aspirations and needs. Various mechanisms, institutions and processes must be in place to ensure people's participation. Access to information collected and generated by governments is also an important pre-requisite to the exercise of fundamental rights, including the right to fully participate in the political process. Public administrations need to be open to people's opinions; creative in seeking suggestions and feedback; and prepared to work in an inclusive manner. A government that leaves no one behind.

### (c) overcoming challenges through technology

Digitalization and new technological developments, like robotics and big data analysis, are making a major difference in society. On the one hand, ICT creates major opportunities for developing public services and their impact and accessibility. On the other hand, these developments raise the question of how to make sure that socio-economic differences are not widening.

### (d) policy coherence and integration

Policy coherence or "Whole of Government" integrated approaches are critical to realize the SDGs and national development priorities. They can be defined as consistent efforts across all government departments to achieve shared goals. However, this is difficult and complex to achieve.

The Forum will discuss such public administration innovations in key SDGs areas from a public administration perspective, notably through the above-mentioned five sub-themes.



## 2. Programme

The programme will consist of:

### (A) An opening session with keynote addresses

### (B) Work in eight parallel tracks on “Public service innovations from around the world: future-proofing government and leaving no one behind”

Participants will join one of the eight tracks on specific sectors, where innovators will present their experiences and lessons. Participants will then have the opportunity to analyse and discuss public service innovations along the above-mentioned five sub-themes. Each track will have its own programme. Two tracks will include field trips to learn about innovative practices in the Netherlands.

The topics of the tracks are:

1. Job creation and prosperity
2. Excellence in delivering health services
3. Partnerships for sustainable energy
4. Cooperative management of increasing water and sea levels (field trip TBC)
5. Enabling children and youth people to achieve the Agenda 2030
6. Unlocking the potential of the furthest behind
7. Inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities
8. Circular economy: sustainable management of resources

#### 1. Job creation and prosperity

Employment is key to help people escape poverty and empower women and other vulnerable groups to enhance their well-being. The ILO reported that the total number of unemployed people will top 200 million for the first time in 2017, up from 197.1 million in 2015. It forecasts for 199.4 million this year. Economic growth is not leading to enough quality job creation. Many women and men have to accept low paid jobs in emerging and developing economies and increasingly in the developed world. Many people also continue to be employed in the informal sector. This track will explore some of the innovative approaches that governments are adopting to promote job creation, decent work and prosperity. Particular attention will be given to public sector initiatives related to migrant workers, women, older workers, persons with disabilities, indigenous people, among others. The track will also look for example at how governments can boost entrepreneurship and micro-credit, facilitate the establishment of cooperatives and small and medium enterprises, and use ICTs and data to provide services for job creation.

#### 2. Excellence in delivering health services

Without effective provision of health services, people’s rights and the principle of leaving no one behind and other goals will not be achieved. A healthy population is the foundation for a country's human capital to achieve the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable



Development Goals (SDGs). Great strides have been made since 2000 to reduce needless suffering and premature deaths that arise from preventable and treatable diseases. However, “available data show that in spite of the major progress during the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) era, major challenges remain in terms of reducing maternal and child mortality, improving nutrition, and achieving further progress in the battle against infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, neglected tropical diseases and hepatitis”<sup>1</sup>.

Supporting countries to move towards universal health coverage based on strong primary care is key to ensure that no one is left behind. Ensuring universal health coverage and access to good quality health services, and conducting integrated public health policies require mobilization of the government at all levels, the private sector, civil society, NGOs, and individuals. This track aims at exchanging ideas on how to promote innovations in delivering health services. It will also look at how to strengthen public administration capacities for effective, efficient, responsive, equitable and accountable delivery of health services for sustainable development.

### 3. Partnerships for sustainable energy (field trip TBC)

Energy is closely related to many challenges the world is facing today, such as climate change, employment, economic growth, income levels, food production, health and security. Measures to promote sustainable energy range from reducing the use of fossil fuels to promoting new ways of generating energy. To achieve the SDGs, governments need to innovate and collaborate with all relevant actors in the field. Partnerships allow everyone access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy. Governments play a crucial role in this regard. They can ensure access to modern energy and assist developing countries. In this track, participants are invited to share and learn about new approaches to developing innovative partnerships for sustainable energy.

### 4. Cooperative management of increasing water and sea levels

Water is a basic human need around the world. Climate change brings home the realization of the fundamental role that water plays in our societies. Water resources require to be managed along different timeframes and at different levels (local, regional, national, international). Today, the rise of water levels in seas and rivers is calling for increased and innovative cooperation among governments, civil society, the private sector and individuals. This track will focus on the impact of rising sea and water levels on small island developing countries and deltas.

### 5. Enabling children and young people to achieve the Agenda 2030

A major aspect of safe and inclusive societies is to make sure that future generations have the capacities to develop and build their life on. The effects of public policies and decisions will have a long-lasting impact on the lives of the next generations and influence the sustainability of our world for decennia to come.

What does it take for communities in times of individualization and globalization to ensure health, safety and education for future generations? What are the challenges of the public administrative organizations involved? How does the public sector utilise joint

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Statistics 2016: Monitoring health for the SDGs, World Health Organization



partnerships with the community in the realisation of a safe and inclusive societies? This track examines public policies and innovative services for children and youth to address poverty reduction, illiteracy, health issues, safety, and decent employment. Three main areas that this track will focus on are Child Protection, the creation of safe communities and Education.

#### 6. Unlocking the potential of the furthest behind

The 2030 Agenda calls to leave no one behind and pay special attention to the needs of vulnerable people, including the poorest of the poor, youth and children, persons with disabilities, older persons, migrants and refugees. This track will provide participants with the opportunity to explore and discuss innovative policies and services that can help to improve the lives and unlock the potential of the furthest behind. It will look at initiatives that have worked in this area and empowered vulnerable groups to be active agents of change in their own countries and contribute to peace, prosperity and sustainable development for all.

#### 7. Inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities

The world's population is projected to increase by more than one billion people within the next 15 years, reaching 8.5 billion in 2030, and to increase further to 9.7 billion in 2050 and 11.2 billion by 2100<sup>2</sup>. In 1950, 30 per cent of the world's population was urban, and by 2050, 66 per cent of the world's population is projected to be urban<sup>3</sup>. Over the last two decades, cities have emerged as the world's economic platforms for production, innovation and trade<sup>4</sup>. While cities have enabled many people to advance socially and economically, there are a number of challenges that are being caused by rapid urbanization. These include urban poverty, impact of climate change, insufficient funds to provide for basic services, notably healthcare and education, and declining infrastructure. Governments and relevant stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, need to deal with these issues. To effectively address these challenges and take advantage of the opportunities offered by urbanization, a new approach or new urban agenda is required. This track will give participants the opportunity to present and discuss challenges, opportunities and lessons learned in delivering public services and in making cities more inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. It will also address issues such as the provision of affordable housing, public transit systems, participatory planning, disaster management, air quality, and waste management.

#### 8. Circular economy: sustainable management of resources

In this track participants will be invited to share and learn about ways in which governments can promote effective use of resources. In particular, to secure the prosperity of future generations, the international community needs to take a closer look at waste management. Waste must be seen not just as waste, but as a resource for a new product. A circular economy is an industrial economy<sup>5</sup> that promotes greater resource productivity with the goal of reducing waste and avoiding pollution by design

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<sup>2</sup> World Population Prospects 2015, United Nations

<sup>3</sup> World Urbanization Prospects, 2014, United Nations

<sup>4</sup> World Cities Report 2016, UN-HABITAT

<sup>5</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Industrial\\_organization](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Industrial_organization)



or intention. This forms a stark contrast to the “take, make, dispose” model of production. This track will discuss examples of successful public service innovations and cases of effective collaboration in the area of waste management between various countries and partners including the private sector.

**(C) Work in Reflection Tables on “what is driving innovations in the public service?”**

Lessons learned from the eight parallel tracks will be presented during the plenary session of the second day of the Forum. The plenary session will be followed by four reflection tables to reflect on what key factors have driven the innovations presented during the first day and how they were influenced by leadership and capacities for innovative government; transparent, accountable and participatory institutions; use of technology to overcome challenges and policy coherence and integration. It will also give participants the opportunity to share innovations in areas not addressed in the eight tracks, and highlight what contributed to their success or posed challenges, particularly in relation to the five sub-themes of the Forum.

**(D) Ministerial Conversation**

Following the reflection tables, Ministers will be invited to reflect on the findings of the Forum and to provide their insights on how to accelerate innovations in public service moving forward.

**(E) Innovation Fair**

The Innovation Fair will showcase good practices from around the world, including the initiatives of the finalists for the 2017 UN Public Service Awards. Its aim is to inspire participants and to provide a platform to network informally.

**(F) UN Public Service Awards**

The United Nations Public Service Award is a prestigious international recognition of excellence in public service. It promotes and rewards innovation and excellence in public services for realizing the SDGs and the principle to leave no one behind, which is at the core of the 2030 Agenda. It also takes into account the various levels of development of countries while reflecting the universal nature of the SDGs. It promotes the role, professionalism and visibility of public service.



### 3. Participants and languages

The meeting will be attended by Ministers, senior government officials, Mayors, academia, and representatives from the United Nations, other international and regional organizations, civil society and the private sector.

The official languages of the meeting will be primarily English. French translation will be provided during the plenary sessions and one track.

### 4. Contact information

For information about the Forum, please visit UNDESA's website at: <https://publicadministration.un.org/en/unps2017>

Government of the Netherlands at: <http://www.UN-PSF2017.nl/>

