The 2018 United Nations Public Service Forum will take place in Marrakesh, in the Kingdom of Morocco from 21-23 June 2018, with the theme of “Transforming governance to realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”.

The overarching theme of Day One of the Forum is: Transforming governance to achieve the SDGs. Transforming the world and realizing the SDGs by 2030 will require a paradigm shift in the way societies govern themselves. It will require rethinking the role of government and the way it interacts with civil society and the private sector in managing a country’s public affairs and responding to people’s needs. There is a need for new governance models with new approaches to leadership, geared towards consultations, engagement and responding to people’s needs. New efforts are needed to improve effectiveness, inclusiveness and accountability. Also critical is reinforcing public administration’s commitment to network with other institutions, civil society and private partners, understand their needs, engage them in devising policies and innovative partnerships. Harnessing the potential and synergies among the different governance actors can bring about much change and help promote prosperity for all. New models of social innovation, and new forms of business action are needed in support of the SDGs. By partnering with the government, civil society organizations can play an essential role in raising awareness of the SDGs, including among the furthest left behind, and in co-
designing programmes and services to ensure that the poorest and most vulnerable are included in solving problems that affect them directly.

I. Focus of the workshop

“Governance of the Future: Challenges and Opportunities in Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals”

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 focuses on the importance of building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. This has brought renewed attention to the key role governance and institutions play in achieving sustainable development.

Governments across the world will need to rethink their governance models to meet the 2030 Agenda core principles and to respond to people’s demands for more responsive and inclusive services. New governance approaches will be needed to rebuild trust in government and enhance transparency and public accountability to realize the SDGs.

Current mega-trends are affecting the way governments work and how they interact with people. Understanding these global mega-trends is crucial. Multiple, evolving and mutually-reinforcing shifts are taking place at all levels of governance. “These dynamics, of geopolitical, demographic, climatic, technological, social and economic nature, enhance threats and opportunities on an unprecedented scale. Globalization and technological progress fostered extraordinary economic growth ... but their unbalanced nature led to high-income concentration and extreme inequality... Exclusion, competition over dwindling resources and shortcomings in governance undermine social cohesion and institutional robustness.”

Looking towards the future, there are many challenges in realizing sustainable development. These relate to population growth and demographic shifts. It is estimated that by 2030 our global population will increase by 1 billion. While some governments are being confronted with issues related to an ageing world, others are grappling with problems of increasing levels of youth unemployment. Conflicts, persisting poverty and climate change will lead to increasing numbers of refugees and migrants, including climate migrants. “Migrant integration is essential to achieve inclusive and sustainable economic growth.”

The expansion of middle-class consumers, particularly in developing countries, will require greater natural resources for consumption. While extreme poverty will be reduced by 2030, a growing middle class will increase the demand for food by 35%, water by 40%, and energy by 50%, posing serious

threats to our environment.\(^5\) Unless governments and people focus on ensuring resource efficiency and new patterns of production and consumption, a core component of the 2030 Agenda, these challenges will have negative effects on sustainable development.

“Frontier Technologies: Opportunities and Risks for Future Governance”

As public institutions focus on the implementation of Agenda 2030 with core principles of leaving no one behind and eradicating poverty, frontier technologies are creating both opportunities and risks for future governance. The 4\(^{th}\) industrial revolution and convergence of innovative technologies, such as big data, Internet of Things (IoT), cloud and super-computing, geo-spatial data and broadband, artificial intelligence (AI), and deep machine learning, is promoting a dramatic shift towards more data and machine-driven societies, while development challenges and social inequality continue to increase. Disruptive technologies\(^6\), including predictive analytics, are creating unforeseen opportunities in many government sectors, including health, security, water management, and the environment, among others. Yet, they are also posing risks to humanity and to the core principles of the 2030 Agenda. As stated by the United Nations Secretary-General in September 2017\(^7\), new technologies are a game changer that can boost development and transform lives in significant ways. But it may also have a negative impact on labour markets and on global security. While AI will create new jobs, others will disappear and most will be transformed\(^8\). Governments will have to create new opportunities or put in place social benefits to compensate for the loss of jobs in many industries. In addition, over 600 million jobs will need to be created by 2030 just to keep pace with the growth of the working age population.

The question of digital transformation that leaders must address is not “if”, but “how” it should happen and how they should prepare to leverage digital opportunities and address their risks. Unless technological breakthroughs are handled responsibly, they could cause incalculable damage. New technologies should not be allowed for illicit activities, such as uses of cyberspace for terrorist purposes, promoting hatred and undermining humanity’s security. Human rights must be protected both off line and online. “Cyber-prevention” aims to mitigate the risks to security in cyberspace. One of the developments which requires immediate attention is lethal autonomous weapon systems (LAWS) which could be altered to attack human, including civilian, targets. There are also growing concerns about data privacy and data protection. Governments across the world need to work together to counter these threats.

The digital transformation will not only depend on technologies but more fundamentally it will require a comprehensive approach that aims at creating public value and offering people accessible, fast, reliable and personalized services. The public sector in many countries is ill prepared for these developments. Traditional forms of regulation may not apply. It is clear that we need a new paradigm shift in strategic thinking, legislation and regulation. Some governments have already started to prepare ethical and legal

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6 "Disruptive technology is the one that moves an established technology and shakes the industry or a revolutionary product that creates a completely new industry. Clayton M. Christensen, a professor at Harvard Business School, coined the term "Disruptive Technology."


frameworks on AI development. It is also important that when adopting new technologies, they are embedded in specific social contexts and properly regulated to have a positive impact on society.

Without targeted measures, the digital divide will also be widened – and the principles of leave no one behind will be challenged by the 4th industrial revolution. Scientific knowledge, technologies and knowhow created in the digital age will have to be carefully managed to eliminate the risks of a new, wider, digital divide. To have any significant social impact in using new technologies, governments need to partner with the private sector in research and development, including in addressing the broadband connectivity gap.

Effective collection and use of disaggregated data from various sources and sensors will be essential to providing personalized services, particularly to the vulnerable groups.

“Transforming Capacities for Effective Future Governance”

Current governance models and capacities need to be transformed to embrace the principles of the 2030 Agenda, while reducing the risks of disruptive technologies and addressing current and future mega-trends. More than ever before, governments will need to cultivate the capacity for change. Innovation will play a critical role and need to be stirred to areas where it will make a difference for the lives of the poorest countries and people.

Visioning and building the capacities for the government of the future towards the realization of Agenda 2030 is a moving target requiring innovative multi-lateral and multi-stakeholder approaches to public governance. It is clear that governments and societies must respond to an increasing number of present and future challenges, with limited resources and often-outdated capacities. To realize the SDGs, governments will need to work with all stakeholders mobilizing people to become agents of change. Governance actors will also have to work together to create more balanced, equitable and socially inclusive societies. The private sector can play a proactive role in fostering new public private partnerships and embrace social corporate responsibility.

People will increasingly expect from governments what they experience from retail services and the private sector. Governments will thus need to deliver services in a personalized and seamless way through a variety of channels, including by using new technologies. This will require governments to be at the forefront of the digital transformation, including instituting appropriate ethical and legal frameworks. To ensure trust in government, data protection and privacy should become a core concern of governments across the globe.

Transformational leadership in this era of rapid change will be essential to advance sustainable development. Leaders are being called upon to create a shared vision of society, strategy and implementation plan in support of the SDGs. Governments will need to bring together and mobilize people around long-term agendas that place emphasis on reducing inequalities and leaving no one behind. They will need to strengthen institutions’ capacity to address dynamic and emerging forces from climate change, population growth, growing inequality, and rapid technological change.

One critical dimension for SDG implementation and review is raising awareness and building the capacity of civil servants. Current and future mega-trends coupled with the emergence of disruptive
technologies are putting higher demands on public servants’ capacity to anticipate and adapt to a rapidly evolving environment. Without a dedicated effort to help governments mobilize and build the capacity of civil servants at all levels, progress on the SDGs may be undermined by ineffective practices. For the SDGs to be realized, civil servants need to understand what they aim to achieve and how they relate to their country’s situation. They also need to identify the complex interactions and trade-offs underlying the SDGs, envisage various policy scenarios, adopt long-term policy horizons, have the capacity to design, implement and monitor integrated policies. New capacities and tools for integrated evidence-based policy-making are needed to plan for the future. Both forecasting and back casting will become essential tools to realize the global goals by 2030.

Civil servants will also need to work across different government departments and with other state institutions, as well as raise public awareness and involve civil society and other stakeholders. Civil servants need to develop new attitudes, skills, and behaviours to engage people in the localization of the SDGs. In an era of disruption and rapid change, the need for transformative governance agendas across stakeholders and governments cannot be understated.

II. Objective

Through presentations and discussion, the workshop will examine the key challenges and opportunities that will likely affect the governance of the future. It will also explore how governments, in developing and developed countries alike, can transform capacities and institute appropriate ethical and legal frameworks for the governance of the future. This workshop will result in a UN publication with substantive contributions from panelists.

III. Organization

Participants include senior policymakers, public governance experts, practitioners, civil society representatives and academics. The workshop will be conducted in English with simultaneous interpretation in Spanish and organised into a mix of presentations, interactive discussions and strategy groups to define key outcomes and messages for the United Nations Public Service Forum’s wrap-up session.

IV. Structure

This workshop will be composed of three sessions. The third session will have two working groups as well as a closing debate.

Session 1 - “Governance of the Future: Challenges and Opportunities in Realizing the SDGs”

Session 1 (1 hour) will focus on present and future sustainable development challenges and opportunities. It will examine how these challenges will impact governance towards the realization of the 2030 Agenda.

Guiding questions:

1. What are the challenges, opportunities and mega-trends that will affect governance and public institutions in realizing the SDGs?
2. What are the characteristics of the governance of the future?
3. How can governance models be transformed to embed the 2030 Agenda principles and to advance the SDGs?

4. How can governments, working in partnership with civil society and the private sector, address present and future challenges to implementing Agenda 2030?

**Session 2 - “Frontier Technologies: Opportunities and Risks for Future Governance”**

In this session (90 minutes), participants will discuss the opportunities and risks of frontier technologies for future governance.

**Guiding questions:**

1. What are the likely trends, including opportunities and challenges of frontier technologies that will impact future governance? What are their possible applications for the SDGs?

2. With frontier technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), how will societies and public governance respond and how can AI be leveraged for better governance?

3. How can we close the rising digital divide among countries and social groups, with reference to disruptive technologies?

4. How can data and predictive analytics be leveraged in support of good governance for the SDGs?

**Session 3 - Strategy Thinking: Transforming Capacities for Effective Future Governance**

Session 3 will provide the opportunity to discuss what capacities are needed to transform public institutions and legal frameworks to realize the 2030 Agenda. It will look at how institutional capacity and partnerships can be strengthened to formulate, re-design, implement and evaluate policies to meet newly arising challenges. It will also examine what new skills current and future civil servants will need to realize the SDGs.

This Session will be divided into two parallel working groups. The first one will look at overall capacities needed to anticipate future scenarios and to ensure governments are well equipped to design and implement long-term plans to implement the SDGs. The second group will consider how to leverage frontier technologies for future governance while minimizing their risks.

**Working Group 1: Capacities for effective future governance**

**Guiding questions:**

1. What capacities are needed for effective future governance in support of the 2030 Agenda, bearing in mind mega-trends and frontier technologies? Please think about 3 to 5 essential capacities.

2. What capacities are needed to anticipate future scenarios and ensure that governments are well equipped to implement the SDGs? Please list 3 to 5 key capacities.
3. What capacities are needed to strengthen partnerships for policy design, implementation and review to meet newly arising challenges and the SDGs?

4. How can leadership in all sectors be transformed for governance of the future? What are the main characteristics of transformational leadership? Please discuss your country or your organization’s experience.

**Working Group 2: Capacities to leverage new technologies for future governance**

**Guiding questions:**

1. What strategies are governments putting in place to utilize frontier technologies while minimizing their negative impact?

2. What capacities do governments need to promote a holistic approach for digital transformation that supports sustainable development and the core principles of the 2030 Agenda while minimizing the risks of frontier technologies?

3. How can governments promote a culture of innovation and capacities for anticipating change?

4. How can governments ensure that they have the capacities to proactively drive the development and use of frontier technologies for good, including AI, together with the private sector, academia and civil society? How can governments partner with different stakeholders to build capacities needed to leverage frontier technologies?

5. How can governments work together with other stakeholders to promote digital inclusion while minimizing the adverse consequences that new technologies could have in terms of social polarization?

**V. Contact Persons**

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