

AIDE-MÉMOIRE

22 August, 1997

Title: Colloquium on *Promoting Ethics in the Public Service*

Sponsor: Council of State Reform
and
Ministry of Federal Administration and State Reform
Federal Republic of Brazil

Co-organizer: United Nations
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Division for Governance, Public Administration and Finance

Dates: 8 - 10 December, 1997

Location: Brazilian Institute of Public Administration (proposed)
Brasilia, Brazil

Background

1. Ethics is gaining prominence in the discourse about governance today. There is a perception that standards in public life is in decline. This raises questions about the costs of misconduct on the part of those who have been entrusted with guarding public interest and resources. These costs are losses in trust and confidence in public institutions and losses in precious resources which were meant to support the economic and social development of nations and people. There is a move worldwide to restore a measure of trust and integrity in public institutions and officials to safeguard democracy and promote better governance.
2. It could be argued that the perception of a fall in public standards is linked to the shifting role of the state which is undergoing tremendous reform. Globalization, technological advances, spreading democratization and fiscal crises are challenging states to deal with strong external forces, be "smart" in serving its citizenry, devolve power, and divest itself of obsolete activities. As a result, the public service as an institution is under pressure to transform itself to respond to these changes. As public servants are asked to take on new and sometimes conflicting roles, there is a need for a cost-effective structure and an encouraging culture to enforce standards and guide their behavior.
3. Brazil, like many other countries, is currently examining and reforming the role of the state and its apparatus. The launch of its reform in 1995 seeks changes in the administrative chapter of its 1988 Constitution, public institutions defined by their functions and place in the state sector, administrative style from legal-rational to managerial, and the social security system for public servants and other state sector employees. Within this context, the Council of State Reform and the Ministry of Federal Administration and State Reform are considering another dimension of its public administration -- ethics in government. Given its recent past -- the end in 1985 of a twenty-year long authoritarian regime, a new Constitution in 1988, the impeachment of its first directly elected President in 1992, and a series of scandals in the last few years -- now is a crucial time to examine integrity in government. This might begin in the Executive Branch of government, and more specifically the public service, by redefining values, ensuring new or modified standards of behavior, and inspiring public servants to higher levels of conduct. To make this ethics initiative a success, all partners in governance -- both federal and state levels of government, the private sector and civil society -- need to play an active role.
4. In April 1996, the United Nations General Assembly, at its resumed 50th Session, adopted resolution 50/225 on Public Administration and Development. The resolution confirmed the vital importance of strengthening public administration for development and emphasized the need for cooperation among United Nations departments and agencies in supporting capacity-building in the broad area of governance, public administration and finance. Specifically, the resolution affirmed the need for public administration systems to be sound and efficient while, in paragraph 13, it acknowledged that the role of the United Nations programmes in public administration is to assist Governments, at their request, and to focus *inter alia* on "strengthening government capacity for policy development, administrative restructuring, civil service reform, human resources development and public administration training."

5. It was against the backdrop of this landmark resolution and a rapidly changing environment for public administration world-wide, that the recently concluded Thirteenth Meeting of Experts on the United Nations Programme in Public Administration and Finance (27 May to 4 June 1997) adopted "re-designing the State for socio-economic development and change" as the overall theme. One of the principal issues explored within this context was that of the ethical values, professionalism and the image of the public service. According to the report of the Meeting (para. 63), to face the current challenges, the public service ought to be reinforced in terms both of its competence base and integrity. The Meeting, therefore, recommended (para 26) that the United Nations should work together with Member States to evaluate existing programmes, policies, legislation and regulations to further their effectiveness in enhancing professionalism, ethics and performance in the public service, thus restoring its prestige.
6. In light of the above-mentioned mandates in resolution 50/225 of the General Assembly and the recommendations of the Meeting of Experts, the United Nations proposes to support the Brazilian Government in holding a colloquium from 8 - 10 December, 1997 on *Promoting Ethics in the Public Service*. This colloquium which will be jointly hosted by the Council of State Reform and the Ministry of Federal Administration and State Reform of the Federal Republic of Brazil will focus on collaboration between the federal and state levels of government and all segments of society in Brazil in launching a national public service ethics initiative.

Objectives and Outcomes

7. The colloquium will serve as a forum for discussion, exploration and cross-fertilization of experience and ideas with the intent of making practical recommendations. The objectives of this National Seminar include:
 - to bring together representatives of both federal and state levels of government, businesses, academia, professional associations, media, non-governmental organizations and concerned citizens of Brazil as well as speakers/resource persons from other countries, international organizations, and experts to identify and examine issues in promoting public service ethics,
 - to examine, discuss about, and analyze in depth these issues within the governance context of Brazil with the purpose of making practical, action-oriented recommendations, and
 - to strategize and forge a cost-effective national initiative in promoting ethics in the public service.
8. The anticipated outcomes would include:
 - action-oriented proposals for approaches, strategies and policies to promote ethical values, standards and behavior in the public service of the federal government of Brazil, and

- appropriate structures and strategies to promote cooperation, the exchange of information and expertise, networking and joint activities among the federal and state authorities in partnership with private enterprises and civil society organizations such as professional associations, academia, the members of the media, etc.

Issues to be discussed

9. In light of the above-mentioned objectives and outcomes, the following groups of issues will be discussed:
 - the changing role of public servants everywhere and, in Brazil, also the reform of the state and its apparatus as well as their implications for redefining values in a modern public service, prioritizing them and determining trade-offs in their impact in safeguarding integrity and promoting performance and proper conduct,
 - translating values into setting, communicating and enforcing desired standards of behavior through codes of conduct exercises, training packages, and penalizing or prosecuting misconduct, etc.,
 - influencing the actual behavior in the public service through social, cultural and environmental means such as good examples by the leadership, a climate of professionalism, clear management and accountability controls, reporting or “whistle blowing” procedures, etc.,
 - the need for collaboration between all actors of governance: the government, the private sector, and civil society to enable a successful national initiative, and
 - specific practical recommendations for immediate implementation by the federal government.

Output

10. Following the practice of other similar gatherings, each of the major themes could become the subject matter of a technical paper. Prepared by leading specialists/resource persons, they would be made available to all of the participants in Portuguese and/or English, preferably ahead of the colloquium. The technical papers would be presented in plenary session, followed by comments from panel discussants and a general floor discussion. Subthemes would be explored in greater depth during round tables with the objective of stimulating participants to share their experience and come up with practical recommendations. A moderator and a rapporteur would be appointed for each plenary session and a facilitator and rapporteur for each working group to steer discussions and highlight common themes. The overall objective is to come up with a report to be presented to the President of Brazil, which would faithfully reflect the current

situation and concerns in the country and produce recommendations for a national coordinated strategy for an ethics initiative in the public service. This would be the task of a general rapporteur.

Timing - Venue

11. The organizers propose holding the event during two-and-a-half working days from 8 to 11 December at the Brazilian Institute of Public Administration or another suitable conference site in Brasilia, Brazil. Participants would be expected to arrive in time to confirm registration early Monday morning and depart Wednesday afternoon.

Participants

12. About 150 participants are anticipated, with a team of two to three -- from each of the federal ministries and the 26 states and the Federal District of Brasilia, the Congress and the Judiciary -- consisting of senior civil servants in charge of public service reform or interested in ethics management. In addition, representatives of businesses, academia, non-governmental and international organizations and other countries are expected as discussants, moderators and facilitators. The costs of the colloquium for participants would be covered by their ministries, and they will be able to register in advance. The costs of other representatives will be provided by the colloquium or other sponsors.

Administrative Arrangements

13. The colloquium will be co-sponsored and co-organized by the Council of State Reform and the Ministry of Federal Administration and State Reform in Brazil. The two sponsors will jointly make and manage all logistical preparations, finalize and approve the colloquium format and programme, invite speakers and participants, manage the colloquium itself, and carry out all follow-up activities including issuing a final report.
14. The United Nations will assist in the design of overall colloquium format and programme by making suggestions, assist with model preparatory documents based on similar previous events, send a representative and resource person to the colloquium itself, and produce a draft of the English version of the final report.

Languages

15. The working languages of the colloquium will be Portuguese and English. Simultaneous interpretation will be provided by the Brazilian Government. Translations of presentation papers from Portuguese into English and vice versa will also be provided, assuming that papers are received sufficiently ahead of time.

a:\braziad.wpd