2010 UNITED NATIONS PUBLIC SERVICE DAY – AWARDS AND FORUM
ON
“THE ROLE OF PUBLIC SERVICE IN ACHIEVING THE MILLENNIUM
DEVELOPMENT GOALS: CHALLENGES AND BEST PRACTICES”

21-23 June 2010
Auditorio y Centro de Convenciones AXA
Barcelona, Spain,

AIDE-MEMOIRE

1. SPONSORSHIP AND PURPOSE

The United Nations Public Service Day - Awards Ceremony and Forum will take place in Barcelona, Spain from 21 to 23 June 2010. It will be organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM) in collaboration with the Government of Catalonia of Spain, which will host the event.

The event will be articulated in two components. The first component will be devoted to a Forum on “The Role of Public Service in Achieving the Millennium Development Goals: Challenges and Best Practices”, which will be held on 21 and 22 June 2010. The second will be dedicated to the celebration of the United Nations Public Service Day and Awards Ceremony, which will take place on 23 June 2010. On that occasion, countries that have made significant progress in their e-government development will also be recognized through the 2010 United Nations e-Government Survey Recognition. In the afternoon of 23 June, a Special Meeting on “Fostering Knowledge Sharing among Public Service Awards Programmes” will be organized to promote greater synergies and collaboration among coordinators of public service awards programmes.

Participants will include heads of government, ministers, senior government officials, mayors, civil society representatives, the academia, and the private sector, as well as representatives of international organizations.
2. BACKGROUND

Since 2003, UNDESA celebrates every year, on 23 June, United Nations Public Service Day by organizing the United Nations Public Service Awards Ceremony and a Capacity Development Workshop to recognize and learn from world-wide public organizations who have improved the quality of life of citizens through innovative practices. The General Assembly, in its resolution 57/277, designated 23 June as United Nations Public Service Day for the purpose of celebrating the value and virtue of service to the community at the local, national and global levels, with prizes to be awarded to public sector organizations for contributions made to the cause of enhancing the role, prestige and visibility of public service.

The United Nations Public Service Awards (UNPSA) is the most prestigious international recognition of excellence in public service. It rewards the creative achievements and contributions of public service institutions to a more effective and responsive public administration in countries worldwide. Through an annual competition, the United Nations Public Service Awards Programme promotes the role, professionalism and visibility of public service. It encourages exemplary public service and recognizes that democracy and successful governance are built on a competent civil service. In brief, the Awards aim at discovering innovations in governance; reward excellence in the public sector; motivate public servants to further promote innovation; enhance professionalism in the public service; raise the image of public service; enhance trust in government; and collect and disseminate successful practices for possible replication. The UNPSA takes into consideration a geographical distribution of five regions. In order to level the playing field for nominations received from countries with varying levels of development and income, the following five regions have been established, including: Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and North America, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Western Asia.

For the first time this year, UNDESA will organize this event in collaboration with a public organization that has won the UNPSA in the past. As previously mentioned, the Directorate General for Participation of the Government of Catalonia of Spain won the 2008 UNPSA and will provide a training opportunity to the participants attending this event.

3. CONTEXT

The role of effective, capable and responsive governments has never been more important than it is today to the well-being and prosperity of our societies. On the one hand, governments are faced with an increase in citizens’ demands for (a) effective, equitable and citizen-centric services (including security, education, health, justice, shelter, sanitation, etc.); (b) greater levels of transparency and accountability of what government does, especially in times of scarce resources, and (c) greater citizen engagement in public decision-making processes. On the other hand, governments are faced with a rising set of domestic as well as international challenges. At the domestic level, countries must tackle multiple crisis, including the financial crisis; natural disasters (earthquakes, tsunamis, and landslides); food and water shortages, climate change, expansive waves of international migration with over 200 million people living outside of
their country of birth, and, in some cases, even with intra-State conflict. At the international level, governments must deal effectively with globalization processes, including the financial crisis which has both an international and domestic component, and issues related to international peace and security. The multiple demands and challenges that national governments face at present call for a revitalized public administration that is capable of designing and implementing innovative strategies, practices and tools that enable them to transform challenges into opportunities for socio-economic development.

In order for public administration to be responsive to the needs of all groups in society, including the poor and other vulnerable groups, and to be more accountable to the population, innovation is required in how it is organized, in its practices and capacities, and in the way public administration mobilizes, deploys and utilizes the human, material, information, technological and financial resources for service delivery. In other words, public administration as an institution, a structural organization, a set of practices and a domain of values and principles through which the State prepares, makes, implements, monitors, controls and evaluates its decisions and policies as well as its performance of the full range of its functions, including the delivery of services, is more than ever critical to human development.

The quest for a more innovative and responsive public administration is also critical for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. In fact, with the need for the world to achieve the commitments made by its leaders in the Millennium Declaration, the 2005 World Summit and many other global and regional conferences, it has attained a level of urgency. In the Declaration of the United Nations Millennium Summit, Member States agreed that the Millennium Development Goals would not be achieved without effective, transparent, accountable, participatory and citizen-centric public governance. Success will depend largely on the effectiveness of public administration and the promotion of an innovative government that works in partnership with all stakeholders. Development can be achieved when public servants effectively deliver desired services in a timely manner, behave transparently and ethically, demonstrate accountability and integrity, are responsive to the needs of the people and mirror the diversity within the population.

In line with the Millennium Development Goals, the United Nations is dedicated to promoting the exchange of experiences, ideas and best practices concerning innovations in governance and public administration in order to contribute to social and economic development. The General Assembly itself has reiterated, in resolution 57/277 that particular emphasis should be given to the exchange of experience related to the role of public administration in the implementation of internationally agreed goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration. In resolution 50/225, it also underlined the importance of enhancing international cooperation in the field of public administration, including South-South and interregional cooperation.

Sharing information and transferring knowledge on innovative practices is a very important tool in stimulating and inspiring governments to introduce innovative practices and provides a fertile environment for the replication of successful reforms. Moreover, focusing on best practices rather than on failures is a way to provide positive incentives for reform efforts and to encourage a positive outlook on
development. Sharing of information per se is, however, not always sufficient at the implementation level. In fact, best practices are usually documented by example, resulting in only limited transfer of knowledge and ideas between countries and a tendency to "reinvent the wheel". In order to maximize the benefit of sharing best practices among countries and to provide more effective assistance to interested governments in replicating specific innovations in public administration, it is necessary to promote a culture of innovation and develop appropriate knowledge tools within the public sector that can promote efficiency, quality, openness, transparency, accountability and effectiveness.

3. OBJECTIVES

This event aims at exploring the policies and strategies, practices and lessons learned in inter-related critical areas of public administration: a) innovation for public service delivery; b) transparency and accountability; c) citizens’ engagement in development management for the achievement of the MDGs, and d) e-government development and knowledge management in government. An expert group meeting on developing institutional capacities of public administration for the achievement of MDGs in post-conflict and crisis situations: challenges, best practices, and lessons learned in preparedness, prevention, and reconstruction will aim at analyzing challenges and strategies both in post-conflict situations and in countries facing natural disasters.

It is expected that the parallel capacity development workshops and the Expert Group Meeting will be highly interactive and participatory since all participants will be given the opportunity to think analytically about the cases being presented and bring in their own experience and expertise of what helps countries strengthen capacities in public administration in the aforementioned areas of concentration. The ultimate goal of this event is to build a shared understanding among all governance actors of what policies and strategies, practices and tools Member States can adopt to make public administration more effective, transparent, accountable, participatory and citizen-centric with a view to promoting greater social and economic development. The event will end with a plenary session where the rapporteurs of each working group will present to the larger audience a set of recommendations on the way forward.

The parallel capacity development workshops and expert group meeting, which will have the same broad objectives, will provide participants an opportunity to:

- present and discuss strategies and trends in public administration in the specific thematic area;
- share successful experiences in strengthening public service capacity in the specific thematic area through the presentation of the 2010 UNPSA winners and the 2010 UN e-Government Awards winners;
- discuss what tools are available to strengthen public administration capacity in each of the areas, with a particular focus not only on what policy options are available, but also on how to enable countries to build such capacity;
• strengthen North-South and South-South cooperation to enhance public sector capacity building in the above-mentioned areas.

4. EXPECTED RESULTS

The event is expected to achieve the following goals:

• increased knowledge of public administration strategies and trends, best practices and tools in the inter-related areas, which will be crystallized and further shared with other UN Member States through the United Nations Public Administration Knowledge Space (PAKS) and a relevant publication.

• greater understanding of the key success factors in promoting an effective, transparent, accountable, participatory and citizen-centric public administration through the discussion of key recommendations and policy options.

• enhanced cooperation among countries that are undertaking efforts to innovate their public administration institutions, structures, mechanisms and processes by establishing on UNPAN a virtual network of government officials and experts working in the area;

• Sharing ideas and making proposals for the development of manuals and guidelines on how to strengthen the capacity of public administration in the areas of focus.

5. THEMES FOR DISCUSSION

The event will focus on policies and strategies, innovative practices and lessons learned on how to promote an effective, transparent, accountable, responsive, citizen-centric and participatory public administration. Experts will be invited to provide an overview of the strategies and trends in each focus area whereas selected government officials will present successful experiences from their own countries. Ample time will also be dedicated to discussing policy options and tools for public administration capacity development.

As mentioned earlier, the parallel capacity development workshops and expert group meeting will focus on strengthening public administration capacity in:

• innovation for public service delivery;
• engaging citizens in development management and governance for the achievement of the MDGs;
• advancing e-government development and knowledge management in government; and
• developing institutional capacities of public administration for the achievement of MDGs in post-conflict and crisis situations: challenges, best practices, and lessons learned in preparedness, prevention, and reconstruction.

6. ORGANIZATION
6.1. Participants

Participants will include ministers and other senior policy makers, experts, practitioners, and representatives of international, regional and sub-regional institutions, academia and the private sector.

6.2. Official languages

The official languages of the meeting will be English, French, and Spanish during the morning of the 23 June 2010. The parallel capacity development workshops and expert group meetings will be conducted in English with selected interpretation in Spanish.

6.3. Electronic networking

All the documents of the meeting will be posted on the on-line Global Network on Public Administration and Finance at: http://www.unpan.org/unpsa

6.4. Format of the meeting

The event will be articulated in two components. The first component will be devoted to a Forum on “The Role of Public Service in Achieving the Millennium Development Goals: Challenges and Best Practices”, which will be held on 21 and 22 June 2010. The Forum will be organized in plenary sessions, as well as parallel capacity development workshops and an expert group meeting. The plenary session will be devoted to a Special Panel on “Participatory Governance”, which will give participants the unique opportunity to learn more about the innovative practices of the Directorate General for Participation of the Government of Catalonia of Spain, which won the UNPSA in 2008 for the category of “Promoting Innovative Mechanisms for Participation in Public Decision-Making Processes”. It will also provide an overview of the experience and practices of participatory governance at the european and global level.

Following the Plenary Session, there will be three parallel workshops and an expert group meeting. These workshops will provide the opportunity for in-depth discussion and analysis of policies and strategies, innovative practices and tools in key thematic areas of public administration: a) Promoting Innovation in Public Service Delivery for Achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); b) Engaging Citizens in Development Management and Governance for the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, c) Advancing e-Government Development and Knowledge Management in Government; and d) Developing Institutional Capacities of Public Administration for the Achievement of MDGs in Post-Conflict and Crisis Situations: Challenges, Best Practices, and Lessons Learned in Preparedness, Prevention, and Reconstruction. The parallel capacity development workshops and the expert group meeting will lead to a concrete set of recommendations on how to improve public administration institutions, processes and practices in the above aforementioned areas, which will be presented at the plenary session on 23 June 2010.

The second component of this event will be dedicated to the celebration of the United Nations Public Service Day and Awards Ceremony, which will take place on 23 June 2010. On that occasion, countries that have made significant progress in their e-
government development will also be recognized through the 2010 United Nations e-Government Survey Recognition. A Ministerial Round Table on “United Nations Public Service Day: Promoting Innovation in Government” will be held after the Ceremony. In the afternoon of 23 June, a Special Meeting on “Fostering Knowledge Sharing among Public Service Awards Programmes” will be organized to promote greater synergies and collaboration among coordinators of Public Service Awards Programmes. A concise statement of key policy messages will be communicated to the Wrap-up Plenary Session. In addition, a short summary of the workshop discussions (7-10 pages) will be prepared by the workshop organizers and incorporated into the overall final report for the United Nations Public Service Day – Awards Ceremony and Forum.

Contact Information:

UNDESA

Dr. Adriana Alberti
Coordinator of the United Nations Public Service Awards Programme
Governance and Public Administration Officer
Division for Public Administration and Development Management
United Nations, New York
E-mail: alberti@un.org

Dr. Lois Warner
United Nations Public Service Awards Administrator
Associate Governance Officer
Governance and Public Administration Officer
Division for Public Administration and Development Management
United Nations, New York
E-mail: warnerl@un.org

Government of Catalonia

Ms. Audrey Rabot
Direcció General de Participació Ciutadana
Departament d'Interior, Relacions Institucionals i Participació
Generalitat de Catalunya
Av. Diagonal, 409
08008 Barcelona
Spain
E-mail: audrey_rabot@hotmail.com