FIFTH GLOBAL FORUM ON REINVENTING GOVERNMENT

Quality and Innovation in the Government of the 21 Century

High-level Meeting on Sharing of Best Practices on Innovation in Public Administration in the Mediterranean Region

Mexico City, Mexico – 3-7 November 2003

1. SPONSORSHIP AND PURPOSE
The High-Level Meeting on Sharing of Best Practices on Innovation in Public Administration in the Mediterranean Region will take place on 5 November 2003 from 5 to 7:30 p.m. in the context of the Fifth Global Forum on Reinventing Government. The Fifth Global Forum, which will focus on “Innovation and Quality in the Government of the 21st Century”, is organized by the Government of Mexico, with the support of the United Nations, and will be held in Mexico City from 5-7 November 2003.

The objective of the High-level Meeting on Sharing of Best Practices on Innovation in Public Administration in the Mediterranean Region is to provide a platform for high-level officials, including Ministers and Directors General, and experts of the Mediterranean region to present and discuss significant innovations in public administration in their respective countries. About 20 to 30 participants are expected to take part in this event and to benefit from knowledge sharing.

2. BACKGROUND

The High-level Meeting on Sharing of Best Practices in Public Administration Innovation in the Mediterranean Region is one of the activities of the Programme for Innovation in Public Administration in the Euro-Mediterranean Region, which has been recently established. Through a Memorandum of Understanding signed on 21 May 2002, the United Nations, represented by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), and the Government of Italy, represented by the Department of Public Administration, agreed to cooperate by establishing a “Programme for the Promotion of Exchange of Administrative Innovation between Europe and the Mediterranean Region”.

The Programme is implemented by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, through its Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM), in collaboration with Formez – Training and Research Centre based in Naples (Italy), and with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Italy. It has been launched in mid 2003 and it is expected to be implemented through 2005.

The objective of the United Nations Programme for Innovation in Public Administration in the Euro-Mediterranean region is to contribute to the improvement of governance systems in Northern Africa, and selected countries of the Middle East and the Balkan region, with a view to enhancing prosperity, peace and stability. In particular, the Programme aims at reinforcing the capacity of national governments, in terms of institutions, human resources, technological adequacy and financial management, to better cope with emerging national, regional and international challenges, as well as to respond more effectively to citizens’ demands and needs. Ultimately, the Programme intends to promote the progressive harmonization of public administration systems in the Mediterranean area in line with the Barcelona process established in 1995 as a means through which the European Union supports Mediterranean partners in their political, economic and social reforms.

In line with the overall goal of innovating governance and public administration in the Mediterranean region, and taking into account the existence of different administrative realities, systems, cultures and identities within the Euro-Mediterranean region, this programme intends to devise a set of strategies to promote the effective exchange of
innovative experiences in public administration among the partner countries.

By encouraging the sharing of knowledge and best practices, partner countries will benefit from experiences and lessons learned in other areas of the region and develop cooperation models aimed at stimulating vertical (North-South) as well as horizontal (South-South) collaboration. In addition, the southern countries of the Euro-Mediterranean basin will gain a better knowledge of the decisional and administrative procedures, as well as legal framework of the European Union (EU). In the long term, they could receive assistance in the process of integration of their regulatory, procedural and decisional systems with those of the EU with the aim of achieving coordinated governance in the Euro-Mediterranean area. In brief, the programme intends to:

• Strengthen the capacity of governments of the region to establish national and regional priorities in public administration, through national and regional reports and studies, as well as regional meetings;
• Foster synergies among existing programmes for the promotion of exchange of experiences in public administration innovation by preparing an inventory of governance programmes in the region;
• Reinforce the capacity of governments and regional institutions to share information, knowledge and best practices in public administration innovation through the creation of a Network of Innovators, specific conferences and meetings, and an on-line portal accessible to all citizens across the Mediterranean countries;
• Enhance the capacity of governments to assess the validity, and transferability of best practices in public administration through the development of specific methodologies and tools, as well as training materials;
• Assist selected governments of the region to implement best practices and innovative experiences through pilot projects;
• Enable governments of the region to acquire knowledge and information on the usefulness of the programme and lessons learned through evaluation tools and an Award on Innovation in Public Administration in the Mediterranean Region.

3. CONTEXT

These are challenging times for governments around the world. In the last half of the twentieth century, and more even so at the beginning of the new millennium, Governments have been under pressure to respond to the demands from their citizens and to the increasing complexity and change in their global environments.

On the one hand, governments need to respond to a number of alarming social and economic issues, including poverty; spread of diseases (particularly severe in the case of HIV/AIDS); unemployment; poor education systems; and environmental degradation. On the other hand, countries are being forced to readjust their policies and skills to effectively integrate into the world economy. To meet these challenges, the United Nations adopted in the year 2000 the Millennium Declaration, which was followed by the development of specific targets encapsulated in the Millennium Development Goals.
While the challenges are many, so are the opportunities for innovation in public administration. In fact, it has been gradually recognized that public administration has a crucial role to play in meeting these challenges. The myth that markets and the private sector alone can accelerate development, spearhead growth, eliminate inequalities and make life better for all has been replaced by bitter disappointment, and therefore people are looking back at government and at public administration as a catalytic force.

Therefore, public administration cannot remain its old self. It needs to be revitalized, to become more proactive, more efficient, more accountable, and especially more service-oriented. How a country's public sector is managed and how it operates is, arguably, one of the most important factors in the successful implementation of its national development agenda. Yet managing the public sector in today's environment of constant change has become a demanding challenge for policy makers, service delivery managers and civil servants – a challenge that is especially daunting for those in developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

Public administration needs to be transformed into a responsive instrument to meet the needs of all citizens, including the poor, and to be accountable to the most vulnerable populations. To accomplish this transformation, governments need to reform their organizational structure, practices, capacities, and how they mobilize, deploy and utilize the human, material, information, technological and financial resources for service delivery to remote, disadvantaged and challenged people. Globalization also requires that states adapt to new and changing local, national and international forces. In fact, public sector reform is one of the most important ingredients in reinvigorating the economy and in allowing countries to integrate into the global economy. There are two important factors that need to be highlighted: on the one hand public administration should serve the people and not the other way round, and on the other the people must also be actively engaged in facilitating and promoting compliance with reforms.

In view of the above, and 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.

Within the framework of United Nations’ efforts to promote economic and social development, the Programme for Innovation in Public Administration in the Euro-Mediterranean region has been established to assist interested governments in improving their governance and public administration systems and to provide policy makers, experts and citizens in general with relevant regional knowledge and information on governance.

4. OBJECTIVES
The High-level Meeting on Sharing of Best Practices on Innovation in Public Administration in the Mediterranean Region will provide an opportunity for participants to:

- Share experiences and best practices in promoting good governance in the Mediterranean region;
- Discuss lessons learned and key issues regarding quality and innovation in the Government of the 21 century in the context of the Mediterranean region;
- Promote co-operation among governments of the region on governance and public administration issues; and
- Identify existing or potential areas of North-South and South-South co-operation in promoting good governance and enhanced capacity of countries to cope with globalization.

The Workshops are expected to achieve the following goals:

- Enhance knowledge of innovations in public administration in the Mediterranean region with potential of transferability;
- Strengthen North-South and South-South cooperation to enhance public sector capacity building with a view to fostering economic and social development; and
- Receive feedback from high-level officials on how the United Nations can provide more effective assistance to the governments of the Mediterranean region.

5. ORGANIZATION

5.1. Participants

Participants will include ministers and senior government officials, and representatives of international institutions.

5.2. Official languages

The official languages of the Meeting will be English and French.

5.3. Electronic networking

Electronic communication will be utilized to encourage wide and representative participation in discussions. All the documents of the Meeting will be posted on the United Nations Programme for Innovation in Public Administration in the Euro-Mediterranean Region (http://www.unpan.org/innovmed.asp).

5.4. Format of the Meeting

The Meeting will be articulated as follows:

- Opening Remarks by High-level government official
- Brief presentation on the Programme
- Presentations on country level experiences and good practices (made by high-level officials)
• Discussion of lessons learned
• Concluding Remarks

6. THEMES FOR DISCUSSION

The Meeting will focus on sharing of best practices in governance and public administration. Selected participants are invited to prepare a presentation on their country experiences on all or any of the following themes which will be the focus of the meeting.

1) Management of Innovations and Public Sector Capacity-Building for social and economic development, including:

Diagnostic and strategic capacity for programme design and evaluation; knowledge and skills to conduct consultations and negotiations at the national and international levels to promote public interest; professionalism in public policy development; stress on merit system; international links as means towards the improvement of professional image and performance of the public service; simplification of procedures; vertical innovations at micro, meso and organizational levels; horizontal innovations; processes of innovation including creativity, strategy and application, leadership, environmental factors and sustainability; innovations and international competitiveness; performance measurement, monitoring and evaluation; core public service values; labor and capital mobility; good practices and lessons learned.

2) Access to Services for Poverty Alleviation, including:

Access to urban and rural shelter and services for all; cost and affordability; government and private sector roles in service delivery; community organization to enhance access; urban development strategies; participatory urban governance and cities without slums; urban projects of shared success; urban innovations and good practices and lessons learned.

3) E-Government, including:

Policy framework for e-government including the creation of new policies and legislation and the inclusion of more actors; organizational arrangements and national and local e-government readiness; e-government and service delivery and access; the role of e-government in enhancing participatory democracy; e-administration and back office components including transitioning to electronic delivery of services and quantifying cost effectiveness of electronic service delivery; e-learning to build talent and improve performance; good practices and lessons learned.

4) Decentralization and Local Governance, including:

Legal framework for decentralized governance; transfer of authority and resources to local governments; checks and balances between central and local governments; role of community based organizations; decentralization and citizen participation; the role of decentralized governance in poverty eradication; decentralization and service delivery; innovations in decentralized governance; good practices and lessons learned.
5) Accountability and Transparency of Government, including:

The role of ethics in public service; sensitivity towards and respect for citizens’ needs including right to information; tools to enhance integrity in governance; anti-corruption commissions/bodies and their effectiveness; cross-border corruption and the role of multinational organizations; innovations to improve integrity and transparency in the public sector; good practices and lessons learned

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