BACKGROUND

In the recent trend of thinking and discourse on, as well as practice of, managing public affairs there has been a cumulative paradigm movement from public administration to governance via public management. It is observable that following these trends and paradigm shifts there have been complementarities among the three concepts and practices (public administration, public management and governance). This cumulative paradigm movement is traceable in the innovations that have been going on in the various parts of the world for 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 that are critical to human development. Innovation in governance and Public administration is critical for performance improvement in the Public sector.

In order for public administration to be responsive to the needs of the poor and 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. The search for innovations in governance and public administration has been on-going for sometime especially since the United Nations Millennium Summit. Its declaration stated that the Millennium Development Goals would not be achieved without good governance. One of the ways through which the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs is facilitating the search for innovations in governance and public administration is through the United Nations Public Service Awards Programme.

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.

Following the resolution, DESA has developed a procedure for granting Public Service Awards to public institutions as a symbolic recognition of the achievements attained in improving public service and good governance.

The United Nations Public Service Awards Programme (UNPSA) recognizes institutional effort to design, provide, and expand services to citizens in a cost effective manner while promoting peoples’ participation in the delivery of services and the
definition of their needs in order to alleviate poverty and as a step forward to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

The process that starts from soliciting and receiving nominations, going through assessing and verifying them and culminating in the award ceremony has proved a very effective tool for gathering experiences in revitalizing public administration through innovations that improve public administration results, the quality of its processes, radical departures from routine, applying information and communication technology in Government.

The following are the four categories of the awards for 2003 and 2004:

(i) Award for the Improvement of Public Service Results which recognizes exceptional performance in responding constantly to the needs of the citizens, promotion of equity by ensuring weak and vulnerable groups access to basic services, and delivery of public service in a manner that emphasizes timeliness, courtesy and access;

(ii) Award for the Improvement of the Quality of the Public Service Process, which rewards excellent performance in promoting transparency in decision-making, accountability to citizens, clients, and other stakeholders, as well as professionalism in areas such as human resource/personnel management, public service ethics, management decision making;

(iii) Award for Innovations in Public Service which cerebrates “radical departure” from business as usual, production of results beneficial to the citizens, the clients, and other stakeholders as demonstrated in beneficiary surveys/benchmarking studies, reduction of the cost of service delivery while maintaining/enhancing service quality, and

(iv) Award for Application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Local Government (Local e-Government) which recognizes excellence in enhancement of service delivery capacity and quality, re-engineering of government operations, fostering e-Participation (i.e., promote interaction between public officials and the public).

In 2005, out of the 205 nominations received, 8 award recipients were selected from the following countries: Canada, India, Mexico, Morocco, Singapore and Spain.

The awards will be given in the following three different categories:

(i) Improving transparency, accountability and responsiveness in public service

(ii) Improving the delivery of services, and

(iii) Application of Information and Communication Technology in
Government: (e-Government)

As in the previous years, one of the activities in the celebration of the United Nations Public Service Day after the Awards Ceremony, is a meeting of experts on innovation in the public service.

OBJECTIVE OF THE MEETING

The main purpose of the Experts’ meeting on innovations is to enhance the capacity of public servants to innovate and improve performance in the public sector. This is done through the dissemination of the winning cases: discussion of the approaches, methodologies, and techniques used to initiate and implement successful innovation. The sharing of these experiences demystifies the process of innovations in the public service and encourages public servants to engage in innovations for public service performance improvement.

The accomplishments of Public Service Awards recipients will serve as examples to others in their countries, in their regions and worldwide. They represent successful practices in public administration, which should be shared and disseminated. The winners of the United Nations Public Service Awards will present their outstanding experiences in public administration that were distinguished by the United Nations in the year of 2005. They will examine innovations and successful practices in public administration, as well as lead discussions on how those practices can be replicated and tailored to the specific circumstances of other countries.

PROGRAMME

The programme for the day is composed of two events:

(i) The United Nations Public Service Awards Ceremony where the winners receive the awards, and
(ii) The meeting of experts on innovations in the public service.

The ceremony will be held in the morning while the experts meeting will take place in the afternoon.

The following is the programme for the experts’ meeting:

1. Key note technical presentation by Dr. Gowher Rizvi, Director of the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University.

2. Discussion Panel on innovations in the public service by the following presentations and panelists:
• “Innovative Partnerships between Government Agencies, and with Community Groups and Business” by Representative of the Vancouver Agreement Coordination Unit, Canada

• The “Canadian Consumer Information Gateway (CCIG)” by Representative of Canadian Consumer Information Gateway (CCIG), Canada

• “Citizen-Government Partnership: Bhagidari in New Delhi” by Representative of the Office of the Chief Minister, New Delhi, India

• “Implementing el Programa Hidraulico Integral del Estado de Mexico” by Representative of the Secretaria de Agua, Obra Publica e Infraestructura para el Desarrollo of Mexico

• Unidad de Gobierno Electrónico y Política de Tecnologías de la Información (UGEPTI) by Representative of the Secretaría de la Función Pública - Unidad de Gobierno Electrónico y Política de Tecnologías de la Información (UGEPTI), Mexico

• “Decentralization and expansion of the quality monitoring process of fruits and vegetables for exportation” by Representative of the Etablissement Autonome de Contrôle et de Coordination des Exportations (EACCE), Morocco

• “Modernization Programme 2004” by Representative of Public Employment Service of Castile and Leon (Ecyl), Spain

3. Plenary discussion
4. Conclusion and recommendations

5. Closing Remarks by the Director of UNDESA/DPADM

PARTICIPANTS

• Winners of the United Nations Public Service Awards 2005
• Members of delegations,
• Media institutions
• Institutes of public administration,
• Regional Organizations
• Accredited NGO representatives
• Secretariat staff.

OUTPUT

The Technical Panel will generate a report discussing Innovations and Successful Practices in Public Administration based on the presentations and discussions. The report will place a special emphasis on the impact, sustainability and transferability of successful practices as well as the factors that facilitate innovations in the public service.

TIME AND VENUE

The Technical Panel will take place on 23 June 2005 in Conference Room 3 at United Nations Headquarters from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m.