AIDE MEMOIRE
THE REGIONAL FORUM ON REINVENTING GOVERNMENT IN
LATIN AMERICA
BALANCING SOCIAL EQUITY AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH
2-4 May 2007

PURPOSE & SPONSORSHIP

The Regional Forum on Reinventing Government in Latin America is a key regional preparatory platform for the Global Forum on Reinventing Government to be held in Vienna, Austria from 26-29 June 2007 on the theme “Building Trust in Government”.

It represents an effort to highlight dialogue among key actors as a mechanism to strengthen State capacity while promoting the quality and effectiveness of governance throughout the Region. It is organized by the United Nations through its Division of Social and Economic Affairs (UNDESA) in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Government of Brazil, through the Presidency of the Republic and the Ministry of Planning, Budget and Management, with the support of the Ministry of External Relations.

The Region as a whole has been undergoing remarkable and profound political changes in the past few years, characterized by widespread political democratization, the emergence of civil society actors, the development of tools for citizens’ engagement in public policy, the unrelenting contrasts between affluence and destitution, the ascending of newly elected governments committed to a new social pact, and the forging of new partnerships between government, civil society and the private sector. Without exception, practically all Governments in the Region were democratically elected based on social platforms and claim to be committed to social equity among citizens. However, in practice, this rhetoric is not always being followed by actual results as demonstrated by current social indicators, leading the population in general to mistrust governmental policies and practices. This context calls for a review of themes, policy options and tools designed to promote effective top-down and bottom-up cooperation leading to a harmonized balance of social, economic and environmental goals as a contribution towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). To balance steady and sustainable economic growth with the fulfillment of widespread social needs is indeed a major challenge for the Region as a whole.

The challenge above will be addressed by the Regional Forum through specific themes, case studies and practices and tools to be disseminated and discussed.

THEMES

Overall, the Forum will address three main themes:

- Citizen Expectations and Trust in the State
- Building Trust through Transparent Governance, Participation and Access to Information
• Building Trust through Better Access to and Delivery of Services

AUDIENCE and MAIN OBJECTIVE

The audience of the Forum is formed by key representatives from Governments, Civil Society and the Private Sector who will examine and discuss specific tools related to critical aspects of the policy-making cycle: design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The Regional Forum on Reinventing Government in Latin America will deal with innovations and good practices in governance; methods of building trust in government through civic engagement; institutional mechanisms that promote better upstream and downstream flows of information from the local to the central government levels; decentralized and participatory approaches to designing, budgeting and implementing public policies; enhancing results through partnerships, new frameworks and tools for political, administrative, and financial transparency, among other issues.

BACKGROUND

Improvements in governance and public administration have become increasingly recognized by the international community as central pillars to the successful implementation of a wide range of policy objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Since its origin in 1999, the Global Forum has emerged as one of the most significant global events to deal with government reinvention. Previous host governments have included the United States of America, Brazil, Italy, Morocco, and Mexico. In May 2006, the Government of the Republic of Korea hosted the 6th Global Forum in Seoul. During the 6th Global Forum, the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations invited participants to the 7th Global Forum to be held at the UN Headquarters in Vienna, Austria. Participants endorsed the recommendation of the Government of the Republic of Korea to accept the kind invitation of the United Nations.

Through Resolution A/RES/57/277, the General Assembly asked the United Nations Secretariat to provide support to the Global Forum on Reinventing Government. In view of the significance of the Global Forum for ministers, senior government officials, civil society organizations, and the private sector, the Secretary-General of the United Nations endorsed continued support, if requested, for the Global Forum in his 2002 report to the General Assembly.

A series of preparatory Regional Forums on Reinventing Government take place in the year prior to the Global Forum to identify region-specific issues, challenges, and responses within the area of governance and public administration. The conclusions that emerge from these meetings influence the trajectory of the Global Forum and are presented in plenary to its participants. In 2006, six Regional Forums will be held, including the Regional Forum on Reinventing Government in Latin America on balancing social equity and sustainable economic growth.
THE GLOBAL AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

Building trust in Government presents one of the major challenges for the early part of the century. Tremendous global changes over the past few years have resulted in a better informed, more diverse, and more demanding citizenry. The breadth of challenges facing the State within the new globalized environment means that governments must explore new ways of incorporating the voices of their citizens into the policy process, while earning the trust of many people and groups which did not always participate actively. There are different ways of meeting this challenge, although commonalities are also present. Integrity, accountability, and transparency are core values that can help build trust in government.

The quality of leadership represents an additional key variable, as governments and organizations aim to introduce innovations into existing structures, improve public sector performance, and enhance the development of human resources.

The Latin America and the Caribbean Region has been undergoing fascinating changes. In many ways, the Region has reflected the shift into a globalizing world and pioneered various possible paths towards development. The old debate whether the entire Region would become capitalist or communist seems to have given room for a whole new set of concerns. On the other hand, the trickle-down theories have failed to balance economic and social goals. Similarly, structural re-adjustment approaches have equally failed or were not designed to generate any desired balance between economic and social results. The conceptual clashes between economic liberalism and nationalism apparently have not produced any realistic development policy that helped build trust in Government while improving social indicators across the board. The developed face of Latin America masks a reality of huge social and gender disparities. Naturally, it is not easy to balance the economic aspirations of the industrialized elites with the social pressures coming from urban slums and rural areas. However, at the same time, the Region has pioneered a series of excellent examples of service delivery, transparency, participatory approaches, successful entrepreneurial spirit and civic engagement. The moment seems appropriate to look into these practices in crafting a path towards the immediate future.

In a globalizing world, the ideological debate on whether a Government is on the “right” or on the “left” has been gradually replaced by another set of questions: How well do Governments treat their own people and achieve socio-economic results? What governance tools can be used to enhance trust among civil society actors?

It seems that the fierce debate between left-wing and right-wing approaches has caused the whole Region to skid sideways and belongs to the past. It seems that in order to build trust and go forward, beyond right or left, it would be fundamental to focus on approaches contributing not only to the promotion of sound economic policies but also to a new set of themes and tools that would equalize the social benefits of growth by engaging key stakeholders.

In this regard, the Region already overcame to a large extent the challenge of implementing representative democracy through elections. The next step, in response to the irreversible rise of civil society as a key governance actor, would be providing people with systemic voice and with transparent mechanisms to improve service delivery and access to information.
THE PROCESS

Building on the results of the previous Forums, the Regional Forum in Latin America and the Caribbean is designed to ensure that the valuable analytical insights and lessons learned are expanded upon, examined, and adapted to meet the needs of governments within the region. The Regional Forum will focus on the key themes and tools promoting citizen engagement for accountable public service delivery, with a view toward measures that help to improve the trust of citizens in their governments. The practical experience of senior level government officials and key representatives from civil society and the private sector will be used to devise strategies for implementation.

The objective of the Regional Forum on Reinventing Government in Latin America and the Caribbean is to assist governments to strengthen their public sector and governance capacities, take greater advantage of the potential of globalization, and contribute to the achievement of development objectives, such as the Millennium Development Goals. This entails, first of all, an assessment of ongoing initiatives related to citizen engagement within various countries in the region, with a view to analyzing best practices and innovative approaches and learning from past efforts in furthering their development agenda. The innovations and good practices to be presented and explored at the Regional Forum will focus different measures that work to build trust in Government, as a means to improve governance and conditions for citizens.

The Regional Forum on Reinventing Government in Latin America and the Caribbean will further provide participants with the opportunity to meet several complementary objectives:

- Establishment of a platform for senior government officials to present their recent experiences in government reinvention;
- Discussion and exchange of different methods of building trust in Government for the purpose of improving governance and public administration;
- Summary review of best practices and innovative approaches for a range of governance activities within the region;
- Examination of central factors that have enabled the successful implementation or adoption of enhanced practices;
- Provision of a venue for senior officials, who are in a position to improve the quality of governance and public administration through Government reinvention efforts, to strategize on methods that enable the implementation and replication of innovations that further these goals; and
- Preparation of a foundation for a “Regional Civic Engagement Network for Reinvention” that interconnects key partners for improved governance; i.e., governments, the private sector, and civil society.

THEMES

Within this context, the presentations and discussions at the Regional Forum on Reinventing Government in Latin America and the Caribbean will refer to the following themes:
1. Citizen Expectations and Trust in the State

Trust is both a pre-condition and a result of good governance. Three key elements in the process of building trust are recognition of the cost of a loss of trust to society, the creation of conditions for citizen trust, and the engagement of citizens in the governance process. There are several governance and institutional components that promote trust. Key components of good governance are public sector capacity; decentralization and local governance; e-governance; electoral and parliamentary processes; accountability and transparency of governance; government, civil society and private sector partnerships; and social trust. Together, these components allow governments to promote legitimacy, enable citizens empowerment, strengthen the credibility of policies and institutions, provide opportunities for participation in government processes and decision making, and ensure efficient and accessible service delivery.

Reforming public administration and ensuring that central agencies operate in an effective and transparent manner are key ingredients for effective service delivery and access. In turn, this facilitates trust in Government and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). With this in view, the Road Map for the MDGs underscores the relationship between public sector management and the goal of poverty reduction. The achievement of development objectives depends on internal and external factors which include, inter alia, the capacity of governments to achieve broad based support and effectively implement public policy. This capacity relates to the credibility of policies and institutions; the effective coordination between governmental authorities; the sustainability of policy measures; the consistency and transparency of public communications; and human resource development, training, and incentive structures. Possible topics to be discussed will include the paradigm shift in the role of the State; strategic governance of projects and the development agenda; public and private sector partnerships for service delivery; main elements of State capacity including human resource development, provision of human security and basic services, protection of the natural environment, leadership development, mobilization of financial resources, and the provision of physical and technological infrastructure.

2. Building Trust through Transparent Governance and Access to Information

Accountable and transparent governance allows the public to remain informed about policy, enables greater opportunities for participation, increases the efficient allocation of resources in both the public and private sectors, and minimizes corruption and unethical practices. It increases stability, and consensus and trust in government. These aspects are conducive to building trust between the government and citizens. Due to its exponentially positive effects in the social, political, and economic development spheres, accountable and transparent governance has been selected as one of the forum sub-themes and will emphasize the following areas: E-Governance and civic engagement; tools to enhance integrity in governance including codes of conduct and conflicts of interest policies;
3. Building Trust for Service Delivery and Access

Tri-sectoral partnerships between the three institutions of governance contribute to increased participation of citizens in the development process and improved access to services, thereby creating the necessary conditions for enhanced trust between citizens and Government. The State, private sector, and civil society each have different knowledge resources, and skill sets that can be used to complement each other. An effective partnership will take advantage of the relative strengths of each member, resulting in greater combined capacities that enhance existing information about the needs of customers and clients, ensure that policy measures and objectives reflect citizen priorities, improve the quality and coverage of service provision, lower costs, and strengthen democratic governance. This sub-theme can address the following areas: comparative advantages of Government, the private sector, and civil society in promoting inclusive governance; consolidation of decentralization processes to enhance service delivery; shared management of public policy; role of civil society in local democratic processes and monitoring public administration; role of civil society in social and cultural development; protection and promotion of the interests of the poor and other vulnerable groups in the policy process, and reinforcing transparency and accountability; leadership and capacity building of civil society; ethics and responsibility of NGOs; role of global civil society in peace, environmental improvement, gender equality, fair international trade and debt relief; Government, the private sector and civil society partnerships for service delivery.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Based on the discussions and deliberations that emerge from the analysis of the key themes above, regional cooperation strategies will be outlined. The senior officials participating in the Regional Forum will form an ongoing working group that will be responsible for broader dissemination of innovations and experience sharing. A Regional Network on Reinvention will be launched. Conclusions and recommendations of the Regional Forum will also be presented to international delegations and participants at the 7th Global Forum on Reinventing Government, which will be hosted by the United Nations in Vienna, Austria, from 26-29 June 2007.

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