AIDE MEMOIRE

Expert Group Meeting
E-Government Survey:
Towards a more citizen-centric approach
(6 – 7 December 2010, New York, USA)

I. INTRODUCTION

The Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) is organizing an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on the topic "E-Government Survey: Towards a more citizen-centric approach". It will be held in New York, USA on 6th and 7th December 2010.

The purpose of the meeting is to provide a forum for discussion to allow the experts to review and methodically examine the Survey’s methodology. The experts will review the methodology in the light of current trends in e-government programmes. The invited experts will also discuss some challenges or emerging issues such as user take-up, enterprise architecture, interoperability, back-office reform, and government open data initiatives, and provide advice and recommendations on how to integrate these issues into the next edition of UN e-Government Survey.

The move towards a more citizen-centric approach entails improving online public service delivery through better use of ICT tools towards promoting the digitalization of the public sector, enabling better access to electronic services, including mobile delivery, and making self-service solutions through electronic and mobile services an opportunity for all. In this context, the UN e-Government Survey needs to update its set of measurable indicators, along with a revision of the methodology, which will better reflect the complexity of e-government efforts and their measurement.
II. BACKGROUND ON THE UN E-GOVERNMENT SURVEY

Over the past few years, an increasing number of countries have recognised the importance of e-governance for public sector reform and national development. E-Government significantly enhances the capacity of UN Member States to deliver citizen-centric public services and achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Governments around the world are stepping up their efforts to develop e-government services and solutions thanks to the phenomenon of increasing internet penetration, but progress is uneven and substantial disparities remain between developed and developing countries.

Since its inception in 2003, the United Nations e-Government Survey has been aiming to set a benchmarking tool for Member States to assess the e-government development status of the 192 Member States of the United Nations, while sharing lessons learned and promoting good practices; especially, in support of a move towards a more inclusive information society. The Survey, on the basis of a consistent methodology, tracks progress of the 192 Member States in implementing e-government programmes. It measures and compares their state of e-government development via the Global e-Government Development Index.

The composite index measures each Member State’s use of the Internet and the web portal for provision of information, products and services; plus the level of telecommunication and human capital infrastructure development. It comprises the following constituent indexes:

1) ICT (connectivity) infrastructure index: It is a composite weighted average of five primary indices of PCs, Internet users, Telephone lines, Mobile phones and Broadband (all indices, per 100 persons/to be revised to households). The data is obtained from the International Telecommunications Union (ITU).

2) Human Capital Index: It is derived from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Education Index, which is a composite of the adult literacy rate and the gross enrollment ratio with two thirds weight given to adult literacy and one third to the enrollment ratio.

3) Online Service Index: It is based on a quantitative analysis of the 192 Member States’ web presence/features. The primary site assessed is the National Portal or the official homepage of the government, along with the websites of five ministries, i.e., education, health, labor, social welfare and finance.

Underlying the index is the following, four-stage model of progression of e-government sophistication:

a. Emerging presence: In emerging presence, e-government is limited, offering basic information online. E-government provides sources of past and current public policies and governance information (e.g., policies, laws and regulations, reports and newsletters);
b. **Enhanced presence:** In enhanced presence, e-government provides not only greater sources of information, but also e-tools and e-services (e.g., downloadable forms, downloadable databases, email communication).

c. **Transactional presence:** Two-way interactive applications provide citizens with opportunities for online, financial and non-financial transactions (e.g., on-line filing for taxes, payment for public utilities, applications for ID cards, birth certificates, licenses, e-voting) and;

d. **Connected presence:** The way government operates fundamentally changes, and there is better coherence, integration and coordination of processes and systems within and across government agencies. Government transforms itself into a connected entity.

This is the most sophisticated level of online e-government and is characterized by:

- Horizontal connections among government agencies;
- Vertical connections among central and local government agencies;
- Infrastructure connections with interoperability issues;
- Government-citizen connections; and
- Connections among various stakeholders (including government, private sector, academia, NGOs and civil society).

In order to avoid subjective value judgment, the *Global E-government Development Index* is not designed to assess the services offered qualitatively; and the online service index allows only for indicator variables denoting the presence/absence of specific website attributes.

The resulting e-government development rankings are a measure of the progress of a country relative to all other countries.

### III. RECENT CHALLENGES IN E-GOVERNMENT

ICTs, a growing population and a socially inclusive society have changed the nature of the government’s role in delivering services to its people. The general public now finds itself in the position of having to work with a range of governmental organizations to obtain the information and services that it needs in order to improve its quality of life. Citizen-centric service delivery is being reshaped by innovative processes in delivering services that take into account of more holistic models of service delivery where the overall wellbeing of the individual is paramount.

As a result, governments are now facing a number of challenges, including:

- How to build knowledge-based integrated citizen-centric government agencies supported by ICTs within government organizations and between agencies in terms of institutional arrangements, new skills and financial resources;
understanding and enhancing their role in the delivery of services;

• evaluating the operational context of citizen-centric models;

• evaluating ICT tools and frameworks to increase people’s engagement in government’s affairs and the provision of fast track delivery;

• evaluating methods for collaborating across departments to achieve common outcomes;

• Evaluating the need to provide citizens with a seamless service experience;

The drivers behind such trends are the need to reduce citizens’ cost of service while achieving efficiencies that reduce government’s cost of service. Cloud computing which entails the interconnection of computer-data centers via a network connected to the Internet, allows one computer to take the place of several machines by running more than one operating system and then allocating resources where they are needed to increase efficiency.

IV. OBJECTIVES AND ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

The discussion on methodological issues and questions will focus on how to better measure e-government development and capture the emerging trends in moving towards more citizen-centric services. The objective is to seek advice and recommendations on how to update the questionnaire of the e-Government Survey to reflect a more citizen-centric approach.

As the 2012 Survey looks to move beyond the measurement of supply-driven e-government services, we need to consider fresh ideas for improving the set of e-government indicators to assess the take-up of citizens using e-government services and solutions, with supporting usage statistics, back-office processes, systems and organizational arrangements required to support efficient e-government activities, the use of mobile devices for transacting with government, digital inclusion and e-participation.

The 2012 Survey will promote the concept of a one stop-shop with integrated government information and services to be provided in one single portal. The Survey will thus only assess the national portal and the established linkages with ministerial websites which provide major functions or services to citizens. In line with this desired change, there is a need to review the current questionnaire to incorporate the one-stop-shop concept in the questionnaire.
The main questions to be discussed and considered in the EGM are as follows:

1. **User take-up and training**
The paramount issue to be considered is how to use the Survey to assess whether governments provide citizen-centric services. More specifically, it is hoped that the EGM will shed light on how to assess/measure user take-up of e-government services (supported by usage statistics). We are also interested here in governments’ capacity building efforts in providing training facilities and programmes to users and how that can be assessed;

2. **Accessibility of Internet or mobile connectivity to all**
The penetration of the Internet to all still remains a major hurdle for governments to ensure that their services online can be accessed by all the citizens that they serve. It is expected that the EGM will advise on how the Survey can score the status of governments in dealing with bridging such technical digital divide issues;

3. **Accessibility of services to vulnerable groups**
The issue here is how can the methodology of the Survey address the inclusiveness/equity issues, especially of vulnerable groups. Are customized services provided for the poor, illiterate, the aged, the young, the blind, women and immigrants? What features can be assessed on government portals and whether e-services are customized to their needs.

4. **Multi-channel service provision**
Citizens want multiple channels into public services—online, telephone, over the counter, mobile, kiosks, and even podcasts. Mobile government is rapidly gaining in popularity. The issue here is whether governments provide services through different channels, e.g. whether a citizen can pay taxes or a parking ticket via his/her mobile as well as via the internet. Broadband issues are important in such provision of service. It is hoped that the Survey will shed light on how to assess such service provision.

5. **Whole of government (WOG) and one-stop service provision**
The issue here is whether governments are creating one-stop service organizations where citizens can access a wide range of services and transactions. Ideally governments would provide integrated services which would entail back-end coordination and interoperability issues. How do we practically assess back-end integration by reviewing the upfront services? How do we check whether governments are integrated horizontally and vertically or in other words, are they interconnected? The EGM should also delve into the issue of country classification standard and the designing of different benchmarks for assessing e-government in different groups of countries. The 2012 Survey will look into possible ways of distinguishing big countries from small countries.

6. **Assessing the environment**
The 2012 Survey will also assess whether governments provide environment friendly/related information and services through internet and mobile devices. The proposed question for discussion is: how to incorporate five to seven indicators on environmental issues into the questionnaire --- whether we should integrate the environment-related questions into the questionnaire or conduct a separate evaluation on environment-related information or service provision by governments.
The discussion should take into consideration the Survey’s methodology as elaborated in the Annex of the UN e-Government Survey 2010.

To aid the meeting’s deliberations, an overview paper will be prepared, which will concentrate on improving the methodology and the e-government indicators.

In order to further facilitate the meeting, all experts are expected to submit, detailed written comments on the overview paper, well ahead of the meeting. All related documents will be made available on the UNPAN portal.

IV. EXPECTED OUTPUT

This two-day meeting will be tightly structured, with a clear focus on seeking advice and recommendations for updating the methodology and indicators of the Survey.

As concrete deliverables of the meeting, the following outputs are expected:

(a) An overview paper on the aforementioned issues for providing advice on the update/revision of the Survey’s methodology and the e-government indicators;

(b) A set of recommendations on the Survey questionnaire with a comprehensive list of the aforementioned indicators and a revised Survey methodology for UNDESA’s consideration; and

(c) A publication containing the meeting proceedings and overview paper, as already mentioned in paragraph (a).

V. LANGUAGE OF THE WORKSHOP

English

VI. PARTICIPANTS

The Expert Group Meeting will be attended by a number of e-government experts drawn from a variety of fields, including academia, the United Nations system and other relevant international organizations.

VII. CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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