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**The role of responsive and accountable public governance
in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and the
post-2015 development agenda**

Making public governance work for the post-2015 development agenda

Note by the Secretariat

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Making public governance work for the post-2015 development agenda

I. Introduction

1. The present paper looks ahead at the challenges for public administrations in relation to the Millennium Development Goals and other development goals beyond 2015 and examines, from three different perspectives, how the emphasis on governance over the past few years has been interpreted at the local level. In considering the role of governance in achieving local public service goals, it highlights successes and areas that need to be improved if future challenges are to be met and recognizes that while there may be some emerging overarching themes, it is essential that ways forward be tailored to local circumstances.

II. Road map for localizing the Millennium Development Goals: lessons and models in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and other advanced nations

2. Many people in advanced economies think that the Millennium Development Goals apply to others rather than to themselves and, further, that the concept of governance has been a vehicle for managing donor funding in this context. If pressed, however, developed countries might acknowledge that even in advanced economies there are pockets of poverty, poor health, disadvantage and difficulties in relationships between peoples of different beliefs and ethnicities. In the present section, which addresses how developed countries, in particular the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, have approached the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, a broader look is taken at approaches to implementing government policy rather than specifically at implementing the Goals. The intention is to identify some of the challenges to implementing and reporting on government policies and to signalling areas for improvement. For example, a presentation prepared by Jonathan Battye of the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit of the United Kingdom shows that the efforts to improve delivery discussed below have increased understanding in relation to pockets of disadvantage in an otherwise positive national picture.¹

Governance as an enabler rather than a result

3. An analysis of levels of trust in countries shows that there is a high correlation between higher levels of governance and trust, and that this is generally a feature of the more established economies.² Whether there is a causal link between governance and economic productivity is currently under discussion.³ It might be that countries can afford to institute stronger governance processes once they

¹ Available from www.oecd.org/gov/budgeting/44291124.pdf.

² See <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=toke-aidt---presentation.pdf&site=21>.

³ Mushtaq Husain Khan, "Beyond good governance: an agenda for developmental governance" in *Is Good Governance Good for Development?*, Anis Chowdhury and Jomo Kwame Sundaram (eds.), United Nations Series on Development (London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2012).

become successful rather than the other way around. But, since the financial haemorrhaging from countries that ought to be wealthy and trusted can be linked to the existence of corruption, it also seems likely that without improvements in governance the situation will not change. Funds that are vital for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, if diverted for personal reasons, clearly are not available to address pressing social and economic problems.

4. This is not to say that established economies are immune to losing funds through corruption, only that the incidence and scale of corruption appears to be lower in such countries. There are examples of other abuses of power but, thankfully, these are usually eventually exposed owing to factors such as freedom of information legislation, whistle-blowing and press freedom — all elements of an effective governance framework. Yet, problems remain with the implementation of government policies, especially among hard-to-reach individuals and communities, for example for the reduction of child poverty in the United Kingdom.

5. It is clear, therefore, that the reforms that have been carried out by advanced economies have been made possible by a context of governance arrangements and frameworks that are effective albeit subject to ongoing improvement. Effective governance supports the values of democracy, of enabling informed voters to make choices and decisions freely on the basis of information and without fear of reprisal. It is therefore necessary to continue to press for effective governance frameworks and, at the same time, to be aware that a simplistic approach to addressing governance shortcomings can be misleading. Superficial improvements that provide merely a semblance of good governance will not create the conditions conducive to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Overview of efforts to improve implementation

6. In the 1990s, concern in the United Kingdom about the effectiveness with which public funds were being used and government policy was being implemented led to the rise of what has been termed “new public management”. Recommendations on improving efficiency in government introduced both structural change in the machinery of government and fundamental change among public servants, from an attitude of paternalism to one of service delivery. Since then, several paths to the implementation of government policy have emerged. These paths have sometimes crossed one another, sometimes run in parallel and sometimes flown freely together.

7. One path has been subjected to the increasingly rigorous scrutiny of public spending: zero-based budgeting followed by priority-based budgeting, increased standards of accountability and public scrutiny. The trend has been to keep downward pressure on spending and to give managers responsibility for budgets allocated to them and then to hold them to account for their choices in terms of how they use public funds. That was before the current austerity measures, which have further reduced the funding available and led to taxpayers asking about the level of overseas aid. If funding levels are maintained, there is the risk that even more conditions will be attached to aid, further constraining the strategies of recipient countries.

8. In parallel, another trend has been to move away from having a large public sector to directly providing services to a commissioning public sector⁴ that may deliver services through the private sector, civil society organizations and social enterprises. This has created scope for a form of citizen engagement that is often overlooked in the emphasis on delivery of services to citizens: the engagement of citizens in making policy decisions, in particular at the local level. The publication of national and local government data has become the norm and the consultation of citizens is a legal requirement in the European Union.

9. Essential to these initiatives has been the measurement of success. As the emphasis on service delivery to the satisfaction of citizens gained ground, so did the need to set benchmarks of achievement. In addition to giving citizens an indication of how well a service was being provided, information on the achievement or non-achievement of targets was seen as a management tool for controlling and assessing government efficiency. In time, this approach would lead to some perverse outcomes, as the achievement of short-term targets became more important than that of longer-term goals. Beneficial outcomes for citizens were sacrificed in order to achieve internal management targets.

10. Subsequently, although targets were not completely dispensed with, the emphasis changed to one of delivery for the benefit of the citizen. Business methodologies such as project and programme management were adapted for use in the public service and, in the United Kingdom, the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit was established in 2001 to concentrate on four key areas of government policy. The remit of the Delivery Unit was subsequently expanded to include performance management and 30 public service agreements with a view to bringing together financial performance and policy implementation. While government departments continued to be responsible for delivery, the Delivery Unit provided support and scrutiny. It was expected that delivery plans would be comprehensive, realistic and, where necessary, interrelated. Other established economies were also looking at ways to ensure that government policies were implemented and introducing their own performance management systems; some countries established delivery units at the centre of government.⁵

11. The performance management approach evolved from various earlier attempts to reduce or make more effective public spending and to implement policy without perverse results. At the same time, the world was demonstrably more interconnected and the problems requiring policy resolutions ever more complex. Whether at the local level (where linking up health, educational and social services for the benefit of a troubled child was a concern) or at the national level (where building a positive relationship between young people leaving education was a concern, as were business success and national productivity), the challenge of managing government performance in this way exposed the need for much more creative and collaborative approaches to policy development. The fact that citizens increasingly share information and have raised expectations in terms of participation means that central

⁴ John Alford and Janine O'Flynn, "Finding a better way to deliver" (September 2012). Available from www.publicservice.co.uk/feature_story.asp?id=20635.

⁵ World Bank, "GET note: Center of government delivery units", *Recently Asked Questions Series* (November 2010). Available from <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTGOVANTICORR/Resources/3035863-1285601351606/NovemberGetNote.pdf>.

government policy has to be interpreted and delivered in a way that is meaningful and beneficial to people locally.

Lessons learned

12. New demands are being made on public servants and, in particular, on leaders, who are often reliant on someone else's staff to achieve the delivery plan for which they are accountable. Leaders are now in a position of managing across boundaries and without hierarchical authority. They must focus relentlessly on implementation while effectively drawing upon a wide range of expert resources, consult stakeholders and manage expectations while being collaborative across government departments. Throughout, their feet are held to the fire in terms of achieving results for citizens. This is a very different role to that of administrator and one that requires different competencies, attitudes and career expectations.

13. It could be useful to have an understanding of the strengths and the failures, and perhaps of when there has been an inability to respond to a new environment, and to draw on such knowledge in considering the future, especially as many developing countries look to learn from the experiences of advanced economies. The thinking of the more established democracies and of international organizations like the United Nations and the World Bank also shapes expectations on donor funding and support or for reform programmes. Unfortunately, in some cases, approaches have been advocated and implemented in the absence of the necessary assessment of local conditions.

14. For established economies, much has been learned in recent years about improving public sector performance that would be wasteful to lose. The current recession and the challenges facing the eurozone, for example, illustrate how interconnected economies are. As the population grows, the climate becomes more uncertain and issues such as hunger and poverty remain, making the world more complex. Such issues require innovative thinking⁶ and approaches, collaboration and risk assessment, greater expectations of flexibility on the part of government and the recognition of individual differences.⁷

Looking ahead

15. As government expenditure is reduced, the freedom to identify priorities that went with delegation to the service delivery areas has to be reconsidered. The United Kingdom is in the process of reforming its civil service,⁸ as is New Zealand.⁹ Some of the aims of these two Governments appear to be similar (for

⁶ Jocelyne Bourgon, *A New Synthesis of Public Administration: Serving in the 21st Century* (Kingston, Canada, Queen's University School of Public Policy, 2011).

⁷ Claudio Morales Oyarce and Faith Boardman (eds.), *Public Service Reform in the UK: Revolutionary or Evolutionary* (Public Management and Policy Association, London, 2012). Available from <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/brdo/docs/resources/public-service-reform.pdf>.

⁸ See the civil service reform plan (available at www.civilservice.gov.uk/reform) and the accompanying document containing data and case studies (available from <http://resources.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/The-Context-for-Civil-Service-Reform-v2.pdf>).

⁹ See www.beehive.govt.nz/release/legislative-milestone-public-service-reform.

example, both plan to make much greater use of information and communications technology (ICT) and to encourage the sharing of central resources), but the language they use, at least in public documents, has a different feel. It is too early to say what impact the austerity measures will have in the United Kingdom, but the language of delivery is no longer widely used. This may simply be the result of a change in the political landscape; if that is the case, it highlights the need for the post-2015 agenda to be enduring, to be built on principles that different political views can genuinely engage with.

16. The above-mentioned change also highlights that effective implementation requires expertise and a long-term approach and sustained support, not the frequently short-term perspective of the political environment. One concern about the current climate of blame and staff reduction in the public sectors of some countries is the ease with which capacity can be lost so that a country's future depends to a much greater extent on the capacity of other sectors to operate for the benefit of the citizen. Effective governance certainly comprises legal frameworks and enforceable guidelines, but it also requires personal commitment and a willingness to solve problems for the benefit of others at the local, national and international levels.

III. Road map for localizing the Millennium Development Goals: lessons and models in selected developing countries

Evolution and challenges

17. In 2001, in his report on a road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration (A/56/326), the Secretary-General noted that success requires solidarity. The Millennium Development Goals were drafted ahead of the International Conference for Financing for Development, held in Monterrey, Mexico, in 2002, two years after the United Nations Millennium Declaration was adopted by the General Assembly (resolution 55/2). During the past 12 years, Member States, with the assistance of various international organizations, have been working together towards implementing the Goals. They have made progress in achieving some of the Goals, but are falling behind on others, mainly due to the many challenges that have since emerged.

18. When the Millennium Development Goals were being implemented, much of the discussion was dominated by development aid officials in industrialized countries. Gradually, the Goals became synonymous with a Western and donor-driven approach to development.¹⁰ Some viewed the Goals as being dictated and written by donors. As a consequence, there was very little ownership of the Goals among development actors, resulting in very few countries attempting to localize them and in most of the national reports on the Goals being drafted by officers at United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) country offices.

19. Although the Millennium Development Goals are laudable and undoubtedly well intentioned, this does not mean that they are realistic for all countries. In some

¹⁰ Rolph von der Hoeven, "MDGs post 2015: Beacons in turbulent times or false lights?", United Nations System Task Team on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda (June 2012). Available from http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/pdf/rolph_van_der_hoeven.pdf.

instances, in fact, the Goals have been overly ambitious, placing unrealistic expectations on aid and promising too much, leading to disillusionment. Financial resources are not the sole and perhaps not the most important means of achieving progress, certainly not where deep structural problems exist in the local system; the focus on financial resources too has resulted in a poor record with regard to rapid progress. In short, excessive focus on aid is risky; although aid can and will play a role in the improvement of the lives of the poor, it is not sufficient to achieve the Goals.¹¹

Calling for a new approach to the post-2015 framework

Governance as a building block

20. Prior to setting a post-2015 agenda, the perception that the Millennium Development Goals were imposed needs to be addressed. Global emerging trends have led to the exposure of the three crises of fuel, food and global recession, along with many other crucial problems, including rising unemployment, increased inequality, climate change and the issue of human rights. All are of the utmost importance, yet were not addressed in the Goals.

21. Other important issues, such as environmental sustainability (addressed in part in Goal 7) and global governance (addressed in Goal 8), were raised at a later stage and were linked to far fewer targets and indicators, despite the fact that governance has proved to be a core building block in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. This shortcoming became clear, for example, during the Arab Spring: while Tunisia ranked first in achieving the Goals in the Middle East and North Africa region,¹⁰ it was the first country to topple its regime, which was characterized by a lack of democracy, equity and justice, all of which are considered to be at the core of governance. This shows that there is no direct correlation between achieving the Goals and good governance.

22. In order to avoid such pitfalls, a post-2015 agenda needs to be based on a global social contract that is relevant to people in the South and the North, rather than one that is dominated by development aid professionals. In addition to avoiding a donor-driven process,¹⁰ it is necessary to focus on risk management and risk-taking actions. A starting point is to link the localization of the Goals with the localization of governance through institutionalization by capacity-building at all levels until the core level, which is the local level, is reached.

Road map for localizing the Millennium Development Goals: a proposed model

23. Getting the best out of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals requires a combination of the following actions: (a) localizing the Goals; and (b) localizing governance, which depends on the existence of political will, an enabling environment, the prioritization of goals and the allocation of budgetary resources.

¹¹ Michael Clemens and Todd Moss, "What's wrong with the Millennium Development Goals?", *CGD Brief* (Centre for Global Development, 2005). Available from http://www.cgdev.org/files/3940_file_WWMGD.pdf.

Why the Millennium Development Goals need to be localized

24. It is necessary to localize the Millennium Development Goals because of the existence of inequality among and within countries. Even where there is progress and achievement of the Goals seems to be on track at the national level, there may be hidden discrepancies, for example in terms of reaching certain localities and challenges related to poverty. Countries with disaggregated data for reporting on the Goals have a clearer picture of where pockets of poverty or marginalized groups are situated, and such information provides a fuller picture of disparities, resulting in more targeted interventions.

25. Analysing the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals at the subnational level may also result in creating opportunities to discuss clearer responsibilities for local governments and development partners. Subnational comparative data, including data by state, province or district, have proven to be a powerful tool for public action.¹² Clustering country data by region for reporting purposes further reduces accuracy due to internal disparities. In addition, reliance on recent available data, which itself may be vague, does not necessarily present an accurate picture of the situation.

26. Localizing the Millennium Development Goals and linking sustainable development with the attainment of the Goals implies more than gathering data. The first step in localizing the Goals is to make sense of differences in the implementation of targets at the national and local levels.¹³ Goal targets must be integrated into locally defined strategies and action plans by demonstrating how established priorities are linked to the national Goal targets rather than by developing specific attainment plans and transposing them onto local communities.¹⁴ Strategies for achieving the Goals are much more likely to succeed when national governments work closely with local governments, civil society and the private sector.

Strategies for localizing the Millennium Development Goals

27. Strategies are needed to solve local issues. The localization process can be carried out in the following two ways: (a) data collection and monitoring at the national, regional and local levels; and (b) analysis of data and identification of developmental priorities linked to the Goals at local, regional and national levels of governance.¹⁴

28. A post-2015 agenda should emphasize rights and gender equity if it is to foster real change in the world. The Millennium Development Goals need to deal with global goals and local challenges. Their achievement requires:

- (a) Local government leadership and contribution to the process of achieving a strategy for the Goals;

¹² See http://mdgpolicynet.undg.org/ext/MDG_Reports/Addendum_to_2nd_Guidance_Note_on_Country_Reporting_on_the_MDGs_November_2009.pdf.

¹³ World Bank and International Monetary Fund, *Global Monitoring Report 2012: Food Prices, Nutrition and the Millennium Development Goals* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2012). Available from <http://uncsd.iisd.org/news/world-bank-imf-report-on-mdgs-progress>. This report contains examples of differences between the national and local levels.

¹⁴ United Nations Development Programme, *Global Goals, Local Challenges: Communities in pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals*.

- (b) Local ownership of the strategy (which should not be the product of consultants only);
- (c) Training to help local government employees to understand the strategy;
- (d) Personal commitment to strategy implementation and concrete action plans;
- (e) Broad political goals to be included in the strategy;
- (f) Realistic action plans to be developed;
- (g) A parallel effort on the legislative and regulatory framework to be developed together with the strategy;
- (h) Further action to be taken to realize the strategy once it has been developed.¹⁴

29. It is not realistic for the Goals to be localized if political will is lacking, for where there is no political will there is also no governance and citizens are not participating in policymaking. States should focus on fulfilling their commitments and on implementing strategies that have proven to be successful. Thus, it is crucial that the Goals become national goals and serve to increase the coherence and consistency of national policies and programmes. In the past, this did not work because the Goals were not accompanied by a clear set of policies.

Barriers to the localization of the Millennium Development Goals

30. The following list of barriers that are hindering the localization of the Millennium Development Goals emerged from a workshop entitled “Achieving the MDGs through enhancing local capacities for integrated coastal resources management: evidences and lessons learned”, which was held in Haikou City, China, on 12 December 2006:¹⁵

- (a) A lack of appropriate capacity in local authorities;
- (b) Inadequate decentralized statistics and lack of consistency in data collections and established baselines;
- (c) Fragmentation of efforts;
- (d) Political differences between national governments and local authorities;
- (e) Lack of aims to achieve a society that is secure from both a human and an ecological point of view, where human needs are met without compromising the integrity of the environment;
- (f) Goals that are highly or entirely anthropocentric, in other words mainly concerned with human well-being.

31. Consultations should include citizen engagement at the local level and address the needs and thoughts of citizens using simple language. In other words, the approach is to engage citizens so that they are encouraged to highlight the concerns that affect them directly. Each barrier should be dealt with independently. In almost all countries, including the least developed countries, low-income countries and even some middle-income countries, individuals and groups have been excluded from the benefits of development because of their geographic location and ethnicity.

¹⁵ See <http://beta.pemsea.org/sites/default/files/easc-wp-2007-05.pdf>.

*The platform: phases of localization**Phase one: assessing the status of achievement of the Millennium Development Goals at the local level*

32. It is necessary to consider new ways of recognizing real success at the country level rather than at global targets by assessing where countries are with regard to the Millennium Development Goals and reasonable expectations of performance.¹¹

33. It is also necessary to clarify that the results emerging at the national level are not accurate, in that they do not give the whole picture, which is why an analysis should be conducted at the local level. This need was clearly exemplified in the case of Goal 1, on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger: the decline of the world's poor by 445 million people, from 1,820 million people in 1990 to 1,375 million in 2005, was entirely due to a decline in the number of poor people in China.¹⁰ The positive global assessment was the result of successes in a large and fast-growing country.

34. Also with regard to extreme poverty, what is being sought is a decent living, not just the end of absolute poverty (the kind of poverty that threatens survival and makes progress impossible for the 1.3 billion people living on less than \$1.25 a day), which is the focus of Goal 1. Achievement of that Goal will not address the lack of participation of poor communities, which is due to their inability to make a decent living and thus to meet the basic demands of life.

Phase two: paving the road and creating an enabling environment

35. A major issue regarding the development of cross-sectoral collaboration is how the public sector can exert control over the product or the service to be provided. How would public organizations ensure accountability in partnerships? To answer that question, the concept of accountability needs to be reassessed and applied to inter-organizational collaboration.

36. Collaboration should be added as another stage, while monitoring and evaluation would be final stages in a model that reflects a holistic self-assessment approach to citizen engagement. Effective monitoring requires a more sustainable investment in data collection, as good-quality data is considered to provide the right basis for analysis, to lead to the right, intended outcomes and to work accordingly on prevention, not treatment.

37. According to the findings of the *United Nations e-Government Survey 2012*, many countries have put in place e-government initiatives to further enhance public sector efficiencies and streamline governance systems to support sustainable development. In addition, more countries are seeking to have an open government data initiative. The guidance toolkit on open government data for citizen engagement in managing development developed by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs could be used as a resource.

38. For the Millennium Development Goals to be localized, the decentralization of governance needs to be assessed, to see where localized Goals respond to shifts towards the decentralization and devolution of central government responsibilities. Awareness, training and empowerment should also be reviewed, as the Goals reflect national aggregate figures that need to reflect local realities. Localizing the Goals

will highlight the local dimension in development efforts and targets will reflect the local context and reality, while also empowering the people.¹⁶

39. Before selecting capacity-development measures, their purpose should be identified. In other words, should a measure's purpose be planning, participation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation or management? And at what level should the measure be targeted? At the individual (attitudes and behaviours), institutional (organizational performance) or systemic (ensuring there is a political, economic and social environment conducive to development) level? What level of governance should it include? The community, local, regional, national or international level?¹⁴ The following key principles apply to capacity-building campaigns focused on the Goals:

- (a) Building the skills and knowledge of all stakeholders (at the national, regional, local, and community levels, and in the public, non-governmental and private sectors);
- (b) Using tailored programmes and methods to reach target audiences;
- (c) Using flexibility to reach out to more vulnerable groups;
- (d) Using locally available knowledge and skills (local experts and previous beneficiaries).¹⁴

Phase three: walking down the road and making the shift

40. The Millennium Development Goals do not contain explicit reference to global governance even though most crises are the consequence of failed global governance. The most important aspect of an improved global governance system is enhanced policy coherence in economic, social and environmental policies at the national and international, as well as local, levels, as the national level does not always represent the local level.

41. While the institutionalization of governance is considered to be the basis for localizing the Millennium Development Goals and building the capacity of citizens to engage in public policymaking is considered the tool, engaging partners and building national partnerships will help achieve a better world for all.

42. In addition, the Millennium Development Goals can only be addressed in the national context by localizing them and making them concise. This means setting out priorities so that each Goal can be turned into an action plan. Since adequate capacities, including with regard to planning, negotiating with donors and monitoring and evaluating assistance, are necessary, beneficiaries will need to develop the relevant knowledge and skills. At the local level, such knowledge and skills must be developed to meet local governance and sustainable development needs.¹⁴

Phase four: staying the course and dealing with uncertainty

43. Networking to achieve common ground (social contract): the contours of a new social contract are emerging, as citizens are seeking a relationship with their government based on transparency, accountability and participation. A post-2015 framework has to deal with human aspects, including those related to economic,

¹⁶ United Nations Human Settlements Programme, *Localizing the Millennium Development Goals: A Guide for Local Authorities and Partners* (May 2006), p. 14.

social, cultural and labour rights, as well as with issues of inequality and redistribution.¹⁰

44. Innovation results in the creation of best practices and the integration of the Millennium Development Goals into national development plans. In an updated strategy and implementation plan of the World Bank Group on strengthening governance, it is noted that the speeches of the former President of the World Bank, Robert Zoellick, mark the continuation of the development community's journey from "best practice" towards "good fit" in strengthening institutions.¹⁷ More global political legitimacy initiatives are needed to foster the enhanced policy coherence for the post-2015 framework, as well as a forum that includes all Member States.¹⁰ Attention should be paid to inequality and human rights as an integral part of the post-2015 agenda, to build a global social contract. If developing countries are fully engaged in the preparatory process for the post-2015 agenda and if inequality and human rights become an integral part of that process, the agenda will become a global social contract with a "social floor" (in other words, a minimum set of safeguards), which in turn will show that such a framework can arrest inequality and poverty in several circumstances.¹⁰

45. In "MDGs post 2015: beacons in turbulent times of false lights?", Rolph von der Hoeven noted:

There is a broad understanding of the major development trends that contributed to achieving the MDGs and which needed to be made more explicit in a coherent post-2015 development agenda. Nayyar lists the following: necessity of economic growth; institutional mechanisms to translate growth into meaningful development by improving conditions of people; the importance of public action; and employment as the only sustainable means of poverty reduction. This requires coherence between various aspects of economic policies (macroeconomic, trade and investment policy), social policy and environmental policies.¹⁰

Looking back: lessons learned

46. It is extremely difficult to reach a consensus among countries on universal goals. Thus, the United Nations needs to play a difficult mediation role, affirming that the goals should be universally applicable, rights-based, aspirational, global, holistic, action-oriented and easy to communicate. Support should be provided to democratic societies where social and economic justice cannot be achieved and where governance does not exist or is confined to a select handful of members of the political and economic elite.

47. Development is crucially dependent on more effective governance. Best practices are not always the most suitable approaches: problem-based approaches have more traction. Yet, we have to rely on both approaches. Strengthening country institutions remains central to the governance agenda, but several systems are essential and there are direct ways to put them in place.

¹⁷ See <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/PUBLICSECTORANDGOVERNANCE/Resources/285741-1326816182754/GACStrategyImplementationPlan.pdf>.

48. Education for all is not only essential for meeting development goals but is also the key to promoting the peace and security upon which sustainable development depends (see A/64/665). Education must be given a much higher priority on the international agenda and integrated policies that reinforce the positive impact of education on health, poverty, gender equity and other socioeconomic outcomes must be promoted. Quality is key. Therefore, it is important to raise standards and criteria in education. The need to set new goals provides a basis for utilizing the strengths of the Millennium Development Goals while addressing some of their limitations and reflecting on the sociopolitical, economic and environmental contexts.

IV. Transformational government through e-government

49. Research has shown that early e-government initiatives did not meet the expectations of providing the increased public benefit originally envisioned because of their heavy emphasis on the automation of existing government processes, the provision of government information online and the delivery of e-services. In short, the business case for e-government was not being made merely through the introduction of technology and/or the delivery of full or random online services, fundamentally because those exercises were not focused on citizens.

50. Despite enormous strides in the global uptake of e-government initiatives in recent years, the absence of a concerted strategy to effectively satisfy the real needs of citizens remains the reality for many e-government initiatives, particularly in developing countries (see the *United Nations e-Government Survey 2012*). The vacuum created by the lack of an effective, people-centred, responsive governance framework, therefore, significantly inhibits the ability of affected countries to deploy the mechanisms and systems best able to effectively meet the Millennium Development Goals, sustainable growth and development, and social inclusion. Evidence of this is found in the rate at which the advanced economies are outpacing developing countries in the area of inclusive, citizen-centred governance that employs ICTs to meet governance objectives. There is a sort of “fit for purpose” governance model.

51. The original e-government model, the ultimate aim of which was to make government information, products and services available online, has been transformed over the past several years into an all-encompassing, comprehensive programme aimed at organizing government services strategically and more effectively around the needs of users. In so doing, greater use is made of ICTs to transform government processes and delivery modes in a more joined-up, connected way and to better address such user needs. This approach has become popularly known as “transformational government” or “t-government”. Information policy experts of the Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards, a non-profit consortium that drives the development, convergence and adoption of open standards for the global information society, describe this new approach as one that encompasses a new “virtual” business layer within government that allows for an integrated, government-wide, citizen-focused service to be presented to citizens across all channels, at no extra cost (see <https://www.oasis-open.org>).

52. For many developed countries, the realization that e-government was falling wide of the mark occurred relatively early on in the global e-government revolution.

This precipitated, for these countries, a review of e-government strategies so as to redirect emphasis towards a whole-of-government, joined-up and connected approach that takes due account of the cultural, organizational and political re-engineering of government and governance processes. This approach utilizes ICTs to deliver targeted, coordinated and responsive services and products that genuinely extend benefits to the users of those services and products and that is socially inclusive.

53. The original e-government model sought to mimic the value proposition of industry and private business, but failed to account for the very critical fact that the obligations of the Government do not exactly match those of private enterprises. Unlike private enterprises, Governments cannot choose their customers. Similarly, private-sector businesses do not have the universal service-type commitment to citizens that Governments do.

54. Moreover, despite aiming to increase efficiencies, the original e-government model actually compounds levels of duplication and inefficiencies within the public administration owing to a lack of coordination between many of the information technology projects that typified this early model.

55. Information policy experts have identified the following 10 pitfalls of the early e-government model:

- (a) Lack of a common understanding of and appreciation for the e-government vision across all parts of government;
- (b) Lack of top-level ownership and effective cross-government decision-making;
- (c) Failure to drive the implementation of the changes necessary to deliver the e-government programme;
- (d) Prohibition of inter-agency collaboration, data and information exchanges and other joint activities;
- (e) Failure of traditional “silo-based” budgetary mechanisms to support the delivery of the e-government programme;
- (f) Failure to achieve optimum contracts and best value for money for the delivery of e-government services;
- (g) Implementation problems caused by attempts to deliver too many services too quickly;
- (h) Lack of takeup by users of the e-government online services;
- (i) Lack of effective interoperability of processes and/or systems across Government;
- (j) Lack of skills at all levels to implement the e-government programme.

56. These are the main pitfalls that have served as a catalyst for transitioning to a t-government approach and that continue to be features of many e-government initiatives, particularly in developing countries. The persistence of such pitfalls, coupled with inadequately inclusive and sustained citizen engagement, will exacerbate the global digital divide, hampering development efforts.

57. Countries seeking to overcome the pitfalls of the early e-government model have shifted to formulating an approach to government, governance and public administration that recognizes the following:

(a) The imperative to design government responses, infrastructure, policies etc., around the needs of users;

(b) The dynamic nature of modern governance and, therefore, the need to appropriately incorporate methodologies to address the constant evolution of the related frameworks in order to maintain their relevance and currency (experts have discouraged the perception that t-government is some sort of perfect end state for governments, stressing that all governments are different in terms of their respective historical, cultural, political, economic, social and demographic contexts, as are the legacies of business processes and technology implementation from which each starts; consequently, the t-government framework is not a “one-size-fits-all” prescription for what all governments should look like in future, and should not be viewed as such);

(c) The need for the full engagement of stakeholders in designing and maintaining the frameworks;

(d) That the desired outcomes can be achieved through the optimal use of ICT advances.

58. The United Nations, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the World Bank have encouraged Governments to shift to t-government by rethinking the terms of e-government and e-governance and by placing greater emphasis on institutional linkages between and among the tiered government structures for inclusive sustainable development. The United Nations sees this widening of the scope of e-government as necessary for ensuring that Governments have a transformative role in the shift towards cohesive, coordinated and integrated processes and institutions (see the *United Nations e-Government Survey 2012*).

What is the value proposition of t-government?

59. The Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards has identified the following four major ways in which t-government programmes differ from traditional e-government programmes:

(a) They take a whole-of-government view of the relationship between the public sector and the citizen or business user;

(b) They include initiatives to e-enable those in the frontline of public services (that is, staff involved in direct personal delivery services such as education and health care) rather than just looking at transactional services that can be e-enabled on an end-to-end basis;

(c) They take a whole-of-government view of the most efficient way of managing the cost base of government;

(d) They focus on citizens, not customers, in other words they seek to engage with citizens as owners of and participants in the creation of public services, not as passive recipients of such services.

60. The main benefits derived from the t-government model are that it does the following more effectively:

(a) It promotes a reduction in bureaucracy, encourages one-stop-shop experiences and leads to the design of services on the basis of the real-time and relevant needs of the users;

(b) It introduces coordination and cohesion within the government framework that reduces duplication and improves efficiency;

(c) It reduces inter-agency conflict, customer frustration and unnecessary costs;

(d) It enables users of government services to access services on a 24/7 basis.

61. The Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards has described this new approach as a managed process of ICT-enabled change in the public sector that puts the needs of citizens and businesses at the heart of that process and achieves significant and transformational impacts on the efficiency and effectiveness of government, producing a relationship between government and the citizen that is on a richer, more reciprocated and more empowering basis.

62. Most importantly, experts have underscored that the focus is now on the process of transformation, on how a Government can build a new way of working that enables it to rapidly and efficiently adapt to the changing needs of citizens and emerging political and market priorities.

Where is the developing world in the evolutionary process to t-government?

63. In the *United Nations e-Government Survey 2012* it is noted that despite the general progress in the implementation of online services globally, there remains an imbalance in the digital divide between developed and developing countries. While much of the imbalance has been attributed to an immature e-infrastructure, the root cause of the problems may be the absence of a t-government strategy and reliance on the early e-government model.

64. The top 20 countries in the Survey were all high-income developed countries; of the 25 countries recognized as emerging leaders, only the following 6 were developing countries: Kazakhstan, Chile, Malaysia, Colombia, Barbados and Cyprus.

65. Sustainable development and social inclusion remain desirable goals for improving the basic human condition and citizens' standard of living. In this regard, developed countries with strong economies and a robust private sector have sought to ensure sustained growth and development through public sector reform initiatives that have not only used ICT as a fundamental enabler but have re-engineered their government machinery and processes towards these goals specifically. Such Governments are able to generate and leverage the means and resources to ensure that their citizens' needs are met.

66. Less developed countries, on the other hand, face significant challenges in meeting these same objectives. One particular challenge is that of reforming the public service machinery and processes, a challenge that requires significant modernization (as a holistic, long-term, multidirectional and cohesive exercise) and

that often arises in circumstances where the status quo has remained due to strong resistance and suspicion to change.

67. The journey has started but for most countries there is still a long way to go. Even those countries that are well advanced in terms of t-government initiatives will see that the initiatives need to be adjusted and adapted to prevailing circumstances at the global and national levels. The success of the post-2015 agenda is inextricably linked to the need to continue encouraging and supporting the reform of national public administrations in a more transformative way, with ICT being the key enabler.

68. Technological advances continue to offer improvements in terms of how services and products can be delivered more effectively. They also provide meaningful solutions for collaboration across all sectors of the wider public administration configuration at appreciably lower costs than was envisioned at the start of the global e-government thrust. These advances provide means for developing countries to leapfrog over much of the growing pains experienced in earlier transformation initiatives, while offering solutions that match scale and capacity capabilities for developing countries of all sizes.

69. E-participation in governance is an important feature of t-government, as it is a precursor for effectively determining the allocation of resources and distribution mechanisms to meet the real needs of users. Simply put, if citizens have the opportunity to express their needs, as well as how they think these can best be addressed, then efforts and resources will not be wasted providing services or products that do not meet users' needs. The implementation of different channels of engagement for citizens is a vital part of e-participation and meeting the objective of social inclusion.

Should t-government be a major factor in a post-2015 United Nations agenda?

70. For the majority of developing countries, the challenges in delivering t-government and t-governance are far more acute than for the advanced economies and it will require a longer time frame to implement the model. Nonetheless, the benefits to be derived from t-government will provide developing countries with the ability to deploy scarce public sector resources and a clear path to improving the conditions and opportunities for their citizens. A post-2015 agenda that endorses the critical role of public administration in achieving sustainable development will recognize that its principal enabler will be t-government.

71. As has been noted repeatedly, the technological capabilities and the capacity to transform are readily and widely available. What is important now is how to find a way of using them to support and enable the transformative process for a modern public governance framework.

72. A solid foundation for assisting countries has been established through the United Nations Public Administration Network and through associated products and initiatives developed by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. To attain the desired development and post-2015 goals for all Member States, continued investment is needed in those United Nations programmes that enable developing countries to examine, benchmark, build capacity and take advantage of other technical assistance programmes offered by the United Nations.

V. Conclusion

73. Taken in the context of the ongoing extensive consultation process by the United Nations and in the light of continuing social and economic challenges faced in many parts of the world, the contributions in sections II-IV of the present report identify some recurring themes and provide the following advice on formulating the post-2015 agenda;

(a) Ownership of goals must be genuinely felt nationally and locally, and goals should be integrated with national Government goals and interpreted, planned and reported locally; care should be taken not to distort priorities through the availability of aid and through the intervention of donor staff in planning;

(b) Goals must be expressed in such a way as to address globally recognized concerns (such as hunger and poverty) and, at the same time, encourage an interpretation of the goals that makes them meaningful at the local level and enables them to be incorporated into higher-level strategies and be translated into achievable action plans;

(c) Human rights must be an integral part of the new goals and particular attention should be paid to vulnerable groups at risk, for example, because of their gender or ethnicity;

(d) Sustained collaboration will be required to address complex issues and scarce resources at the national, international and local levels, where ICT can be an enabler for more transparent and effective governance and facilitate the implementation of policy goals;

(e) Continuing improvement in governance is essential for creating an environment for the improved implementation and resolution of complex problems, the protection of resources and the meaningful engagement of citizens;

(f) Enhanced competence in problem solving, collaborative working, innovation and leadership will be required at all levels (i.e., national and local);

(g) Meaningful reporting that supports the resolution of problems (e.g., revealing local disparities) is needed instead of the establishment of league tables that mask areas for improvement;

(h) Appropriate transfer of successful approaches from one area or country to another should be encouraged, with the usual caveats about ensuring local relevance and applicability.

74. More needs to be done to enrich these high-level proposals. It is clear that political resolve will be required to engage with the challenges in a constructive, non-competitive manner. Political leaders will need to demonstrate their willingness to adopt effective governance approaches and to build and implement enabling infrastructures such as ICT strategies and local-level engagement plans. In addition, implementation cannot be achieved without ensuring that individual and institutional capacity also exists to drive forward and together these goals with confidence and expertise.