STRENGTHENING NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

17th Internet Governance Forum in December 2022 in Ethiopia - Photo credit: UN DESA

... to accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

Throughout the year, UN DESA continued to provide necessary knowledge-sharing and capacity-building support to Member States in order to ensure delivery of the SDGs is integrated into planning, oversight mechanisms and budgets of governments and institutions.

UN DESA ...

- Built capacity on the implementation of the *11 Principles of Effective Governance for Sustainable Development*.
- Brought together stakeholders to discuss the critical role of SDG 16 in accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Advanced digital government transformation, cooperation and digital inclusion worldwide.
- Enhanced Member States' capacities to promote new mindsets, and innovation in public institutions.
- Worked with schools of public administration to equip public servants with the capacities to implement the SDGs, including by strengthening institutional arrangements for policy coherence.
- Engaged youth and women in institution-building and public service delivery for sustainable development.

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STRENGTHENING NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Effective, inclusive and accountable public institutions and digital government are key to people's well-being in every society across the world. UN DESA, through its support to public institutions in the design and implementation of public policies and the delivery of services, ensured their efforts are directed towards the achievement of all the SDGs.

Accelerating action for effective governance for sustainable development in Africa

Since 2019, UN DESA, in partnership with the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), has worked to enhance the institutional capacities of national governments to adopt the principles of effective governance for sustainable development, elaborated by the Committee of Experts on Public Administration. For example, in response to ongoing demand from African countries for expert guidance and peer learning, UN DESA organized a workshop in September 2022 in Cape Town, South Africa, to discuss how countries can follow up on the key messages from the 2022 high-level political forum, including good practices from the presentations of the Voluntary National Reviews. Attended by

representatives of 18 countries, the workshop resulted in key recommendations for African countries on how to make progress towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063.

UN DESA and the APRM also held a workshop on Strengthening National Institutional Capacities for the UN Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development and the AU Agenda 2063. Attended by representatives of 25 African countries, this annual workshop explored how effective, accountable and inclusive institutions and the principles of effective governance for sustainable development can accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and

the AU Agenda 2063. 94 per cent of respondents indicated that they would be interested in further capacity-building support from the APRM and UN DESA. Ten strategy guidance notes to operationalize selected principles of effective governance were also developed to provide practical guidance to Member States on intergenerational equity, leaving no one behind and participation.
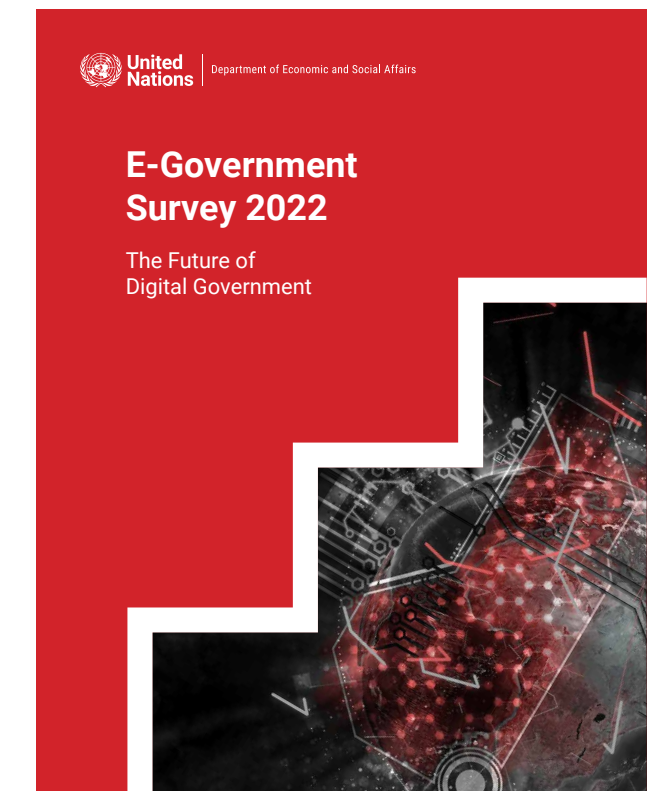

UN Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development Navid Hanif addresses the African Continental Workshop on Strengthening National Institutional Capacities for the UN Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development and AU Agenda 2063 in Cape Town, South Africa - Photo credit: UN DESA

Promoting digital government transformation and digital data governance

Multiple crises and opportunities have propelled countries to accelerate and advance digital government strategies, according to the *UN E-Government Survey 2022*. The Survey, prepared by UN DESA, assessed the digital government landscape across 193 Member States with a ranking of countries based on the E-Government Development Index (EGDI) and the Local Online Service Index (LOSI) at the national level and local level, respectively. Despite a digital performance gap between city portals and their national counterparts, most cities have improved their LOSI. The 2022 Survey also highlighted that the future of digital government is not just digital but hybrid and pointed

to addressing different forms of digital divides that have been amplified because of the pandemic, including gender divides, urban-rural divides, and age divides.

To address the existing challenges and gaps in digital data governance, UN DESA organized workshops on enhancing the institutional capacities of countries in Africa and Asia. Five national workshops have been conducted in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Lao PDR, and Rwanda, with national baseline studies conducted to assess the state of national data governance and to recommend policy actions to further govern data effectively in supporting the accelerated implementations of the SDGs. Working with UN ESCAP, UN DESA also organized workshops on regulatory sandboxes, aimed at enhancing the institutional capacity of countries in special

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E-Government Survey 2022

The Future of Digital Government

situations to develop policy experimentation and regulatory sandboxes to accelerate progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Calling for global multistakeholder action on digital cooperation and bridging digital divides

The 17th Internet Governance Forum (IGF), held in November and December 2022 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the Internet's role in enabling individual and economic resilience, and illustrated how those who lack connectivity or meaningful access are severely disadvantaged, potentially exacerbating inequalities in multiple forms. These and other "IGF Messages" have been a touchstone in the preparation of the Secretary-General's policy brief on a Global Digital Compact (GDC), launched in May 2023 to help support Member States deliberations as they prepare for the Summit of the Future. The messages underlined the importance of synergizing the IGF with the Summit process and underscored the Forum's centrality to emerging digital cooperation mechanisms. The programme of the Forum aligned with the Secretary-General's envisioned GDC and included issues of universal connectivity and human rights, data privacy and protection, digital security and accountability, Internet fragmentation, and advanced technologies like artificial intelligence (AI). The strong presence of young people ensured talks were forward-looking and prioritized the needs and concerns of future generations. Bringing together more than 5,000 participants from stakeholder groups from around the world, onsite and online, the Forum featured more than 300 sessions, 1,000 speakers, and representatives from over 170 countries.

Under-Secretary-General addresses at the 17th IGF Forum in December 2022 in Ethiopia - Photo credit: UNECA / Daniel Getachew

SDG 16 as a compass for navigating intersecting crises

UN DESA, the International Development Law Organization (IDLO) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy co-organized the fourth SDG 16 Conference in May 2023 to identify concrete measures for supporting peace, justice, social inclusion and effective institutions at all levels in support of sustainable development. Under the theme "SDG 16 as a compass for navigating intersecting crises", the event brought together leading experts on peace, justice and strong institutions representing governments, civil society, UN entities and other international organizations, academia and other stakeholder groups. More than 250 participants attended the conference in person, and more than 500 joined online. Civil society was strongly represented and issued the 2023 Rome Civil Society Declaration on SDG 16+, which emphasized key areas that need immediate action and genuine commitment to prosperous, peaceful and inclusive societies. The conference focused on three themes that are central to addressing the current intersecting crises: promoting the United Nations' New Agenda for Peace; restoring trust in public institutions; and promoting participatory decision-making to accelerate transformative action: food systems and climate change. It also took stock of progress made on SDG 16 since 2015.

Promoting accountability through budget credibility and external audits

UN DESA supported Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) in improving their analyses on the credibility of government budgets, aimed at delivering sustainable development promises as recognized in SDG 16. UN DESA, together with International Budget Partnership (IBP) and a group of eight SAIs (Argentina, Brazil, Georgia, Indonesia, Morocco, the Philippines, Uganda, and Zambia), developed a Handbook on SAIs' contribution to strengthening budget credibility through external audits. The development of the Handbook followed a user-driven approach, with UN DESA and IBP closely working together with various SAI working groups and regions. The initiative was widely supported by the audit community, which has been engaged through webinars, technical expert and peer review meetings, a side event in the margins of the 24th International Congress of Supreme Audit Institutions and presentations at the SAI Working Group on Public Debt and the Capacity Building Committee. The Handbook was launched in July 2023.

Italy's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Antonio Tajani, speaks at the SDG 16 Conference 2023 - Photo credit: UN DESA

Developing institutions' capacities for climate action and disaster risk reduction

UN DESA continued to work on building the capacities of institutions and awareness of public servants for climate action. In June 2023, the Department provided training to media officials in Mongolia on promoting risk-informed communication for reporting on emergencies and disaster risk reduction (DRR) to achieve the SDGs. The training was supported by one of the toolkits of UN DESA's Curriculum on Governance for the SDGs, focusing on the issue of Risk-informed Governance and Innovative Technology for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience.

In April 2023, the Department also organized, in collaboration with partners including UNITAR and UNDRR, among others, an online workshop on Risk-informed Governance, Climate Action and Finance Mechanisms for Local Resilience. The workshop was attended by local government officials and other stakeholders from national government, civil society, academia and institutions in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. The workshop helped improve the participants' understanding on the global DRR framework, as well as climate change adaptation and innovative finance mechanisms in support of the SDGs. It also enhanced their capacities to promote governance innovation and leverage risk-informed governance for DRR and resilience, including through usage of the Disaster Resilience Scorecard for Cities to assess their city resilience progress for the development of an evidence- and needs-based action plan.

Changing mindsets in public institutions to accelerate the SDGs

Through various capacity-development activities, UN DESA worked with schools of public administration and UN Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs) to promote new mindsets of public servants, digital government transformation and innovation to implement the SDGs. For example, working with the RCO in Pakistan, and Pakistan's National School of Public Policy, National Institute of Management, and Civil Services Academy, UN DESA equipped public servants with innovative mindsets and behaviours to better address current and future challenges through a real-life case study on ecological restoration of the Indus River Basin. Based on the Toolkit on Changing Mindsets in Public Institutions, part of the Curriculum on Governance for the SDGs, the training on the same topic is being mainstreamed and embedded in the courses of Pakistan's National School of Public Policy. Trainings and training of trainers were also conducted in Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala and Sri Lanka. Emphasis was given to nurturing innovative mindsets to enhance vertical and horizontal coordination and effective and inclusive delivery of public services by focusing on leadership, collaboration, and innovation mindsets.

Furthermore, in collaboration with the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), UN DESA launched the Curriculum on Governance for the SDGs for the Latin America and the Caribbean region. With more than 70 participants from the region, many expressed an interest in applying the toolkit to their institutional and organizational context.

> **The symposium has ignited a profound spark of innovation and strategic thinking within us, enabling the anticipation of future challenges and proactive responses to emerging issues. It has provided us with valuable lessons that we must wholeheartedly embrace and translate into tangible and meaningful actions.**
>
> by **Rumina Khurshid Alam**
> **Member of Parliament of Pakistan, Convener of Parliamentary Task Force on SDGs**

Curriculum on Governance for the SDGs

UN DESA's *Curriculum on Governance for the SDGs* is a set of Training of Trainers toolkits to promote understanding of sustainable development issues, enhance governance capacity, and strengthen public servants' awareness of their active roles in contributing to the achievement of the SDGs. It covers topics such as changing mindsets, transparency, accountability and ethics, policy coherence, innovation for social inclusion and risk-informed governance, and contains ready-to-use and customizable training materials on key governance dimensions needed to advance the implementation of the SDGs. The toolkits provide methodologies and approaches to advance knowledge and assist governments in developing capacities at the individual, organizational, and institutional/societal levels. They are structured around modules that include readings, self-assessment situation analysis, application of theories to concrete issues and challenges, priority-setting exercises, case studies, action planning, and other activities that can assist countries in advancing governance transformation for sustainable development.

Bringing stakeholders together for effective governance for the SDGs in Asia-Pacific

UN DESA facilitated peer-to-peer learning between public institutions and civil society organizations in the Asia-Pacific region with the aim to foster collaboration in tackling pressing challenges and achieve the SDGs. In November 2022, government and non-government representatives gathered in the Republic of Korea for the Regional Symposium "Effective Governance and Digital Transformation for Accelerating the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Addressing Global Challenges" to discuss how to strengthen governance across a region struggling to make up ground lost to COVID-19, climate change and extreme weather events. Former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also participated in the event and urged continued investment in strong institutions and digital capacities to address climate emergencies and pandemics. At the request of several governments, UN DESA will provide further capacity-building support to governments based on its Curriculum on Governance for the SDGs, focusing on multi-level governance, transparency and accountability, disaster risk reduction and digital transformation for SDG implementation.

Representatives from across the Asia-Pacific region meet to advance the Sustainable Development Goals - Photo credit: UN DESA

Equipping public servants with the capacities to implement the SDGs

Throughout the year, UN DESA spearheaded several capacity-development activities to mainstream the SDGs in the curricula of schools of public administration and equip public servants with the capacities to implement the SDGs. For example, together with local governments and schools and networks of public administration in Africa, UN DESA organized the Regional Symposium on Mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals in the Curricula of Schools of Public Administration in Africa, and launched the Curriculum on Governance for the SDGs in the Africa region. UN DESA also conducted a training of trainers on innovation and digital government, in collaboration with organizations of public administration in Asia. In Mongolia, through a workshop organized with the local RCO, the national academy and the national news agency of Mongolia, UN DESA supported the delivery of an action plan for effective governance mechanisms for accelerating the SDGs implementation in the country. The Department also organized an annual meeting with schools of public administration on mainstreaming the SDGs in the curricula of schools of public administration, new mindsets and competencies and began the review of the Standards of Excellence for Public Administration Education and Training.

In addition to country and regional-level efforts, UN DESA continued to expand its online training course selection to further enhance learning from the Curriculum on Governance for the SDGs and its toolkits. The online training course on Transparency, Accountability and Ethics in Public Institutions

– Understanding and Assessing Corruption was utilized by the participants of the Malawi national workshop on Transparency, Accountability and Ethics in Public Institutions, organized by UN DESA in collaboration with the Office of the Ombudsman, the UN RCO and UNDP in Malawi. The workshop resulted in the development of action plans to promote an accountable, ethical, transparent, and inclusive public service to accelerate progress on the SDGs, leveraging digital government and building partnerships and cooperation for transparent and inclusive services. In May 2023, the Department also developed new toolkits on effective digital data governance to accelerate digital government transformation, and on capacities for digital government transformation.

Celebrating 20 years of excellence in public service and promoting innovation

For two decades, the United Nations Public Service Awards Programme (UNPSA) has celebrated excellence in public service by recognizing the creative achievements and contributions of public institutions to address the social, economic and environmental needs of society. In the last 20 years, the UNPSA has gathered over 500 global initiatives showcasing the vital role of public service innovation in promoting sustainable development and inclusion. Throughout the years, UN DESA has supported the organization of the UNPSA and recognized initiatives in support of tackling global challenges including poverty, climate change, and public health. Past winners include projects that improved access to healthcare, promoted gender equality, strengthened public financial management, and leveraged technology to enhance transparency and
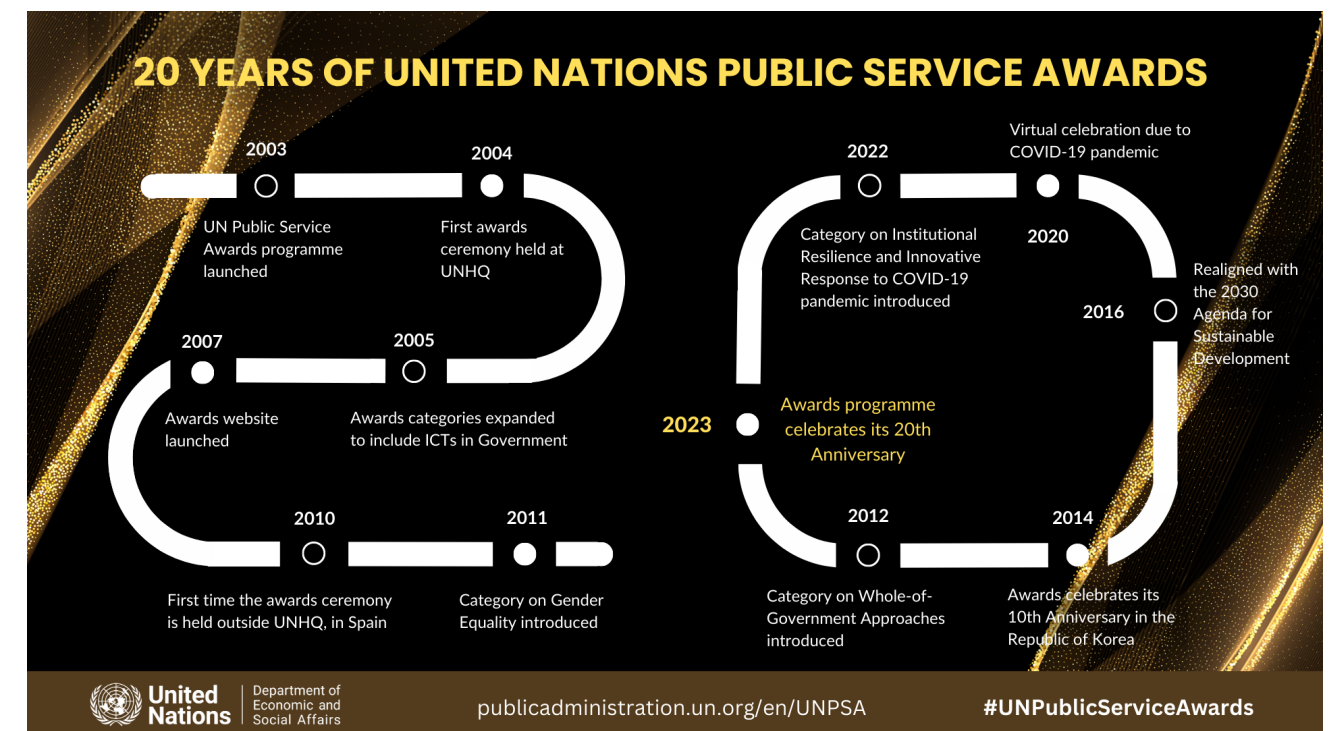
accountability in governance. In 2022, the Awards paid special tribute to initiatives that addressed the COVID-19 pandemic. As the programme marks its 20th anniversary in 2023, which also coincides with the SDG Summit in September and the mid-point review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a comprehensive review of the programme was undertaken to assess its effectiveness and to better promote and disseminate innovations in the public sector.

Youth engagement in institution-building and public service delivery for sustainable development

UN DESA contributed to enhancing the capacities of young leaders and government officials to support the implementation of the SDGs. In Côte d'Ivoire, the Department organized a workshop to boost the capacity of young leaders and government officials to implement the SDGs. More than 50 youth-led civil society organizations, with a reach of over one million members, participated in the workshop, which prepared participants to conduct devolution sessions with their peers in their communities on how to effectively engage youth in public policymaking to achieve the SDGs.

UN DESA also hosted its 6th Youth Forum on SDG Implementation, in support of leveraging public governance to promote youth participation for climate action and building resilience. At the Forum, held virtually in November 2022, youth shared their vision on pursuing sustainable and resilient recovery from climate change and to accelerate SDG implementation. Furthermore, a special youth session was organized during the UN DESA's Regional Symposium on Effective

20 YEARS OF UNITED NATIONS PUBLIC SERVICE AWARDS

2003 — UN Public Service Awards programme launched
2004 — First awards ceremony held at UNHQ
2007 — Awards website launched
2005 — Awards categories expanded to include ICTs in Government
2010 — First time the awards ceremony is held outside UNHQ, in Spain
2011 — Category on Gender Equality introduced
2023 — Awards programme celebrates its 20th Anniversary
2022 — Category on Institutional Resilience and Innovative Response to COVID-19 pandemic introduced — Virtual celebration due to COVID-19 pandemic
2020 — Realigned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
2016
2012 — Category on Whole-of-Government Approaches introduced
2014 — Awards celebrates its 10th Anniversary in the Republic of Korea

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publicadministration.un.org/en/UNPSA   #UNPublicServiceAwards

Governance and Digital Transformation, where participants of the Youth Forum engaged in a dialogue with the UN Member States and explored ways and means of promoting youth development and engagement for climate action with the view of realizing the SDGs and the Decade of Action.

Empowering women as leaders in public institutions

In 2022, UN DESA continued to collaborate with UNDP, UN Women and the UN Regional Commissions in Africa and Asia and the Pacific to address persistent gender inequality and the below-parity representation of women in positions of power and decision-making in both regions. With the aim of increasing the presence and leadership of women in public institutions at national and subnational levels, UN DESA commissioned global reviews of laws, organizational policies and good practices. The reviews identified an analytical framework hinging on gender equality as a foundation for achieving all SDGs and women's equal participation and leadership as essential for an inclusive, responsive and accountable public sector. Using the analytical framework as a benchmark, UN DESA, in collaboration with UN country teams, supported self-assessments of norms and practices promoting gender equality within public administration in the project countries. In partnership with UNDP, UN DESA also developed capacity-building modules to address the gaps identified in the national reviews. Based on these modules, UN DESA has organized capacity-building activities to support the development of an action plan that prioritizes gender equality and promotes women's career progression towards leadership positions in the public sector in each project country.

Participants at the Cote d'Ivoire workshop on youth engagement - Photo credit: UNDP Cote d'Ivoire