

**Economic and Social Council**

Distr.: General  
20 January 2020

Original: English

**Committee of Experts on Public Administration****Nineteenth session**

30 March–3 April 2020

Item 6 of the provisional agenda\*

**Effective governance for sustainable development: putting principles into practice and reviewing outcomes****Effective governance for sustainable development: putting principles into practice and reviewing outcomes****Note by the Secretariat***Summary*

At its seventeenth session, the Committee of Experts on Public Administration agreed on a set of 11 principles of effective governance for sustainable development, building on the conceptual framework presented at its sixteenth session, which had the essential elements of effectiveness, accountability and inclusiveness of Sustainable Development Goal 16 at its core. The principles, endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution [2018/12](#), highlight the need for pragmatic and ongoing improvements in national and local governance capabilities to reach the Sustainable Development Goals. To this end, the principles are linked to a variety of commonly used strategies for operationalizing responsive and effective governance, many of which have been recognized and endorsed over the years in various United Nations forums, resolutions and treaties.

At its eighteenth session, the Committee continued its discussion of technical guidelines to operationalize the principles, including from sectoral perspectives, and considered further ways to engage relevant United Nations organizations, regional organizations and professional and academic communities in this regard. The Committee also considered linking the principles with related work on indicators, with a view to contributing to strengthening the analytical basis for assessing the impact of reform policies on building strong institutions and achieving the Goals.

The present paper, prepared by the Secretariat in collaboration with Committee members Geert Bouckaert, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, Ali Hamsa, Louis Meuleman, Juraj Nemec and Moni Pizani, is aimed at supporting the Committee's further deliberations on connecting the principles to regional and national actions to build strong institutions for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The

\* [E/C.16/2020/1](#).



Committee's attention is drawn to the potential for collaboration with regional organizations, inter alia, in the preparation of baseline studies on the status of the principles across the regions concerned. Regional workshops with leading roles for Committee members could likewise be helpful in promoting the operationalization of the principles and in strengthening linkages, where appropriate, between national efforts to build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions and global follow-up and review processes.

The Committee previously agreed that a common understanding of the concepts and main factors underpinning the implementation of each strategy could assist in seeing the full picture of institution-building, sharing findings of common interest and pursuing priorities accordingly. Such guidance could helpfully be illustrated with case studies and promising approaches observed at the national and subnational levels, and opportunities to connect with others through international cooperation, peer-to-peer learning and research could accelerate the achievement of effective, accountable and inclusive institutions. An update on this work is provided in the present paper, including reflections on procedural questions related to the development of guidance notes based on the collective knowledge of communities of practice.

Finally, the question of reviewing outcomes with reference to recent developments in the field of governance indicators and auditing of Sustainable Development Goal implementation is considered. The question of indicator selection at different levels of analysis is revisited and expanded in recognition of methodological and quality assurance issues raised by the global statistical community. The Committee is invited to advise on a strategy for accelerating its initiative to associate each of the principles with a set of agreed global Sustainable Development Goal indicators and/or other indicators, with a view to contributing to strengthening the analytical basis for assessing the impact of reform policies on building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

## I. Background

1. At its seventeenth session, the Committee of Experts on Public Administration agreed on a set of 11 principles of effective governance for sustainable development, building on the conceptual framework presented at its sixteenth session, which had the essential elements of effectiveness, accountability and inclusiveness of Sustainable Development Goal 16 at its core. The principles, endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution [2018/12](#), highlight the need for pragmatic and ongoing improvements in national and local governance capabilities to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. To this end, the principles are linked to a variety of commonly used strategies for operationalizing responsive and effective governance, many of which have been recognized and endorsed over the years in various United Nations forums, resolutions and treaties.

2. At its eighteenth session, the Committee continued its discussion of technical guidelines to operationalize the principles, including from sectoral perspectives, and considered further ways to engage relevant United Nations organizations, regional organizations and professional and academic communities in this regard. The Committee also considered linking the principles with related work on indicators, with a view to contributing to strengthening the analytical basis for assessing the impact of reform policies on building strong institutions and achieving the Goals.

3. In its resolution [2019/26](#), on the report of the Committee on its eighteenth session, the Economic and Social Council encouraged Governments at all levels to consider applying the principles of effective governance for sustainable development to all public institutions and in support of the implementation of all Sustainable Development Goals, taking into account different governance structures, national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities. The Council also encouraged the Committee to continue to identify and review related technical guidelines to operationalize the principles and took note of the initiative of the Committee to associate a set of agreed global Sustainable Development Goal indicators with each of the principles.

4. Putting principles into practice and reviewing outcomes depend on progress in each of these areas. The present note contains an update and further reflections on these matters. It has been prepared in collaboration with members of the informal working group on the principles of effective governance of the Committee as background material for consideration at the nineteenth session.

## II. Putting principles into practice

### A. Regional cooperation in promoting effective governance for sustainable development

5. At the eighteenth session, Committee members emphasized that a sense of ownership of the principles at the regional, national and subnational levels would be essential to putting them into practice and promoting the sense that issues pertaining to building strong institutions for sustainable development were being dealt with at those levels. Regional actors could be pivotal in this respect given their critical role in bridging global objectives and national action.

6. Regional cooperation and integration are emerging as key drivers of progress, in particular in the strengthening of monitoring and statistical capacities, the mobilization of finances and the advancement of innovative policy solutions, which are essential to formulating integrated development strategies and addressing transboundary challenges.

The United Nations regional commissions, for their part, support countries in their efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by providing technical capacity, analytical work and advisory services and by serving as dedicated platforms for norm-setting and sectoral and intersectoral dialogue (see [E/2019/15](#)).

7. The regional commissions also support countries by holding workshops to assist with the preparation of voluntary national reviews. The guidance on the preparation of voluntary national reviews reflects the principles of effective governance, inter alia, by suggesting that countries consider including information on how they have ensured that the institutional mechanisms supporting Sustainable Development Goal implementation are effective, accountable and inclusive, and highlighting how it has been possible to mobilize institutions around the Goals, to improve their functioning by making them more responsive, accountable and transparent, and to promote collaboration and change to achieve policy coherence and integration across sectors.

8. In the guidance on the preparation of the voluntary national reviews, it is suggested that information could be provided on how responsibility has been allocated among national and subnational levels of government for coherent implementation of the 2030 Agenda, what has been done to ensure that relevant data and information are systematically gathered, shared and analysed, and how policies and measures for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals are reviewed, monitored and evaluated.<sup>1</sup>

9. Alongside the regional commissions, other regional organizations are actively engaged in integrating the 2030 Agenda into regional plans and supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in regional and national contexts. Many such organizations cooperate with the United Nations in areas of mutual interest and have been granted permanent observer status, which allows them free access to most meetings, including the annual sessions of the Committee. Some have policy frameworks or specialized bodies dedicated to governance and institution-building in the regional context. Examples of prominent regional organizations that support countries in promoting effective governance and building strong institutions are provided in table 1.

Table 1  
**Examples of regional organizations engaged in building strong institutions**

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Policy framework, action plan or focus area</i>	<i>Specialized forum(s)</i>	<i>Monitoring tool(s)</i>
African Union	First 10-year implementation plan (2014–2023) of the African Union Agenda 2063; monitoring and supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda	African Peer Review Mechanism; African Governance Architecture	<i>Africa Governance Report</i> (most recent edition: 2019)
Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)	OECD policy framework on sound public governance	Public Governance Committee; Regulatory Policy Committee	<i>Government at a Glance</i> (most recent edition: 2019); <i>Regulatory Policy Outlook</i> (most recent edition: 2018)

<sup>1</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews: The 2020 Edition* (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019), p. 60.

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Policy framework, action plan or focus area</i>	<i>Specialized forum(s)</i>	<i>Monitoring tool(s)</i>
Organization of American States	Effective public management	Inter-American Cooperation Mechanism for Effective Public Management	-
Ibero-American General Secretariat	Ibero-American initiative for the improvement of governance, institutional strengthening and the development of human talent	Ibero-American Conference of Ministers of Public Administration and State Reform	Ibero-American governance index (under development)
Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)	ASEAN Community Vision 2025	ASEAN Cooperation on Civil Service Matters	-
South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)	Human resources development	Meeting of SAARC Cabinet Secretaries; various professional bodies recognized by SAARC	-

### **Collaboration with the African Peer Review Mechanism**

10. At its eighteenth session, the Committee discussed whether work on promoting the principles could be joined with existing processes of the African Union and other regional bodies that have established implementation pathways. It was suggested that this could occur at the level of Heads of State of the African Union, as well as in the local sphere of governance.

11. The African Peer Review Mechanism is a specialized forum dedicated to promoting good governance among the States members of the African Union within four thematic areas, as follows: democracy and political governance; economic governance and management; corporate governance; and broad-based socioeconomic development. The Mechanism is the African self-monitoring tool for sharing best practices and experiences, identifying deficiencies and assessing capacity-building needs to ensure that the policies and practices of participating States conform to the shared values of the African Union and support the integration of Africa.

12. On the basis of the decision of the Heads of State during the African Union summit in January 2017, the Mechanism has been further tasked with supporting the States members of the African Union in playing a role in the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want and the 2030 Agenda. Given its commitment to promoting good governance, the Mechanism focuses on follow-up to aspiration 3 of Agenda 2063, calling for “an Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law”, which is closely related to Sustainable Development Goal 16 of the 2030 Agenda.

13. In October 2019, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Mechanism organized, as a follow-up to the eighteenth session of the Committee and in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a regional workshop designed specifically to support countries in moving ahead with assessing gaps in the institutional application of each of the 11 principles of effective

governance at all levels.<sup>2</sup> Government-led assessments initiated at the workshop could serve as a precursor to more specific in-depth reviews, as appropriate, and/or lead directly to the formulation of Government-led reform policies in priority institution-building areas. The workshop was also aimed at fostering policy coherence by encouraging alignment of institution-building efforts related to the 2030 Agenda with the Agenda 2063 objectives of the African Union.

14. Several mechanisms and tools to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063 have already been developed by the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Union, the African Development Bank and the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa, among others. These include the Sustainable Development Indicator Framework for Africa,<sup>3</sup> the annual *Africa Sustainable Development Report*,<sup>4</sup> the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development,<sup>5</sup> the Regional Coordination Mechanism for Africa<sup>6</sup> and the Regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group for Africa.<sup>7</sup>

15. Tools dedicated specifically to the monitoring of governance include the ECA *African Governance Report*,<sup>8</sup> the *Africa Governance Report* of the African Union<sup>9</sup> and the civil society-led Ibrahim Index of African Governance.<sup>10</sup> While efforts to promote effective governance and ongoing collaboration among all relevant stakeholders were seen as valuable, workshop participants noted that continued efforts could be made to harmonize such mechanisms and tools with a view to further promoting coherence and streamlining monitoring at the regional level.

16. Data and statistics for the monitoring of governance in Africa were a recurrent topic of discussion at the workshop, with data-related challenges a common refrain. Among the difficulties faced by countries in the region are lacking financial resources and human capital, compiling data at the local level, implementing data disaggregation, reconciling differences in methodologies among countries and over time, and strengthening the use of data in policy processes.

17. The African Peer Review Mechanism has developed approximately 98 indicators in its four thematic areas, with reporting based on data produced in Africa in cooperation with national statistical offices. It was noted that such reports could be strengthened by, inter alia, conducting qualitative citizen reviews of public services separate from and in addition to quantitative indices, such as sustained citizen satisfaction surveys; drawing on reviews of the implementation of related

<sup>2</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “Effective governance for sustainable development: putting principles into practice”. Available at [https://publicadministration.un.org/africa\\_regional\\_workshop/](https://publicadministration.un.org/africa_regional_workshop/).

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), *Sustainable Development Indicator Framework for Africa and Initial Compendium of Indicators* (Addis Ababa, ECA, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Jointly prepared by ECA, the African Union, the African Development Bank and the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa. The most recent edition of the *Africa Sustainable Development Report* was released in 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Convened by ECA in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the African Development Bank and the United Nations system. The sixth session of the Forum will be held from 24 to 27 February 2020 in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. See [www.uneca.org/arfsd2020](http://www.uneca.org/arfsd2020).

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, United Nations, ECA, “The twentieth session of RCM-Africa and the third joint meeting of the Regional United Nations Sustainable Development Group”. Available at [www.uneca.org/rcm20](http://www.uneca.org/rcm20).

<sup>7</sup> See <https://unsdg.un.org/un-in-action/africa>.

<sup>8</sup> The most recent edition of the ECA *African Governance Report* was released in 2018 and is available at [www.uneca.org/publications/african-governance-report-v](http://www.uneca.org/publications/african-governance-report-v).

<sup>9</sup> See African Peer Review Mechanism, *The Africa Governance Report: Promoting African Union Shared Values* (January 2019). Available at [https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36418-doc-eng\\_the\\_africa\\_governance\\_report\\_2019\\_final-1.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36418-doc-eng_the_africa_governance_report_2019_final-1.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> For more information, see <https://mo.ibrahim.foundation/iag>.

commitments, such as the United Nations Convention against Corruption, so as not to overburden countries with duplicate reporting requirements; drawing on unofficial data sources, such as national human right reports and assessments; contextualizing and localizing indicators, such as those on access to informal institutions of justice promoted by the Group of Seven Plus association of countries that are or have been affected by conflict; and integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into audit plans through supreme audit institutions.

18. In the concluding observations of the workshop, the importance of integrating the principles into processes of the Mechanism through the joint development of a monitoring and evaluation tool for Sustainable Development Goal 16 in Africa was underlined. Some national participants observed that the principles were already being considered in their voluntary national review processes, although they were not necessarily identified explicitly.

19. An important outcome to that end was the agreement by the organizers to begin work on a baseline study on the status of the application of the principles across Africa. One approach to such a study could be to conduct a survey of adherence to the principles in the public sector and report on the findings. Some important questions arise regarding the selection of indicators, the administrative levels within countries and the units of analysis (e.g. branches of government, jurisdictions, institutions or individual agencies). In addition, the study could provide an opportunity to consider how existing tools and initiatives relate to one another and/or what the added value would be of a survey on the application of the 11 principles by countries, especially with respect to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063.

20. A second part of the study could comprise an analysis of the survey findings vis-à-vis the implementation of the broader 2030 Agenda. A premise of this work could be not only that building strong institutions is a Sustainable Development Goal, but also that stronger institutions deliver better governance and sustainable development outcomes. An analysis of the institutional strengths and weaknesses could help to pinpoint specific challenges in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the countries concerned and/or at the regional level.

21. Such an analysis might further reveal structural issues, such as systematic gaps in accounting for the impact of reform policies on different population groups, the health of the environment or critical disconnects between resources and the responsibilities of subnational administrations. Taken together, such a cross-country comparison could reveal accelerators and opportunities for transforming governance to deliver on the decade of action for the Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Collaboration with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development**

22. At the eighteenth session, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) informed the Committee that the Organization had adopted 14 separate recommendations on different areas of public governance and had well-developed guidance on promoting public governance among its member countries.<sup>11</sup> A draft policy framework for sound public governance designed to connect various aspects of policymaking was the subject of ongoing public consultation. OECD was also attempting to weave together existing legal instruments and highlight areas in which legal instruments do not exist, for example, promoting a whole-of-government approach and evaluating policy performance, while building a platform to bring

<sup>11</sup> See Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), “Public governance”. Available at [www.oecd.org/governance/](http://www.oecd.org/governance/).

tailored support to capacity-building that could help to bring together the collective expertise of the international community to address governance challenges.

23. At the invitation of OECD, the Committee commented on the draft policy framework with a view to promoting coherence between the global and the regional levels, strengthening the linkages with the Sustainable Development Goals and addressing both governance successes and governance failures. The Committee is pleased that most of its comments appear to have been taken into account in a revised draft of the framework.<sup>12</sup>

24. The draft framework is aimed at providing Governments at all levels with an integrated diagnostic, guidance and benchmarking tool to help, inter alia, to design and pursue a public governance reform agenda that enables Governments to move closer to OECD standards and practices in this area. The Committee has observed that the framework seeks to bring together insights and recommendations from previous work into one comprehensive document and as such is very useful, not least for OECD member and partner countries.

25. Interaction with OECD has given the informal working group an opportunity to recall insights that may be relevant to all regional initiatives. One is that the common thread in promoting effective governance for sustainable development is the universal nature of the 2030 Agenda and the determination of all countries to take the bold and transformative steps that are urgently needed to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path. All Governments have committed themselves to work tirelessly for the full implementation of the Agenda by 2030. Regional frameworks, tools and reforms could helpfully take the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals as a main objective of reform policies.

26. In the same vein, OECD notes in its draft policy framework, and the Committee concurs, that the environmental, social and economic challenges of the current times call for coherent approaches to public policymaking that respond to the complex, multidimensional challenges facing society. Centre of government coordination is an important strategy for promoting an integrated approach to Sustainable Development Goal implementation and could be a focus of regional follow-up and review mechanisms alongside other approaches. Monitoring of policy coherence and analysis of the impact of institution-building initiatives on the multidimensional challenges faced by countries are issues of ongoing concern.

27. Another lesson highlighted in the interaction with OECD was the importance of context, which is acknowledged in the draft policy framework. Although all countries subscribe to the common vision of the 2030 Agenda, there may be notable strengths and limitations of specific policy frameworks and tools for building strong institutions for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals vis-à-vis regional and economic groupings of countries. Cases in point are countries with economies in transition or in post-conflict situations. Accordingly, the Committee could continue to encourage the development of context-sensitive regional action plans, forums and tools that nonetheless draw on the basic principles of effective governance for sustainable development and take the 2030 Agenda as the main guidance for all countries in tackling critical environmental, social and economic challenges.

## **B. Progress in identifying practices to operationalize the principles**

28. In 2019, the Committee commented on a draft framework for guidance on commonly used strategies that was proposed in the note by the Secretariat on this

<sup>12</sup> OECD, OECD draft policy framework on sound public governance, document GOV/PGC(2018)26/REV1.



topic (see [E/C.16/2019/4](#), sect. II.A) and agreed that a common understanding of the concepts and main factors underpinning the implementation of each strategy could assist in seeing the full picture of institution-building, sharing findings of common interest and pursuing priorities accordingly. As indicated in previous deliberations of the Committee, such guidance could helpfully be illustrated with case studies and promising approaches observed at the national and subnational levels, and opportunities to connect with others through international cooperation, peer-to-peer learning and research could accelerate the achievement of effective, accountable and inclusive institutions.

29. Although the Committee did not indicate priority areas for study, members recalled the merits of promoting a professional public sector workforce, performance management, sound policymaking, civic engagement and education, regulatory capacity, information and communications technology and public sector integrity. The Committee also advised on the need to consider various institutional and development contexts in providing guidance.

30. To date, five preliminary versions of the strategy guidance notes (out of 62 commonly used strategies in the agreed framework) have been prepared and made available for comment by the members of the informal working group of the Committee, among others. The draft notes address budget transparency under the principle of transparency, public sector workforce diversity under the principle of non-discrimination, and monitoring and evaluation, coherent policymaking and risk management frameworks under the principle of sound policymaking. The Committee may wish to provide initial reactions.

31. The relatively modest effort of preparing five draft strategy guidance notes under the auspices of the informal working group has underscored the need to accelerate efforts following a well-defined process for developing the series and building consensus, as discussed previously by the Committee and encouraged by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution [2018/12](#). Drawing on the established working methods of the International Organization for Standardization, it is suggested that the Committee consider convening ad hoc technical groups on a voluntary basis, with members drawn from international organizations or international professional associations on the basis of relevant professional experience and recognition as leading authorities in their field.

32. Guidance notes prepared by such groups could be subject to peer review and other quality control mechanisms. Drafts could be circulated to the relevant professional associations and related bodies for comment as they become available, with an emphasis on the engagement of national and subnational officials. Comments from all stakeholders should be taken into account in revisions.

33. Elaborating technical guidance calls for a comprehensive approach to information sources, with preference given to surveys, standards, methods and tools that are clearly impartial and have been prepared according to strictly professional considerations. While all sources have their strengths and weaknesses, it may be that only sources that meet certain standards of quality are mentioned in the final versions of the technical guidance. Criteria for assessing the quality of information sources could be provided.

34. Assessments of the public sector situation and trends could be based on authoritative global and regional surveys administered by international organizations and/or other widely recognized entities as determined by each group. Survey data should be considered if the survey has been developed and administered following a scientifically sound methodology. Similarly, existing standards should be considered if, in the opinion of the group members, they have been developed in accordance with a sound methodology. This could include standards that have been adopted by an

intergovernmental body, produced by an international secretariat of an intergovernmental body with a clear mandate to produce such a standard or published by a recognized international professional association within its area of competence. As with the principles in general, it could be underscored that standards are voluntary and not an agreement or law.

### **III. Reviewing outcomes**

#### **A. Progress in linking the principles to work on governance indicators**

35. At the eighteenth session, three levels of indicators were presented for discussion. It is widely accepted that effective, accountable and inclusive institutions enable the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and, where progress towards the achievement of the Goals is lagging, weak institutions may be a significant factor. At the highest level of analysis, therefore, the principles could be associated with the global Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework as a reflection of their impact on the achievement of the Goals. The achievement of the Goals is measured by the global indicator framework and related regional and national indicator frameworks.

36. As noted at the eighteenth session, some 80 per cent of countries have national development plans that are used as the basis for country results frameworks, while 20 per cent use sectoral plans. Indicators of governance impacts could be linked to expected sustainable development outcomes such as these to avoid a “box-ticking” approach to policy reforms, while at the same time enabling an analysis of specific gaps in institutional capabilities that may be hindering the achievement of national objectives.

37. At the second level of analysis, each of the 11 principles could be linked to additional governance indicators developed for more specific purposes. How to measure adherence to the principles is a main subject of study by the Committee. Since effective governance and institution-building are an integral part of the 2030 Agenda, such indicators could even be included in the global Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework, as proposed by the Committee in its previous report on this subject (*ibid.*, sect. III.A and annex). They could also be drawn from related frameworks, such as the one developed by the Praia Group on Governance Statistics of the Statistical Commission with the purpose of providing a foundation for the development of international statistical guidance and standards in the governance domain.

38. Indicators at this level of analysis could be particularly helpful in understanding the extent to which different combinations of reform policies contribute to operationalizing the principles in various developmental and institutional contexts. The attribution of strategies to outcomes may not always be direct or clearly identifiable. By way of illustration, it is commonly accepted that the provision of open government data promotes accountability and enables public scrutiny of institutions as well as inclusiveness. However, depending on the content and form of such data and the capacity of civil society actors to make use of them, open government data may have limited practical bearing on promoting access to information or revealing how government functions. Well-crafted indicators of transparency that are independent of both sustainable development impacts and specific structures and processes could help to strengthen the analysis of what does and does not work under different conditions.

39. At the third level of analysis, indicators could be associated with commonly used strategies. Such practices are measured using key performance indicators based

on the collective knowledge and experience of expert communities of practice. They may often reflect structures and processes, such as the ratification of a treaty or the proportion of administrative units audited, that are directly connected with the methods of implementation and the expected results of a strategy.

40. As observed at the eighteenth session, indicators could also be seen through the lens of specific development objectives. With regard to Sustainable Development Goal 4, on quality education, for example, the focus could be on the application of the principles to institutions directly associated with the educational system or having important interconnections with it. While indicators of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization may already provide much of the conceptual and data content needed for analysis, the principles could suggest areas of governance for sustainable development that are less examined in the educational and related sectors. A similar argument could apply to the security and justice sectors, which are a focus of the work of the Praia Group, or any other area relevant to the Sustainable Development Goals.

41. A refinement of the proposal for disambiguating indicators at different levels of analysis is provided for the further consideration of the Committee in table 2.

Table 2

**Indicators at different levels of analysis**

<i>What is being measured?</i>	<i>What questions could indicators help to answer?</i>	<i>What indicators may be most relevant?</i>
Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals	What is the impact of adherence to the principles on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Globally agreed indicator framework for the Goals</li> <li>• Regional and national Sustainable Development Goal indicators</li> </ul>
Application of the principles	How much do the commonly used strategies contribute to operationalizing the principles in various contexts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicators of effective governance for sustainable development (associated with each of the principles)•Regional indicators of effective governance for sustainable development</li> </ul>
Implementation of commonly used strategies	Are recommended structures and processes in place and are they producing the expected results?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key performance indicators (associated with the strategies)</li> </ul>

## **B. Drawing on the work of the Praia Group on Governance Statistics**

42. The Praia Group on Governance Statistics, established in 2015 by the Statistical Commission, was mandated to develop a handbook on governance statistics for national statistical offices. Following extensive consultation and preparation, the Group released a draft version of the handbook for comment in November 2019.<sup>13</sup> The Statistical Commission will consider the final report of the Group at its fifty-first session, to be held from 3 to 6 March 2020, under the agenda item “Governance, peace and security statistics”. The handbook is intended as guidance for national statistical offices on the measurement of governance concepts at the heart of Sustainable Development Goal 16.

<sup>13</sup> Available at [http://ine.cv/praiagroup/handbook/Handbook\\_on\\_GovernanceStatistics-Draft\\_for\\_global\\_consultation.pdf](http://ine.cv/praiagroup/handbook/Handbook_on_GovernanceStatistics-Draft_for_global_consultation.pdf).

43. An initial exchange on the potential interaction between the work of the Committee on the principles of effective governance and the work of the Statistical Commission on governance statistics took place at the seventeenth session of the Committee, in April 2018, and an update was provided at the eighteenth session, in April 2019.

44. A central objective of the Committee in pursuing collaboration with the Group has been to promote horizontal linkages between the work of the Statistical Commission on statistical development and the work of the Committee on governance and public administration aspects of the 2030 Agenda. Specifically, the Committee has encouraged the Group to consider how the principles could be reflected in the handbook given the shared interest of the statistical and public administration fields in the development of an indicator framework for the measurement and monitoring of the targets related to governance in the 2030 Agenda.<sup>14</sup>

45. The draft handbook covers eight dimensions of governance, namely, non-discrimination and equality, participation, openness, access to and quality of justice, responsiveness, absence of corruption, trust, and safety and security. The chapters on each of these dimensions enumerate a set of key recommended indicators and other indicators that may be useful to national statistical offices in their efforts to strengthen measurement of the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16. The handbook provides a description of each dimension, including its subdimensions, as appropriate, and an explanation of the importance of the dimension.

46. A comparison of the principles with the conceptual framework followed by the Praia Group is contained in the annex. As observed at the eighteenth session, there appears to be substantial conceptual overlap with some principles (integrity, transparency, non-discrimination and participation), while others may be subsumed under other dimensions (competence and leaving no one behind) or otherwise not be reflected in the first edition (sound policymaking, collaboration, independent oversight, subsidiarity and intergenerational equity).

47. The differences in perspective may be attributed in part to different starting points. Whereas the Committee places effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at the core of its work on the principles, human rights appear to be at the centre of the work of the Praia Group. In the draft handbook, it states: “Human rights, as defined and elaborated in international law, provide an adequate basis for further development of definitional and methodological frameworks of governance statistics.”

48. For each of the eight dimensions studied by the Praia Group, a set of key indicators is recommended. The rationale for the selection of key indicators varies, but in general, is related to the availability of existing data sets and best practices in governance data collection. In outlining its views on participation, for example, the Group advises that indicators should aim:

- (a) To cover all aspects of the topic;
- (b) To be relevant to policymaking, with strong links to specific policies and strategies;
- (c) To be simple, clear and easy to understand by policymakers and other stakeholders;
- (d) To provide a direct and unambiguous measure of progress;

<sup>14</sup> The terms of reference of the Praia Group on Governance Statistics are contained in [E/CN.3/2015/17](#), annex.

(e) To be relevant across all or most countries.

49. The Group also provides guidance on data sources, specifically in relation to household surveys, business surveys, censuses, administrative records and expert assessments, and on types of indicators (structural, process or outcome indicators) and suggests that different dimensions of governance may call for different approaches. For example, in measuring “direct discrimination”, the use of household surveys and administrative data is recommended, with an emphasis on outcomes. The advantages and disadvantages of sources and indicator types may be different for other aspects of discrimination.

50. Data quality is a further issue in the selection of governance indicators according to the draft handbook, which refers loosely to the quality framework for OECD statistical activities. The OECD quality framework has seven dimensions, namely, relevance, accuracy, credibility, timeliness, accessibility, interpretability and coherence.<sup>15</sup> The framework was chosen by the Group as it was found to be applicable to both official and unofficial sources.

51. A further consideration is the cost to national statistical offices of producing statistics, which is a major challenge for many countries. To address resource constraints, the Group suggests that countries consider improving and expanding existing administrative data systems and/or integrating governance modules into existing surveys, possibly on other topics, in cases where data collection calls for the use of surveys. In addition, the Group underscores the value of engaging new actors in data collection and exploring new sources of unofficial data.

52. The Group observes that, in areas where more advanced guidance exists, data collection and use tend to be more widespread, and the data itself more comparable and harmonized. For example, methodological work is relatively advanced in connection with the measurement of bribery, crime prevalence and victimization, access to criminal justice, system responsiveness and trust in institutions. In contrast, substantial further methodology work is required in measuring discrimination, participation, openness (transparency), access to civil justice, satisfaction with services and other forms of corruption, such as grand corruption and nepotism.

53. The need for better coverage of hard-to-reach population groups in all relevant data collection exercises has been identified as a common challenge across countries and regions. As observed by the Committee and others, in order to produce data that are suitable for addressing the principle of leaving no one behind, additional efforts are needed to produce disaggregated data whenever relevant.

54. In the light of the above, the Committee may wish to consider drawing on the key recommended indicators of the Praia Group in relevant areas, in particular in relation to the principles of integrity, transparency, non-discrimination and participation. The Committee could also consider accelerating its technical work on linking the principles to indicators by following the lead of the Praia Group in adopting an agreed framework for ensuring data quality, such as the OECD quality framework, or another internationally agreed standard, such as the United Nations national quality assurance framework for official statistics.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> OECD, Quality framework and guidelines for OECD statistical activities, document STD/QFS(2011)1.

<sup>16</sup> Contained the United Nations national quality assurance frameworks manual for official statistics published in October 2019, chap. 3 and annex. Available at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/dataquality/un-nqaf-manual/>.

## C. Developments in auditing of Sustainable Development Goal implementation

55. The International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) continues to support supreme audit institutions in auditing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals through the INTOSAI Development Initiative (IDI) global programme on auditing the Goals. As part of this programme, 73 supreme audit institutions in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean and one subnational audit office have conducted performance audits of preparedness for the achievement of the Goals. For these audits, a whole-of-government approach was adopted to examine how Governments have integrated the 2030 Agenda into national contexts.

56. The audit model included an examination of the establishment of institutional frameworks, mechanisms for policy coherence, means of implementation, the principle of leaving no one behind, mechanisms for follow-up and review and multi-stakeholder engagement. Reports to date show that supreme audit institutions have urged national Governments to take action where it was lacking, provided independent oversight of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, made recommendations for enhancing preparedness and implementation, and contributed to raising awareness among citizens and stakeholders. In some instances, supreme audit institutions have been consulted in voluntary national review processes.

57. IDI is currently developing another Sustainable Development Goal audit model (ISAM) to support supreme audit institutions in auditing Sustainable Development Goal implementation. A member of the informal working group on the principles of effective governance participated in the first meeting on the development of the model, held in Oslo in February 2019. The new model defines an audit of Sustainable Development Goal implementation as an audit of the implementation of the set of policies that contribute to the achievement of a nationally agreed target linked with one or more Sustainable Development Goal targets. Such audits are expected to draw conclusions on how likely the target is to be achieved on the basis of current trends and the adequacy of the national target in comparison with the corresponding Sustainable Development Goal target.

58. The model, which will be available in early 2020, is based on the 2030 Agenda and the guidance on the preparation of voluntary national reviews. As such, IDI observes that there is alignment between the model being developed and most of the principles of effective governance for sustainable development.

59. The model will be piloted through cooperative audits on specific Sustainable Development Goal targets in two regions (target 12.7, on sustainable public procurement, in Latin America and a target still to be determined in Asia and the Arab States). IDI will also provide support to the supreme audit institutions of Uganda and Fiji in auditing the implementation of target 5.2, on violence against women.

60. IDI will also facilitate the achievement of greater impact of the audits of Sustainable Development Goal preparedness and implementation. The Initiative will support supreme audit institutions in communicating key audit messages and strengthening follow-up mechanisms and will facilitate coalitions of stakeholders to advocate the implementation of the recommendations of supreme audit institutions related to the Goals.

## IV. Conclusions and recommendations

61. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat and regional organizations share a common interest in promoting effective governance for sustainable development, in particular as a powerful lever in bringing about the transformations necessary for balancing the three dimensions of sustainable development and implementing the 2030 Agenda. Effective governance is also an enabler of regional cooperation and integration, which are key to achieving integrated development strategies and addressing critical transboundary challenges.

62. At its eighteenth session, the Committee noted that regional actors could be valuable partners in supporting related capacity development at the national and subnational levels and in reviewing and monitoring the use of the principles by interested countries. The African regional workshop on effective governance, initiated by the Chair of the Committee and organized by the Department and the African Peer Review Mechanism in collaboration with UNDP, was a pivotal step in this direction.

63. The joint workshop to promote the principles of effective governance was especially useful because of the alignment of institution-building efforts related to the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, and given the relevance of the principles to the core long-term goal of the region to have capable institutions and transformative leadership in place at all levels. This is supported by the role of the African Peer Review Mechanism in promoting effective governance, as well as its role as a self-monitoring mechanism for sharing best practices, identifying deficiencies and assessing capacity-building needs in conformance with African Union shared values and regional integration objectives.

64. Further collaboration with the Mechanism and other regional organizations, inter alia, in the preparation of baseline studies on the status of the principles across the regions concerned could be valuable. Additional regional workshops could likewise be helpful in promoting the operationalization of the principles and strengthening linkages, where appropriate, between national efforts to build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions and global follow-up and review processes.

65. The proliferation of mechanisms and tools in the wide-ranging field of governance suggests that there may be value in further harmonization of guidance for countries to draw on in their national and subnational institution-building efforts. Some work has begun on compiling and elaborating the collective knowledge of global communities of practice in the form of a series of strategy guidance notes to operationalize the principles. Given the need for accelerated action to promote effective governance and institutional reform for the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals and the fact that governance was identified in the *Global Sustainable Development Report 2019* as the first of four levers for transformative action, faster progress may be in order.

66. At the same time, experience suggests that a well-defined process should be put in place to encourage technical rigour and ensure that any such Committee guidance notes are seen as relevant and legitimate among policy advisers and practitioners in a wide variety of development contexts. Finding resources to compile, produce and review such guidance in the desired time frame could be a challenge.

67. Similarly, the Committee may need to expand its efforts to link the principles with governance indicators if substantial progress is to be made in this area by 2021, when the current term of the members ends. Table 2 provides a model for understanding indicators at different levels of analysis, as well as a way of thinking about indicators in relation to the impact of the principles on sustainable development,

the contribution of commonly used strategies to the realization of the principles and, at an operational level, support for structures and processes. The advice of the Committee on this model or another way of organizing various types of indicators could help to focus efforts in the next intersessional period.

68. The recent release of the draft Praia Group handbook on governance statistics is a welcome advancement. In addition to drawing on the Group's key recommended indicators and other indicators, as appropriate, the Committee can benefit from the experience of the Group with various challenges in statistical methodology. Specifically, the adoption of an internationally agreed framework for assuring data quality could assist the informal working group in screening prospective indicators and data sets, both official and unofficial, as appropriate.

69. Finally, the release of the draft handbook provides an opportunity to recall the common interest of the Committee and the Statistical Commission in supporting the Economic and Social Council, and the high-level political forum on sustainable development under the auspices of the Council in particular, in its central role in overseeing follow-up to and the review of the 2030 Agenda at the global level, within their respective areas of expertise and in accordance with their mandates. In the spirit of promoting horizontal linkages among the subsidiary bodies, the Committee and the Commission could consider taking further steps to enhance their collaboration in the field of governance statistics.



## Annex

## Principles of effective governance for sustainable development compared with dimensions of governance developed by the Praia Group on Governance Statistics

<i>Principle</i>	<i>Related dimension from the Praia Group handbook on governance statistics (as at November 2019)<sup>a</sup></i>
Competence: To perform their functions effectively, institutions are to have sufficient expertise, resources and tools to deal adequately with the mandates under their authority	-
Sound policymaking: To achieve their intended results, public policies are to be coherent with one another and founded on true or well-established grounds, in full accordance with fact, reason and good sense	-
Collaboration: To address problems of common interest, institutions at all levels of government and in all sectors should work together and jointly with non-State actors towards the same end, purpose and effect	-
Integrity: To serve in the public interest, civil servants are to discharge their official duties honestly, fairly and in a manner consistent with soundness of moral principle	Absence of corruption: This dimension focuses on the levels of intolerance to corruption, the levels and patterns of observable corrupt practices and the State response to corruption
Transparency: To ensure accountability and enable public scrutiny, institutions are to be open and candid in the execution of their functions and promote access to information, subject only to the specific and limited exceptions as are provided by law	Openness: This dimension focuses on the extent to which public institutions provide access to information and are transparent in their decision- and policymaking processes. More specifically, the dimension covers access to information, open government provisions, freedom of expression and media pluralism
Independent oversight: To retain trust in government, oversight agencies are to act according to strictly professional considerations and apart from and unaffected by others	-
Leaving no one behind: To ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality, public policies are to take into account the needs and aspirations of all segments of society, including the poorest and most vulnerable and those subject to discrimination	-
Non-discrimination: To respect, protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, access to public service is to be provided on general terms of equality, without distinction of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, disability or other status	Non-discrimination and equality: This dimension focuses on any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference or other differential treatment that is based on grounds such as colour, sex, language, religion, national or social origin, disability or other status, with the intention or effect of nullifying or impairing human rights and fundamental freedoms

## Principle

*Related dimension from the Praia Group handbook on governance statistics (as at November 2019)<sup>a</sup>*

Participation: To have an effective State, all significant political groups should be actively involved in matters that directly affect them and have a chance to influence policy

Participation in political and public affairs: This dimension focuses on the ways in which citizens take part in the conduct of political and public affairs, including by registering to vote, voting and standing as a candidate in elections; being members of legislative, executive and judicial bodies at all levels of government; accessing positions in the public service; and engaging, individually or as members of political parties and other non-governmental organizations, in political activities

Responsiveness: This dimension focuses on whether people have a say in what government does and whether they are satisfied with the government's performance

Subsidiarity: To promote government that is responsive to the needs and aspirations of all people, central authorities should perform only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more intermediate or local level

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Intergenerational equity: To promote prosperity and quality of life for all, institutions should construct administrative acts that balance the short-term needs of today's generation with the longer-term needs of future generations

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Access to and quality of justice: This dimension focuses on the ability of people to defend and enforce their rights and obtain just resolution of justiciable problems, if necessary through impartial formal or informal institutions of justice and with appropriate legal support

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Trust: This dimension focuses on people's trust in institutions as well as in other people, with a primary focus on the former, for example, the Parliament, the national Government and the justice system

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Safety and security: This dimension focuses on levels and patterns of crime, perceptions of safety, measurement of casualties directly provoked by armed operations and the quality of law enforcement and criminal justice institutions

<sup>a</sup> Available at [http://ine.cv/praiagroup/handbook/Handbook\\_on\\_GovernanceStatistics-Draft\\_for\\_global\\_consultation.pdf](http://ine.cv/praiagroup/handbook/Handbook_on_GovernanceStatistics-Draft_for_global_consultation.pdf).