



# Economic and Social Council

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## Committee of Experts on Public Administration

### Twenty-first session

4–8 April 2022

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

### Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

#### Annotated provisional agenda

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
3. Governance and public administration aspects of the theme of the 2022 session of the Economic and Social Council and the 2022 high-level political forum on sustainable development.
4. Building strong institutions to combat climate change and its impacts and for the sustainable management, protection and restoration of natural resources.
5. Issues of governance and institution-building in conflict-affected countries.
6. Application of the principles of effective governance for sustainable development at the subnational level.
7. Issues in public financial management and budgeting for the Sustainable Development Goals.
8. Public sector workforce matters.
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10. Dialogue with voluntary national review countries on institutional aspects of Sustainable Development Goal 16.
11. Provisional agenda of the twenty-second session of the Committee.
12. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its twenty-first session.

#### Annotations

##### 1. Election of officers

The Committee will elect a Chair, three Vice-Chairs and a Rapporteur for the twenty-first session. The Chair, Vice-Chairs and Rapporteur constitute the Bureau. In accordance with established practice, the officers will continue to act as the Bureau



during the intersessional period that follows the twenty-first session in preparation for the twenty-second session.

**2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters**

The Committee will be invited to adopt the agenda of the twenty-first session on the basis of the provisional agenda approved by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 2021/232. In the same decision, the Council decided that the twenty-first session of the Committee would be held at United Nations Headquarters from 4 to 8 April 2022. The morning meetings will be held from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and the afternoon meetings from 3 to 6 p.m. Informal meetings and events may be held at other times.

*Documentation*

Annotated provisional agenda ([E/C.16/2022/1](#))

**3. Governance and public administration aspects of the theme of the 2022 session of the Economic and Social Council and the 2022 high-level political forum on sustainable development**

The theme of the high-level political forum on sustainable development for 2022 and of the Council for the 2022 session will be “Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. Participants in the forum will also discuss Sustainable Development Goal 4, on quality education; Goal 5, on gender equality; Goal 14, on life below water; Goal 15, on life on land; and Goal 17, on strengthening the means of implementation and revitalizing global partnerships. Participants will also consider the integrated, indivisible and interlinked nature of the Goals.

The Committee will consider the theme and the Goals under review from a governance and public administration perspective, paying particular attention to the cross-cutting nature of all the Goals, and will adopt its contribution to the forum under this agenda item.

*Documentation*

Note by the Secretariat transmitting the expert paper on transforming institutions and governance to build forward better towards 2030 ([E/C.16/2022/2](#))

Contribution by the Committee to the 2022 thematic review of the high-level political forum on sustainable development

**4. Building strong institutions to combat climate change and its impacts and for the sustainable management, protection and restoration of natural resources**

The Committee will consider the issue of building strong institutions to combat climate change and its impacts and for the sustainable management, protection and restoration of natural resources within the context of the principles of effective governance for sustainable development.

*Documentation*

Note by the Secretariat transmitting the expert paper on building strong institutions to combat climate change and its impacts and for the sustainable management, protection and restoration of natural resources ([E/C.16/2022/3](#))

Background paper on building strong institutions to address climate change and for the sustainable management of natural resources

## 5. Issues of governance and institution-building in conflict-affected countries

In its resolution [70/262](#), on the review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, the General Assembly stressed the importance of closer cooperation between the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission and encouraged the Commission to draw on the expertise of relevant subsidiary bodies of the Council, as appropriate, with a view to contributing, through the Council and in accordance with its mandate, to the work of the Commission from a medium- to long-term perspective.

Consequently, at its seventeenth session, the Committee considered the question of stakeholder engagement in post-conflict countries. It concluded, *inter alia*, that re-establishing legitimacy and trust were major challenges faced by post-conflict societies, where certain groups might have been systematically excluded and military, police and other institutions might be associated with repressive or corrupt practices. In subsequent sessions, the Committee expanded its consideration of the institutional aspects of the security and justice sectors with a discussion of the underlying issues in promoting security and access to justice for all and ways to support the institution-building aims of Goal 16 in those areas. The Committee also observed that the pandemic was likely to exacerbate existing challenges in conflict-affected countries and increase pressure on already struggling institutions. Local leaders and civil society organizations on the ground remained critical partners in aiding vaccination programmes that rely on trust and legitimacy, while clear, verified information was essential to overcoming challenges related to fake news and mistrust of government.

At its twenty-first session, the Committee will continue its reflection on building strong institutions for sustainable development in conflict-affected countries, with particular reference to lessons learned about State-building from the case of Afghanistan.

### *Documentation*

Note by the Secretariat transmitting the expert paper on institutions and State-building in conflict-affected settings: the case of Afghanistan ([E/C.16/2022/4](#))

## 6. Application of the principles of effective governance for sustainable development at the subnational level

At its nineteenth session, the Committee focused its discussion on connecting the principles of effective governance for sustainable development, endorsed by the Council in its resolution [2018/12](#), to regional and national actions to build strong institutions for implementation of the Goals. At its twentieth session, the Committee welcomed the preparation of a baseline study on the implementation of the principles in Africa by the African Peer Review Mechanism, as well as a draft study on the implementation of the principles in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The Committee noted with appreciation efforts to identify and review related technical guidelines to operationalize the principles, including from sectoral perspectives, and to further engage the relevant United Nations organizations, regional organizations and professional and academic communities in this regard, in an inclusive manner, together with all relevant stakeholders.

The Committee concluded that more in-depth consideration of regional studies could be useful, as could further discussion of the public sector situation and trends in specific practice areas, such as strategic foresight, building on the work of past sessions and using the strategy guidance notes as a point of reference where applicable.

Given the essential role of local authorities in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, at its twenty-first session the Committee will consider matters relating to the application of the principles at the subnational level.

*Documentation*

Note by the Secretariat transmitting the expert paper on the application of the principles of effective governance for sustainable development at the subnational level ([E/C.16/2022/5](#))

**7. Issues in public financial management and budgeting for the Sustainable Development Goals**

At its seventeenth session, the Committee discussed issues related to effectively mobilizing, allocating and managing budgetary resources and observed that building competent public fiscal management capacity at the national and local levels, together with adequate oversight capacity, remained a major challenge. The Committee recommended that the Goals be mainstreamed into national finance strategies to bridge the gap between policy priorities and actual government spending and, in the least developed countries, to ensure that the achievement of sustainable development did not depend on aid alone.

In subsequent sessions, the Committee highlighted that sound fiscal management entailed full ownership of domestic and international flows, reduction of illicit financial flows and corruption, strengthened fiscal transparency through open and collaborative budgeting processes, participatory and performance-based budgeting, and fiscal decentralization commensurate with subnational institutional capacity and arrangements in a given country. Achievement of the Goals could be accelerated if the Goals were embedded in national and subnational budgets and if these were effectively executed. In most cases, this would require reorganizing budgets based on activities and programmes, which required a strategic decision by political leaders, as well as technical efforts. Expanded efforts were also needed to strengthen local government finance and financial management, including through a concerted global effort to address severe budgetary challenges and financial risks that Governments were facing at the subnational level.

At its twenty-first session, the Committee will continue its consideration of matters relating to transparent and participatory budgeting, drawing on the experiences of selected countries.

*Documentation*

Note by the Secretariat transmitting the expert paper on transparent and participatory budgeting for the Sustainable Development Goals ([E/C.16/2022/6](#))

**8. Public sector workforce matters**

At its seventeenth session, the Committee discussed the challenges of building the awareness, competencies and skills of civil servants at the national and local levels and readying institutions and policies for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Committee observed, inter alia, that efforts to rally civil servants and the broader public sector workforce around the Goals and instil a sense of commitment could be strengthened, along with new ways of working on the basis of participation and engagement. The Committee also observed that new policies and technical skills would be required in the public sector, given the high rate of scientific and technological advancement and the service delivery and policy complexities associated with the Goals.

In subsequent sessions, the Committee pointed to the enabling role that critical thinking, complexity thinking, futures thinking and design thinking, in addition to deliberative skills, emotional intelligence and appropriate use of frontier technologies, could play in delivering innovative public services and achieving the Goals. The Committee stressed that building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels required a comprehensive understanding of the scope and capabilities of the public sector workforce, and encouraged countries to address public sector workforce capability gaps, including gaps in digital skills, within the context of human resources and national development strategies.

The Committee continued its consideration of the issue, with specific reference to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on essential workers in the public sector. The Committee was of the view that further attention was needed with regard to new modalities of work in the public sector, inequalities in compensation systems, subnational government workforce capacity, changes in public sector management to attract youth and issues pertaining to the politicization of the public service and its impact on the Goals.

At its twenty-first session, the Committee will discuss questions pertaining to governance capacity and legitimacy to deliver the Goals and for robust and well-functioning crisis management systems.

#### *Documentation*

Note by the Secretariat transmitting the expert paper on public sector workforce capacity and legitimacy for the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals ([E/C.16/2022/7](#))

### **9. Issues in digital government**

At its twentieth session, the Committee agreed that it would be useful to examine issues in digital government at the twenty-first session, with a focus, inter alia, on bridging the digital divide for an inclusive recovery from the pandemic, the readiness of institutions to take advantage of technology in the education and health sectors, new skills needed in leadership positions, the status of public sector workers in the information and communications technology field and the application of the principles of effective governance in digital government development with a view to designing systems that are consistent with international human rights and privacy norms. Against this backdrop, the Committee will be invited to consider in particular the role of digital government in efforts to prevent corruption and the promotion of a human-centred approach to digital transformation.

#### *Documentation*

Note by the Secretariat transmitting the expert paper on digital governance: integrity, challenges and prospects ([E/C.16/2022/8](#))

### **10. Dialogue with voluntary national review countries on institutional aspects of Sustainable Development Goal 16**

As its twenty-first session, the Committee will again invite a small number of voluntary national review countries to engage in an interactive dialogue with the experts on the institutional aspects of Goal 16, taking into account the interlinkages between Goal 16 and the other Goals. This could include reflections by the experts on the use of the principles of effective governance for sustainable development, endorsed by the Council in July 2018, as a guide to transformative pathways to realize the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development. The experts would be invited to prepare questions and comments for consideration based on country inputs,

identify challenges and provide proposals that could contribute to accelerated actions to achieve the Goals. The Committee will also continue its consideration of how best to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and action-oriented approaches to advance the decade of action to deliver the Goals, building on the process of voluntary national reviews conducted by the high-level political forum.

#### *Documentation*

Conference room paper on dialogue with voluntary national review countries on Sustainable Development Goal 16

### **11. Provisional agenda of the twenty-second session of the Committee**

In accordance with General Assembly resolution [72/305](#), the Committee should adopt a theme for its twenty-second session that is aligned with the main theme of the high-level political forum and the Council for 2023, while continuing to address issues necessary to discharge its other functions. The main theme for 2023 will be “Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels”.

In discussing its draft provisional agenda of the twenty-second session, the Committee may also wish to consider reflecting on a provisional programme of work for the period from 2022 to 2025 and on the related terms of reference of its informal working groups, building on the experience and accomplishments of previous years. Members could consider whether doing so would contribute to the work of the Committee and further enhance its profile through the forward-looking study of critical issues in governance and public administration relevant to the implementation of and follow-up to the 2030 Agenda.

### **12. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its twenty-first session**

The Committee will adopt a report to be submitted to the Council on the work of its twenty-first session. In accordance with General Assembly resolution [72/305](#), the work of the Committee should reflect the need for an integrated and action-oriented approach to the Goals and build on a solid evidence-based review of progress on the 2030 Agenda.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution [68/1](#), the Committee should include in its report an executive summary, and the report should be concise and clearly identify the conclusions and recommendations and issues that might require attention and/or action by the Council.

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