

UNPAN Workshop

Theme: Enhancing Regional Integration for sustainable development through UNPAN

Address by UNDP Country Director on behalf of the UNDP Resident Representative

10 June 2015

Programme Director, Mr. Pierre Schoonraad,

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Mr. Aubrey Nxumalo, Member of the Mayoral Committee city of Ekurhuleni

Ms. Lydia Phalwane, Chief Director, Enabling Environment, and other CPSI colleagues,

Distinguished delegates and government representatives from the SADC region,

UNDP colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to South Africa.

It is a great pleasure for me to be here on behalf of UNDP and its Resident Representative, Mr. Gana Fofang, who unfortunately could not be here due to a last minute request to attend to some urgent business in connection with the AU summit. We are grateful for the invitation to participate in this important workshop on Enhancing Regional Integration for Sustainable Development through the UN Public Administration Network (UNPAN) which UNDP was honored to financially and technically support.

UNDP's interest in supporting this event is premised on the convergence of the objectives of this meeting, which are to promote South-South learning on innovative public administration practices, with our own priorities as expressed in our Country Programme Document (CPD) for South Africa. UNDP, in agreement with the Government of South Africa, have identified support for strengthened public sector delivery and accountability as well as supporting South Africa in its regional and global roles, as two of our four programme objectives for the period 2013-2017, the other two being inclusive growth and greening the South African economy.

Today's workshop brings together senior government representatives to share lessons and experiences, address challenges, explore collaborative solutions, and enhance knowledge sharing on innovative practices in the public sector domain in the SADC region. Moreover, it aims to increase the contribution and use of the UNPAN portal in the region. One of the key outcomes of this workshop is to define the parameters of a joint research on innovation in the civil service, including harnessing data for evidence-based policymaking, and on leveraging new digital technologies and social media to promote citizen engagement. Indeed experiences in empowering citizens to participate in public processes, by monitoring service delivery have shown significant results in terms of public accountability and transparency as well as improved quality of the services rendered. In an age of advanced information and communications technologies (ICTs), there are many new opportunities and tools for opening up such engaging spaces between the citizens and the public authorities and within the public sector itself.

For UNDP innovation is not an end, it is a means to bring the most up-to-date concepts and tools to get the best development results. Innovation is indeed a driver for sustainable development, it is evidence based, practical and results-driven.

It is encouraging to see that the African Union has adopted a science, technology and innovation strategy for Africa, in line with the Common African Position for the post-2015 Development Agenda. Innovation is crucial for Africa's emergence because it is an outlet for the tremendous creative force of the continent, and especially its youth. As we know so well, Africa is capable of generating its own innovations, not just adopt those of others. We have seen for example, in Kenya M-Pesa, which was an innovation to overcome the barriers of a developing financial system through mobile technology. But there are many other lesser known examples across the continent in various fields of development practice.

Within South Africa, many initiatives have been taken in order to underline and broaden innovation oriented networks. The Innovation Hub, for instance, provides unique spaces for high-tech entrepreneurs, emerging and established businesses, academics, researchers and funders or venture capitalists to meet, network and collectively work towards growing the South African economy through innovation. The Innovation Hub is also within close proximity of various government departments, notably, the Department of Science and Technology. With Technology innovation as one of their five main programme pillars, DST has made it its mandate to increase the well-being and prosperity of South Africans through science, technology and innovation. Of course let us not forget, the immense efforts by the Centre for Public Service Innovation, our gracious hosts for these two days, which

seeks to create enabling environments that aim to change the mindsets of public servants and instill in them a self-challenging attitude. This is done to encourage the continuous development of the public sector to build a cadre of effective and innovative leaders that are creative and responsible risk takers.

While indeed South Africa has taken tremendous strides in embracing innovation, some key strategic questions continue to bedevil some of us working in development. For example, how can innovation help fulfill the promises of the Constitution? How can innovation contribute to the attainment of the strategic objectives of the National Development Plan's-Vision 2030? What role can innovation play in nurturing the democratization process? How do we position the South African public sector to ensure it supports the government's developmental agenda, and lastly, how do we ensure we do not miss out on innovation at community level?

These are all important questions and UNDP can help find solutions to some of them. UNDP has long experience in supporting more than 130 countries across all regions of the world to implement public service reforms as part of its good governance agenda. In doing so, we work with ministries, local authorities, constitutional bodies, and civil society organizations. UNDP can draw on this wealth of experiences in supporting the countries of this region to find context specific solutions to these challenges.

To help process, synthesize and disseminate the knowledge generated from these various country level experiences in public service and administration, and in partnership with the Government of Singapore, in 2012 UNDP established the Global Centre for Public Service Excellence. The Center, through its evidence building activities, identifies trends, innovations and public service solutions. It brings officials, leaders, policy-makers and experts together to debate and collaborate on addressing the public challenges of the day. We are pleased that on the second day of the workshop our colleagues from Singapore will be able to join in via Skype to share more information about how the Center can support public service efforts in the region.

In 2014, and to further incentivize country offices to innovate, UNDP launched the Innovation Facility. Since its launch, the facility has supported 49 initiatives across 54 countries. The support enhanced community participation by developing responsive feedback mechanisms and pathways; strengthened national planning processes by developing national planning instruments; and encouraged inclusivity by establishing spaces to co-design solutions to social problems. An African innovation facility has also been launched and country offices across Africa have galvanized around this agenda with a groundswell of proposals being considered for funding. I therefore take this opportunity to encourage participants in this meeting to engage with my counterparts in UNDP country offices in the region to explore possibilities for collaboration, in the event that such collaboration is not already on-going.

Ladies and gentleman, 2015 marks a milestone year for global development with 3 major summits taking place, FFD in Addis in July, the SDGs in September, and climate change in December. As we approach the MDGs deadline, and open a new chapter with the SDGs which we will hear more about during the course of the day, innovation must be one of the key drivers of this new development agenda. In the words of Ms. Helen Clark, the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, when referring to the process of consultation around the SDGs put it “placing the “end-users” at the heart of the process, and engaging them in identifying the challenges and in co-creating solutions, can contribute a lot to implementation of the post-2015 agenda. Indeed the way in which the global citizenry has been engaged in the dialogue on post-2015 shows how new technologies can be employed to reach very wide audience.”

She goes on to describe the role of innovation by saying: “to contribute to sustainable and equitable development, we must continue to invest in innovation in its programing and in its ways of working. New partnerships must be built. We must continually improve our processes to become more agile. We must be calculated risk-takers. We should openly share what works and what doesn’t.”

It is my hope that the quality of discussions and information sharing at this workshop will generate meaningful and innovative solutions for the SADC members. UNDP South Africa looks forward to working with CPSI and other partners to expand institutional capacities and provide technical support to enhance efforts to unearth, develop and implement innovative solutions within the country and the region.

I thank you and wish you a fruitful workshop.