

Elements for Consideration
For the
Holy See's Contribution to the OHCHR Report on the public service as an essential component of good governance in the promotion and protection of human rights

The Human Rights Council resolution on the role of good governance in the promotion and protection of human rights (A/HRC/RES/19/20) has rightly affirmed that States have the primary responsibility to ensure that professional public services uphold the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity, and are predicated on good governance principles, including impartiality, rule of law, transparency, accountability and combating corruption (OP2).

International instruments have rightly affirmed that everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives; that everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country; and that the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government, this will being expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures (*cf.*, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 21, and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 25, c).

For governance to be “good”, such governance must take into account the common good, namely, the good of all people and of the whole person. Public administration exists to serve the human being at every level of a State in order to build a more free and responsible society. As democratic, good governance should promote the participation in public life of all people living within society, including Churches, religious communities and believers. Good government is that government in which political authorities fully take into account the moral dimension of political representation (*cf.*, Statement of the Holy See at the Eighteen Ministerial Council of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) 6-7 December 2011).

Professional public services are called to exercise responsible authority, that is, authority exercised with those virtues that make it possible to put power into practice as service — including patience, modesty, moderation, charity, and efforts to share — an authority exercised by persons who are able to accept the common good, and not prestige or the gaining of personal advantages, as the true goal of their work (*cf.*, Compendium on the Social Doctrine of the Church, 410).

Among the deformities of the democratic system, political corruption is one of the most serious because it betrays both moral principles and the norms of social justice. It compromises the correct functioning of the State, having a negative influence on the relationship between those who govern and the governed. It causes a growing distrust with respect to public institutions, bringing about a progressive disaffection in the citizens with regard to politics and its representatives, with a resulting weakening of institutions. Corruption radically distorts the role of representative institutions, because they become an arena for political bartering between clients' requests and governmental services. In this way political choices favor the narrow objectives of those who possess the means to influence these choices and are an obstacle to bringing about the common good of all citizens (*cf.*, *ibid.*, 411).

As an instrument of the State, public administration at any level — national, regional, community — is oriented towards the service of citizens: being at the service of its citizens, the State is the steward of the people's resources, which it must administer with a view to the common good. Excessive bureaucratization is contrary to this vision and arises when institutions become complex in their organization and pretend to manage every area at hand. In the end they lose their effectiveness as a result of an impersonal functionalism, an overgrown bureaucracy, unjust private interests and an all-too-easy and generalized disengagement from a sense of duty. The role of those working in public administration is not to be conceived as impersonal or bureaucratic, but rather as an act of generous assistance for citizens, undertaken with a spirit of service (*cf.*, *ibid.*, 412).

In response to the challenges presented to professional public service, the Holy See proposes the concept of human ecology, the first and fundamental structure of which is the family, in which man receives his first formative ideas about truth and goodness, and learns what it means to love and to be loved, and thus what it actually means to be a person. Here we mean the family founded on marriage between one man and one woman, in which the mutual gift of self by husband and wife creates an environment in which children can be born and develop their potentialities, become aware of their dignity and prepare to face their unique and individual destiny (*cf.*, *Centesimus annus*, 39). Human ecology entails moral education and formation in the dignity of the human person, the common good, solidarity, subsidiarity, and the preferential option for the poor. The more public professional services are able to put these values into practice, the more they will be able to contribute to the realization of the common good and thus advance the right to development.