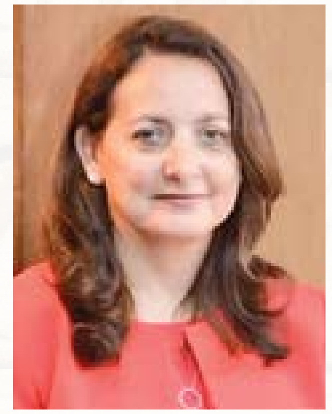
Governance for Sustainable Development



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The notion of governance, in the contemporary literature of research issued by international organizations, is used in conjunction with other development-related notions, given that it is a main prerequisite and an essential requirement for achieving "development". Addressing the notion of governance entails addressing the mechanisms for distributing rare values, allocation of authorities, participation and accountability mechanisms in society.
The body of literature unanimously states that it is not possible to achieve sustainable development without giving effect to the governance values (participation, inclusion, response, accountability, competency, efficiency, integrity, combating corruption, the rule of law, equality, transparency, decentralization, strategic vision and oversight). Economic growth is no longer an end in itself, but a means to achieve development. Hence, it has become incumbent upon governments to ensure that economic growth leads to improving the life quality of the population (education, health and others).

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) reports, which have been published since 1990, discussed the notion of life quality and the human role in development, maximizing their selection capabilities, enabling them to exercise such options, unleashing their innovative energies and enabling them to participate in their life matters. Kofi Anan, the former secretary-general of the United Nations, points out that "governance" may be the only most significant factor in enhancing "development".

The governance factors, by which the development system is managed, consist of three sets of factors:

Momentum set: includes leadership, strategic vision, reform initiatives and catalysts.

Institutional mechanisms set: in which the activities, roles and interactions of the parties and the key institutions that comprise them are organized.

Set of values and principles from which the ruling powers are formed and normalized in the development governance system, including integrity, competency, justice, inclusion, transparency and accountability.

Some studies pointed out that the governance of sustainable development aims at:

1. Comprehensive national development that includes suburban and rural areas, all the strata of society, including men and women.
2. International development that aims at a fair distribution of wealth between the wealthy and poor states, establishing international respectable human relations.
3. Temporally sustainable development that meets the demands of the present and coming generations.

Governance and Developmental Partnership among Several Players

The State's developmental role underwent changes. Though the State is a key and an important player, it is no longer the sole player. Development, in the light of governance, needs job opportunities availed by the private sector. It also needs institutions that organize individuals within groups that have an impact on public policy, and this is the role played by civil society.

Such change to the State's developmental role enhanced the partnership between the private sector and the civil society, along with the State as three elements that share in achieving sustainable development.

Governance enables economic and production sectors, for example, to contribute to formulating education policies, knowledge and research plans and programs for educational and research institutions. As a result, such institutions certainly meet the developmental needs of such sectors and rectify the poor connection and coordination between such educational, training and research institutions and the user sectors benefiting from the services of these institutions.

Governance and Nationalization of Development

Governance plays a key and pivotal role in the nationalization of development. Governance in society is assumed to be the proceeds or product of a social census as a result of which the nature of governance in such a society is identified. The reality of governance is of a compound nature; it includes all the processes and structures to determine how available resources are used to realize the public interests in the State.

The World Bank reports that have been issued since 1989 about development in Africa demonstrated that the problem of the lack of development in Africa is attributed, despite the aids provided to African states, to the lack of catalysts that drive the citizens of these societies to become a part of the development efforts. In other words, such lack of development is attributed to the lack of a civil society component as a key player in development. Also, reports said that one of the key challenges that hindered the optimal implementation of Millennium Development Goals is the lack of interest in the local context, its nature and its fitness for implementing such goals. The local context, however, is crucial in realizing social and economic development and constitutes a real opportunity for supporting the development process.

The World Bank reports suggest that poor governance in Arab countries hinders development. Comparing the economic performance of the Middle East and North African states to that of the East Asian states, such reports concluded that had the average governance in the Middle East region been parallel to some highly-performing Asian states, such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, the growth rates would have risen up to one percentage point per annum.

The nationalization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) rests on the frameworks such goals could provide for the local development policies. This process is also based on the support the local administration units provide in realizing the Sustainable Development Goals.

Governance and Development Institutional Frameworks in Arab Countries:

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Success achieved by some states in activating the governance mechanisms is ascribed to the collaboration of official institutional frameworks and the necessary cultural infrastructure for it. Consequently, it is necessary to link the notion of governance to its contextual success factors. The institutional reform process is a highly complex one; it entails understanding and processing a wide range of challenges.

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The change of the world inevitably causes governance to change. Major structural transformations, such as Fourth Industrial Revolution and climate change, confuse each area of strength; technology causes decentralized and independent entities to replace centralized and hierarchical organizations. In addition, social, economic and digital disparity gaps are increasing, and the ٢١st Century brings about unprecedented challenges that require developing a governance model.

Reform will not merely be realized once the laws and regulations are changed.

Because public institutions do lay down and implement rules, the way such institutions are designed and the way they work to serve development, society prosperity, and equilibrium between the interests of different groups certainly determines the performance and sustainability of development.

In this context, Mancur Olson, a leading researcher in institutional economics, asked the question of why some nations are wealthy and others are poor. After testing the factors at play, such as access to knowledge, the difference in access to capital markets, difference in the connection between people and the land or natural resources, the difference in market capabilities of human resources, and others, it was concluded that such factors are not convincing; the only surviving logical interpretation to the phenomenon of significant differences in levels of prosperity among nations lies in the quality and efficiency of its institutions.

In line with this conclusion, the sixteenth goal of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals asserts that it is necessary to create efficient and transparent institutions that are accountable at all levels. This highlights the importance of corporate governance to give effect to its ability to achieve sustainable development.

Furthermore, this requires laying down a strategic vision of development to diagnose the institutional framework and institutional reforms, and formulate them in feasible plans that accelerate development and achievement. Thus, this includes a package of legislative, judicial and administrative reforms and includes creating appropriate institutional environment and regulatory frameworks for the transformation and development of the economy and society.

Governance and Addressing Development Challenges

In the light of the catastrophic challenges to achieving the importance of sustainable development, which emerged recently, such as the World Financial Crisis, COVID-19 pandemic and the outbreak of Ukrainian War, there are several calls to address these challenges through giving effect to governance. This asserts the pivotal importance of governance in overcoming the challenges to realizing the Sustainable Development Goals.

In his report entitled "Our Common Agenda", António Guterres, the United Nations Secretary-General, clearly called for a better and more comprehensive "World Governance" to build a greener, fairer and safer future.

Moreover, Klaus Schwab, the executive chairman and founder of the World Economic Forum, argues that in the light of an anticipated Tsunami of new challenges that are looming as a result of the failure of climate action and erosion of social cohesion, addressing such challenges necessarily requires leaders to adopt a new governance model. When our institutions properly apply governance, we pay little attention to them; they are simply like a hidden infrastructure that supports the economy and all aspects of the social system.

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