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**DISCUSSION ON ISSUES OF COMMON INTEREST TO SENIOR OFFICIALS  
FROM CENTRES OF GOVERNMENT**

**Meeting of Senior Officials from Centres of Government on  
How to Strengthen Government-Citizen Connections**

**Royal Palace, Naples (Italy)  
11-12 October 1999**

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## **DISCUSSION ON ISSUES OF COMMON INTEREST TO SENIOR OFFICIALS FROM CENTRES OF GOVERNMENT**

### **I. Objectives of the session**

1. The Public Management Service (PUMA), responding to the request of high-level officials from Centres of Government, has reserved one session within the group's annual meetings for free discussion. A first discussion within this new framework is included on the agenda of the Naples meeting of 11-12 October, 1999 (Session III, Tuesday, 12 October). This session therefore has no predetermined subject. It will consist of spontaneous discussion emerging from questions raised in turn by the different participants. It is conceived as a supplementary occasion to intensify the exchange among the members of this network of colleagues and practitioners.

2. The high-level officials from Centres of Government may benefit from this session by:

- Exposing their colleagues to certain questions that they must deal with as a normal part of their work and responsibilities, in order to allow for a quick exchange of experience and gathering of concrete practices as well as views on the effectiveness of possible solutions;
- To reflect together on new challenges that they and the political level are facing, to identify further research that should be done, to improve the information available to decision-makers on such questions, and to help them anticipate decisions they will have to make in the future;
- To question each other on the evolving and future relationship between public authorities and other, diverse national and international actors within a globalised world of rapid communication.

3. The discussion within this session will enable PUMA to identify more precisely the centres of interest at the cusp between the administrative and political interface, and to adapt its activities accordingly. The Secretariat will intervene, if necessary, in the course of the discussion to provide information on PUMA's programme of work to date and planned, notably in relation to the development of a new mandate for the Public Management Committee, and in relation to those issues raised by participants.

### **II. List of principal themes proposed by participants for discussion**

4. In order to preserve the spontaneity of the discussion, it is suggested that participants raise any question(s) they wish. The Secretariat has established the following list of themes provided by some participants in advance to indicate their intentions for interventions within this session. These provide some propositions to support further reflection and discussion. These themes can be grouped into three distinct categories.

***Public policies: organising governmental action***

- Strategic planning in the medium term, establishing priorities across sectors, and addressing the challenges of co-ordinating cross-cutting policies.

Canada will introduce the discussion through a presentation on their current initiative to develop a strategic medium-term plan, co-ordinated by the centre of government, concerning nine priority areas of public policy.

- Tackling cross-cutting policy issues.

This second subject proposed by a participant could extend the discussion opened by the Canadian presentation.

- The modernisation of public services.

***The organisation of governmental work at the Centre***

- Managing the flow of information between a dually led executive (for example, President and Prime Minister): how much Government documentation/information should be provided and under what general understandings or rules?
- Formal and informal Government decisions: practices and experiences in how these different types of decisions are recorded, communicated and managed.
- The ways in which information and communication technologies are used for the work of centres of government: the extent to which security considerations are a constraint to full realisation of the potential offered by these new technologies.

***The evolution of the context of Centre of Government work***

- Is it possible to humanise globalisation?
- Why are actions of a “humanitarian” nature within the international community not always bound by the same norms?
- For what reasons are errors in political judgement still committed?
- Will the increasing proliferation of independent demands continue to take our strategies by surprise?
- The role of diplomats in an on-line world that has a tendency to give greater weight to “virtual” messengers.
- In a world where action is determined increasingly by market competition, should political decision-makers be held accountable (or “punishable”) for their own inertia?