

## ***FIRST THINGS FIRST:***

### ***Sustaining Political Will for Public Governance Change***

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#### Summary

Crises and crumbling states have demonstrated time and again, and dramatically, the vital need to pay enough attention to public institutions. That is before the difficulties strike. Without basic public governance capacity responding to today's and tomorrow's needs, effective policies and programmes addressing the public interest cannot be put in place, we lay waste the World, and people suffer. First things first then.

Today, in the foot hills of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, these truisms have never been so valid, and the need for authoritative, expert, indeed for visionary attention so acute. That means not just technocratic capability, but political attention and will, which must be sustained, in order to ensure the purposefulness, strength and adaptability of the institutions required to tackle the daunting combination of problems now facing individual countries, and the planet for the very first time.

This paper first summarily develops this problematique as the premise for what follows. It makes no systematic attempt to define what is covered by public governance and public institutions --- this varies from country to country and the traditions and perceptions prevailing in each, but briefly lists some of the key governance needs in today's context. The basic issue addressed here is nevertheless shared by all: namely that there is little professional or personal interest for political actors and decision takers to see needed institutional adaptation and reforms right through until they have been realised. For progress to be made on this front, more vigorous pressures and incentives to modernise in time are needed than exist at present. The paper goes on to make the following nine proposals for helping to address this central difficulty, which tends to hang out of sight in the shadows, but which fundamentally undermines our capacity to govern.

1. Maintaining an Agenda: Independent National Councils to fix government attention on priorities for public governance change.
2. An Independent, Neutral, World wide Voice: providing authoritative informed views with no strings attached.
3. Reformers' Peer Circles: interaction and mutual support between high ranking peers.

4. Comparative International Information and Indicators: as an aid to transparency and incentive for improvement and initiative.
5. Cross-business Advisory Board: mobilising, channeling, and 'Hearing' powerful pressures differently
6. Foundations Forum: bringing to bear a growing external fund of expertise
7. Media Reflection and Action Group: responsibly speaking the unspeakable, reporting the innovative, and, praising the positive.
8. Exchanges on Training for the Young about State Institutions: laying the foundations of knowledge on what governments do, citizenship, and why the Public Interest is vital.
9. World Renowned Award: A Nobel Prize for outstanding contributions to improving public governance.