I take this opportunity to welcome you to the 5th Pan African Conference of Ministers of Public Service in this beautiful city of Addis Ababa and country of Ethiopia. I further extend my compliments to the AU Commission for hosting this crucial gathering of Ministers and for committing all efforts in preparing for this Conference. A special recognition must also be extended to the Ministerial Committee for their dedication and support, leading up to this Conference.

I will not pre-empt the Chairperson’s Report, but find it important to set the scene for our deliberations and work-programme in the coming days. In addition, I will address some of the issues we will have to concentrate on and highlight the strides we have made and outline the challenges that we face. It is also necessary that I provide the framework for our discussions so that a common understanding of the Conference work-programme is adopted.
In attaining the objectives of NEPAD, the Socio-economic programme of the African Union, it is obvious that it cannot be “business as usual”. To place the African continent on the required development trajectory, reform of the public service is crucial in ensuring implementation and in creating the conducive environment for good governance and service delivery. It is further clear that the programme for socio-economic transformation must be complimented by an effective programme of public service reform and initiatives to enhance public service capacity and delivery. The NEPAD principles are based on the fact that good governance is a basic requirement for peace, security and sustainable economic development.

NEPAD principles are further based on regional integration as a central and to this extent relevant theme in Africa’s development effort. In this regard, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are the building blocks to the desired necessary destination of an African Economic Community. RECs are mandated with the functions of coordination and ensuring implementation. RECs must therefore be empowered and capacitated to carry out their functions efficiently and effectively. Public sector reform, initiatives and capacity building should therefore take place in the context of regional integration as embodied in the institutional arrangements provided by the RECs. In addition, this implies that public sector reform efforts, initiatives and capacity building must emphasise regional development and integration.

For the above-mentioned reasons, the 5th Pan African Conference of Ministers of Public Service focuses on the RECs, rather than exclusively focussing on reform initiatives and capacity building at the national and sub-national spheres. This specific thrust was mandated in the Stellenbosch Declaration resulting from the 4th Pan Africa Conference in 2003. To re-emphasise the principles of the Governance and Public Administration Programme (G&PA) for Africa – the programme:

- Is to built on the principles of regional cooperation, identification of common needs and pooling of available resources, in the spirit of NEPAD and its intention to build African capacity to deal with regional Challenges
• Identifies as critical areas of intervention the following: institutional capability development; knowledge and policy learning; data collection and exchange; innovation and partnership support.

• Creates a framework for regional organizations, national management development institutions and international development partners to collaborate in a manner unprecedented on the continent. Identifies specific programmes of action for which African and international funding and other assistance can be sought, and the implementation of which can be monitored, to ensure impact and sustainability.

Implementation is the major challenge that we face as Africans. For successful implementation to be actualized, the following is required: capacity, commitment, coordination and communication. To date capacity building remains the challenge to governance and public sector reform implementation efforts in Africa. Of further necessity is to continually remind ourselves of the symbiotic relationship between public administration and good governance. The success of this relationship will be measured by how best we implement reform initiatives at the continental and regional spheres.

Implementation of reform initiatives must be informed by lessons of experience and best practice. We must further ensure a platform for sharing and for developing specific solutions to our challenges at the continental, regional and national spheres. The African Renaissance will be built on the foundation provided by the successful relationship between good governance and public service. NEPAD marks a fundamental shift in Africa’s approach to development challenges. As African leaders we are setting the public service reform initiatives and capacity building priorities required which are also necessary for growth, poverty reduction and sustainable development.

African leaders have also adopted the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) as the self-monitoring tool towards improved governance and achieving sustainable development. The APRM emphasises the governance aspects in the areas of economic, political, socio-economic and corporate governance spheres. In this sense,
the APRM provides the practical framework for ensuring good governance in the public service. The APRM further provides a useful platform for sharing lessons and replicating best practices. In addition, this crucial forum provides the policy space for public service reforms and initiatives, based on “Peer” inputs and feedback.

Building global support and partnerships with global and regional institutions is a necessary endeavour that generates commitment for the African capacity development effort. Forging strategic partnerships is not only important in resource mobilisation, but also important with respect to technical assistance and sharing of lessons and best practice. Already we have seen institutions like the EC, GTZ- German Development Agency, and Japanese International Development Agency (JICA) deliver on key commitments and of course one does not wish to ignore other international donors that have given sustained support to the programme. African institutions such as the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) have also committed resources in support of the African capacity building efforts. The NEPAD Secretariat has also raised supportive resources for the launch of the African Management Development Institute (AMDIN). We expect that further resources will be committed after the 5th Pan African Conference of Ministers and call on our development partners to timeously turn commitments into reality.

To facilitate our deliberations at this Conference of Ministers, I think it necessary to highlight the key issues we require addressing. The key issues I will address are not exhaustive, but provide insight into the nature of the African public service reform efforts.

- First, as I have noted above, both international and African institutions are called upon to indicate commitment and to deliver on their respective commitments. Of importance to be considered is the aspect of coordination in implementation.

- Second, with respect to e-Government, I expect that progress will be reported by the Experts Meeting on how to enhance this undisputed critical vehicle for efficient service delivery. It is imperative that we explore with a view to strengthening ongoing continental efforts to support the incidence of
information and communication technology in governance and service delivery.

- Third, knowledge exchange and policy learning is crucial and a key thrust has been the initiation of collection and collation of information on Public Sector Human Resource Management across the continent. In addition, we have initiated the process of encouraging the documenting and sharing of country case experiences in public sector reform. Further, we have initiated the collection and collation of data on Ministries and institutions involved in governance and public administration.

- Fourth, we intend to formally launch the Africa Public Service Innovation Awards Scheme on the occasion of the 5th Pan African Conference of Ministers of Public Service. Let me pause here to explain that the continental Innovation Awards project seeks – in the main - to profile and recognize innovation. In particular and within the scope of the Governance and Public Administration programme, this welcome initiative aims at responding to the general failure to recognise and implement innovative solutions on the continent and the resulting tendency to rely on imported package solutions to continental capability challenges.

While deliberating on some of the key issues that I have highlighted, we must never lose sight of the challenges that we are faced with. The challenges have been detailed in the Report of the Chairperson, however, it is necessary to emphasise the focus of regional integration at this Conference and the challenges that we will have to contend with in ensuring that regional initiatives are successfully achieved. The challenges of creating linkages between regional and national efforts to strengthen public sector reform efforts must be a priority.
A further critical challenge is the need for creating a strong civil society, an urgent need to address the Brain drain and a change in approach in ensuring that we attract the right calibre of expertise and experience into our civil service.

A final crucial challenge is ensuring good governance and socio-economic transformation through public service reform and efficient and effective public administration.

Again, let me hasten to underline the fact that the outlined challenges are in no way exhaustive, but rather provide a bearing to the Conference deliberations with a view to seeking solutions to the developmental hurdles that confront us.

May I take this opportunity to call for successful deliberations and outcomes from this Conference of Ministers? The development challenges we face on the African continent are daunting, but the commitment by our leadership has shown that we have the political will to address the African development issues. The fact that we have gathered here as Ministers of Public Service proves our commitment to ensuring that the African continent is capable of good governance and effective and efficient public service and administration.

I again thank the AU Commission for hosting the event. I thank the Government of Ethiopia for warmly welcoming us to this beautiful city of Addis Ababa. I thank all Ministers for their commitment and support. Recognition is also given to our partner institutions, both African and international, for their continued commitment to our efforts.

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