Capacity Building for Human Resource management in Africa:  
Professionalizing Human Resource Management in the Public Service  
Kampala, Uganda – 15-21 March 2008

Aide Memoire

1. **Background**

The implementation level of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the developing countries is not the same across the board. While some countries are on track, several others are still behind schedule. Unfortunately, most of the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are by far behind compared to the rest of the world. Since most of the least developed countries of the world are also found in Africa, it is worrisome that the countries that should benefit from such an initiative are the ones that are lagging behind.

The development of the human capital is crucial to improve the performance level of countries to achieve national as well as international development agendas. Global, regional and national commitments to sustainable development and poverty reduction require highly developed human capacities in the public sector to transform these commitments into results. The knowledge, know-how and skills, networks and attitudes of personnel in the public sector are at the heart of the performance of countries because it is through them and by them that services are planned and delivered, critical innovations conceived and realized and needed reforms carried out.

Therefore, human resource managers in the public sector occupy a strategic position in realizing economic, political and social development of a country. Unfortunately, many countries do not recognize this strategic position of human resource managers in the formulation of development plans. Even worse, human resource managers in the public sector may not be professionally tuned to the critical role they should play.

Recognizing the short-comings of development plans in strengthening human resources capacity in developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan African countries, and cognizant of the effectiveness of the sharing of experiences and best practices among developing countries when it comes to finding a viable solution to common problem, UNDESA collaborated with the International Public Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR) to organize the first ever meeting of the IPMA-HR in Africa. The meeting which was held in Cape Town (South Africa) in April 2007 was attended by several African countries as well as international members of IPMA-HR. During this meeting the human resource managers sponsored by UNDESA prepared a proposal for the establishment of a network of African human resources managers which served as a discussion paper at a follow-up meeting.

With the financial support of UNDESA, the public sector officials met again in Swaziland in September 2007 during a Roundtable Conference of the African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM) and presented their proposal to a wider group of senior public sector officials from Africa. On the basis of this discussion paper, participants of the AAPAM Roundtable Conference discussed issues related to the undeveloped professional
status of human resource managers in the public sector in Africa and agreed that there is a need to rectify this situation through, among other things, the creation of a strong professional network to champion the cause of professional development and strategic positioning of human resources managers in Africa. In addition, an initiative to form an Association of Public Service Commissions in Africa was discussed and agreed upon by the participants.

As a follow-up to the strong recommendations of the AAPAM Roundtable Conference in Swaziland concerning the above-mentioned two initiatives, AAPAM is holding a workshop in Kampala, from 17 to 21 March 2008 with the theme “Enhancing leadership capacity development of the African Public Service Commissions and other authorities in the public sector”. UNDESA would like to take this opportunity to address the two major issues related to the capacity building exercise of human resources management in Africa as well as the leadership capacity development of African public Service Commissions.

2. **Objectives**

The main objective of this activity is to pave the ground for the establishment of a network of African public sector human resources management professionals. The primary objective of the establishment of such a network will be to facilitate the sharing of knowledge, information, best practices, and capacity building amongst African public sector human resource management professionals. The network will provide a platform for advocacy to enhance organizational and individual capacity for effective performance in the public sector especially in the delivery of public services without which the achievement of the MDGs and other development objectives would be stunted.

It is believed that the establishment of such a network would contribute in no small measure to the promotion of the development of sound human resource management capacity throughout the African continent. Given the centrality of human resources to effective public sector service delivery, the benefits that such a network could have for African public services are numerous.

3. **Inputs**

AAPAM will be responsible for the organization of the meeting in Kampala, Uganda – organizational logistics, such as conference facilities, interpretation, substantive papers and reporting are provided entirely by AAPAM. UNDESA would sponsor the participation of one staff member and six human resources managers from sub-Saharan African countries. The UNDESA sponsored human resource managers will lead the discussion on the strengthening human resource management capacity through the establishment of the proposed Network of African Human Resource Management professionals.

4. **Outputs and expected accomplishments:**

The Programme will strengthen the capacity of the public sector officials responsible for human resources management in Africa through the establishment of an African Public Sector Human Resources Managers Network that would:
(a) Promote excellence, integrity and professional standards in the practice of Human Resource Management in the Public Sector.
(b) Identify and share best practices in human resource management (HRM) so as to assist public sector organizations improve their performance in HRM and public service in general.
(c) Provide HRM practitioners in the public sector in Africa with tools, models, skills, methods, and data to improve the effectiveness of their HRM and development programs.
(d) Promote continuous learning, enhance knowledge, improve skills, and develop the next generation of human resource professionals and leaders in the public sector in Africa. In pursuance of this objective, establish a system aimed at the certification of HR professionals in partnership and/or collaboration with the Management Development Institutes in Africa.

The major output of this activity is a commitment by the Civil Service Commissions and the senior human resource managers represented at the AAPAM Roundtable Conference to establish the African Public Sector Human Resources Managers Network. This would be accomplished through a Declaration or Decision that would be submitted to a Ministerial Meeting for adoption at an appropriate forum at a later date to be determined.

5. **Dates and Venue:**

The workshop will take place from 15-21 March 2008, Kampala (Uganda) as follows. Participants are expected to arrive on 14 March and depart on 22 March 2008.

6. **Language:**

The workshop will be conducted in English.

7. **Contact Persons**

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