CONFERENCE COMMUNIQUE

Delegates from eighteen (18) African countries numbering approximately two-hundred and sixty-seven (267) attended the 30th AAPAM Roundtable Conference, which was held at the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) from 6th to 10th October, 2008. The Roundtable Conference was hosted by the Government of Ghana. Among the participants were Cabinet Ministers, Heads of Public/Civil Services and Secretaries to Cabinet, Permanent/Principal Secretaries and other high ranking Government Officials, Chairpersons and Commissioners of Public Service Commissions, Heads of Management Development Institutes, representatives of Statutory Institutions, academics and researchers. The countries represented at the Roundtable included Botswana, Cameroon, Ghana, The Gambia, Kenya, The Kingdom of Lesotho, Namibia, Nigeria, Mozambique, Malawi, Mauritius, South Africa, Sudan, The Kingdom of Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The Roundtable Conference was also privileged to have representatives of AAPAM Partner International Organizations: The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC), and the Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

The theme of the Roundtable Conference was “Enhancing the Performance of the Public Service in a Developmental State” and the Roundtable sub-themes were:

- The Historical development perspective of the Public Service in Africa
- Addressing the Role, Scope and Size of the Public Service in Africa: Are the Methodologies and Approaches Appropriate
- Strengthening Human Resource Management: Challenges and Improvement Measures
- Pay Incentives and Rewards
- Enhancing Public Service Accountability
- Public Services for Development States in Africa: Lessons from NICs
- Country Case Studies

The overall objective of the Roundtable Conference was to explore the difficulties, possibilities and modalities for enhancing the role of the Public Service in a developmental state. To achieve this overall objective, participants:
- Explored the historical development of the African Public Services over time and identified major issues that have affected their performance;

- Examined measures taken by African Countries to address the institutional and human resource weaknesses of the public services over time, identified achievements and difficulties encountered as well as lessons learnt;

- Examined the replicability of the measures taken by the newly industrialized countries like Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Indonesia to strengthen their public services that made them to spearhead development

- Provided an opportunity to participants to learn from each other and from country-case studies, as well as presentations of innovations being undertaken in a number of countries

- Provided opportunities to participants to discuss current and potential contributions of Research and Training Institutions in enhancing the role of public services in developmental states.

Over the five-day period, the Roundtable participants working in nine (9) plenary and workshop sessions:

1. Noted that of all the continents, Africa lags behind with regard to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other agreed development agenda including poverty eradication. This is largely attributed to absence/inadequacy of a developmental state irrespective of the definition. The achievement of a developmental state will require developing capabilities in the political (institutional), regulatory, bureaucratic/administrative and technical areas as well as the capacity to mobilize and extract resources to finance development.

2. Further noted that not enough attention seems to be devoted to addressing these areas.

3. Acknowledged that a strong public administration system requires competent, knowledgeable, well motivated, and innovative human resources. However, in most
African Public Services, the human resource is not managed as a valuable asset. The HR departments and HR practices are not accorded adequate recognition within the public service system. There is need to modernize and professionalise the human resource function in public service organizations. In that regard, African public services must position the HR function by recruiting competent and professional HR practitioners, providing training and development opportunities and according them a supportive work environment. To this effect, the participants endorsed the initiative being taken to establish an Africa Public Sector Human Resource Managers Network and urged African governments to accord it the required support. It was noted that the Government of Tanzania has already started working with UNDESA to organise capacity building events in strategies for human resource development in the public sector. All African Governments are urged to send Human Resource Managers for this training.

4. Noted that African public services lacked performance and delivery capacities because of the unattractive conditions of service. Pay levels are in most countries low, stagnant, non-competitive, compressed, and not related to performance. In addition, the pay levels are not determined in a systematic, professional way. Countries where the Civil Service has made a difference in development have tended to pay their Civil Servants well, for example Singapore, Malaysia, and Botswana. The reason that tends to be given for low pay is the inability to pay, an assertion that must be questioned. In that case, there is the need to introduce pay reform policies and strategies that will make the public service the preferred employment of choice, with competitive and attractive conditions of service comparable with the private sector to both attract and retain staff and also to arrest the issue of brain drain. Developing Human Resource Managers capable of providing professional advice on pay determination would help in this regard.

5. Stressed that training and development programmes should be systematically institutionalized within the public service and should be seen as an essential investment and not a cost.

6. Noted that while the retrenchment exercises which were undertaken as part of the structural adjustment programmes are now ebbing, many governments have not yet addressed the issue of the right-size and skills-mix of the public service to be able to
undertake the changing functions of the public service. Attention should therefore be
given to finding the optimal size and mix to meet the emerging functions including the
need for greater management capacities now that the state is sharing its service
delivery functions with other actors. It was realised that in many instances, the
challenges related to the achievement of MDGs, NEPAD, and other development
agenda requires more and not less capable public servants.

7. Discussed the issue of whether Africa can learn from the experiences of the Newly
Industrialised Countries (NICs) as they moved to a developmental state. It noted that
in developing, they placed strong emphasis on the state leading the development
process, investing heavily in infrastructure and human capital development, as well as
developing the capacity of the public service including emphasis on training and
development. Africa should emulate the course of action by those countries, taking
into account the circumstances obtaining in the different country environments.

8. Agreed that within Africa, there are countries making significant strides towards the
achievement of a developmental state e.g. Botswana and Mauritius. Other African
countries might wish to learn lessons of what and how those countries made the
progress with special focus on the contribution made by their public services.

9. Noted that increasingly, African governments are recognising the importance of
engineering local-level socio-politico-economic developments using local governments
to enhance democracy and participation in local governance. As those developments
are taking place, the pace varies from country to country. The factors that influence
that pace are, on the one hand, the capacity of local government institutions to
shoulder those decentralised responsibilities, and, on the other hand, the willingness
of the centre to move the required resources to sub-national structures. Given the
fact that a developmental state cannot be built from the centre, there is need to put
effort in building capacity of local government through training, and empowerment of
councillors, and at the central level, passing legislation that require central authorities
to release those resources.

10. Recognised that the achievement of the developmental state requires effective
collaboration between the political and administrative leadership. In many countries,
this does not seem to be the case. At the national level, management development
institutes (MDIs) should be encouraged to take the initiative to organise fora/training that will bring together the political and administrative classes on a regular basis. This could best be done as new governments are inaugurated and the MDIs taking proactive steps to engage and dialogue with government on the issue. At the continental level, AAPAM may wish to encourage Ministers of Public Services to attend the Annual Roundtable Conferences as well as other special conferences/workshops involving politicians and senior public service practitioners.

11. Agreed that competent, transformational and visionary leadership, both political and administrative, largely accounted for the phenomenal growth and development of the NICs. In contrast with the situation in Africa, leaders are constrained by the lack of well-developed political systems and values that nurture and develop leaders and are, thus, unable to develop the level of leadership capacity needed to champion the development of Africa. Accordingly, it was affirmed that current and emerging African leaders should endeavour to emulate and inculcate the leadership style and qualities prevalent in the NICs and strive to encourage fruitful and positive relationships with the institutions of the state. As a long term strategy, universities, MDIs, Ministries responsible for human resource development as well as international development partners, should emphasise programmes geared towards leadership capacity development.

12. Expressed appreciation to the cherished Partner International Organisations of AAPAM for their resolute and continued support towards enhancing the capacity of the public services of AAPAM member countries.

13. Expressed profound gratitude to the Government of Ghana and his leadership, notably the Vice-President of the Republic, for opening the conference and giving the participants guidance; the Minister of Public Sector Reform for making time to be available in spite of his busy political campaign schedule; and GIMPA leadership and staff for providing an excellent and hospitable environment for the conference. Further, expressed appreciation for the hospitality extended by the many public and private organizations over the five-day period.

14. Expressed gratitude to the AAPAM Secretariat for hosting the preparation of the conference over the last and the immediate periods.