Strengthening Public Sector Human Resource Management Capacities in Africa

Capacity Building Workshop on
“Promoting Professionalism in the Public Service: Strengthening the Role of Human Resource Managers in the Public Sector for the effective implementation of the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration”

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
14-18 March 2011

Workshop Communiqué
I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Capacity Building Workshop on “Promoting Professionalism in the Public Service: Strengthening the Role of Human Resource Managers in the Public Sector for the effective implementation of the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration” took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 14 to 18 March 2011. The workshop was organized by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Public Sector Human Resource Managers’ Network (APSHRMnet) and it was hosted by the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

2. Delegates from thirty-five (35) African countries numbering three hundred and forty-seven (347) attended the workshop. Among the participants were Cabinet Ministers, Heads of Public/Civil Services and Secretaries to Cabinet, Permanent/Principal Secretaries, Under Secretaries, Senior Public Sector Officials charged with the management of human resources, 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.

3. Delegates were from the following African countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo (Republic of), Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome-and-Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Southern Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda and Zambia.

4. Participants from the following International, Regional and Sub-regional organizations also attended the workshop: the African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM), the African Training and Research Centre in Administration for Development (CAFRAD), the International Public Management for Human Resources (IPMA-HR), the African Management Development Institutes Network (AMDIN), African Association of Public Service Commissions and others appointing authorities, the World Bank, and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The workshop was generously supported by UNDP, UNDESA, UNECA, and Governments of African countries.

5. The workshop was formally opened by His Excellency, Hon. Dalmas Otieno Anyango, Minister of State for Public Service of Kenya, Prime Ministers’ Office, and Chairperson of the 6th Pan African Conference of Ministers of Public Service. Statements were also made by Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ECA, H.E. Mrs. Julia Dolly Joiner, Commissioner for Political Affairs, Africa Union Commission, Mr. Titus Ndambuki, Vice-President of AAPAM. Welcoming remarks were made by H.E. Mr. Juneydi Sado, Minister of Civil Service of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, and a Vote of Thanks by Honorable Hawa A. Ghasia, (MP) Minister of State in Charge of the Public Service Management, United Republic of Tanzania.
6. The following was discussed during the workshop:

- Political Leadership in Promoting Professionalism in the Public Service and Implementing the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration.

- Promoting and Strengthening Professionalism in the Public Service: A General Conceptual Overview.


- Challenges and Strategies for Effective Implementation of the African Charter on Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration.

- Facilitating and Inhibiting Factors and Strategic Actions.


- Strengthening the African Public Sector Human Resource Managers’ Network.

- The role of human resource managers in the promotion of professionalism in the public service and in implementing the public service charter at national level.

- How to maintain linkages, collaboration, partnerships, and networking among human resource managers in ministries responsible for public service, other ministries and public sector institutions, their counterparts in Public Service Commissions and other appointing authorities in the public sector, management development institutes, and development partners working on capacity development in the public service in Africa aimed at information sharing, peer learning and capacity enhancement for human resource managers in the public service in Africa.

- The various challenges related to the promoting and sustaining professionalism in the Public service in Africa.

- The challenges that must be overcome to get the charter successfully implemented.

- Strategies through which professionalism can be promoted and sustained and the charter for public service implemented as part of the strategies for professionalism in the public service in Africa.

- Stakeholders and their roles in the implementation of the charter.
II. KEY OBSERVATIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

a) Observations

7. Participants made the following observations:

- Some African countries are yet to recognize the strategic position of the human resource manager for the formulation and implementation of development strategies. Consequently, the public service sector in Africa is still facing multitude of challenges as not enough attention is paid to this vital aspect of human resource management on the continent. Human resources constitute a very strategic and important group in the public service and have a leading role to play in public sector reform. Therefore adequate attention and resources must be devoted to getting its underlying fundamentals right.

- The workshop provided a great opportunity for establishing the direction of the future implementation path that could be established for the African Charter on Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration. The Charter is establishing the ground to manage Africa’s own interventions and programs in an effective, reliable and efficient manner, which is key to state building and to the overall development and integration strategies in our continent. The struggle for democracy, contestations on economic opportunities and the exercise of human rights do now, more than ever before, bring to the fore the importance of a “capable state” and most importantly a professional and motivated public service.

- For Human Resources Managers to excel they need a good understanding of the nature and mission of the public organization they work with be it a utility firm or an engineering organization. Africa was called upon to encourage and promote professional associations as a way to stimulate dialogue and cross-fertilization among professionals.

- Africa is in competition with the rest of the world and the only unique commodity the continent has is its human resources. As such, the most important challenge faced by African countries today is to raise labor productivity, through an effective and efficient human resource management. In many African countries, the role of human resource officers is still confined to routine functions about staff entitlement to pay increments, staff welfare and the like. Human resource managers must provide innovative leadership in the management of public affairs and not to consider the function of human resource as a routine exercise. Capacity constraints among African countries in the area of human resource management are caused by the inability of African governments to recruit and retain the needed well-trained and skilled personnel due to a number of reasons including low salaries, poor conditions of service, over-centralization, and dilatory and outdated procedures. There is need for public private partnerships in the sense that certain key public service deliverables be undertaken in partnership with professional experts outside the public Service.

- With this third workshop by the APS-HRMnet, Africa has the resources it needs to increase the pace of development and specially to create a more responsible and satisfied citizenry by providing equal and right opportunities to all. Participants were call upon to discuss the issues on the agenda with an open mind and to critically
identify practical solutions to the challenges faced by our continent today and for the future generations.

- In order for African human resource managers and leaders to be effective they should always facilitate dialogue on the status quo, question traditional approaches, and embrace the culture of change.

- Adequate popularization of the African Charter on Values and Principles in Public Service and Administration was a good avenue to be used in facilitating the implementation and domestication of the Charter before the ratification process was completed and the APS-HRMnet has a critical role to play in this as they work to promote professionalism.

- The implementation of the Charter could be both informal and formal. The informal way could be through the inclusion of Charter’s principle in the daily work and procedures of the Public Service, while the formal could be done once the Charter is formally ratified and entered into force.

- Lack of legal framework and capacity, as well as lack of accountability and transparency in some countries may hinder the implementation of the Charter while in others political orientation, organizational culture and leadership styles may affect the implementation of the Charter.

b) Conclusions

8. Some of the key conclusions emanating from the workshop were that:

- An effective and efficient public service is central for achieving Africa’s development goals. This require, among others, efficient service delivery, effective and well-functioning institutions, efficient policy and program management, and efficient coordination of all stakeholders. All these require a competent Human Resource.

- Motivation in the public service is a major challenge for human resource development in Africa, particularly in the public service. In most African countries civil servants are not well paid hence, developing professionalism and retaining skilled human power are major challenges the sector is facing.

- The political environment for public servants in Africa is not conducive for civil servants to become effective and efficient in service delivery. In some African countries service delivery in the public service is highly influenced by political/partisan interests. This is a big handicap for the civil servants to provide quality services to all citizens.

- For African countries to professionalize human resource function and, by extension, the public service it is necessary to promote training and capacity building with particular emphasis on continuous learning, institute pay and benefits reforms to support the attraction and retention of competent professional staff, practice recruitment procedures that allow professional and unique talent to join public service, manage performance to focus on excellence and results, and encourage public service staff to join and be actively involved in professional associations.
The issue of remuneration is critical for public servants to behave in the right manner and to execute their duties. Because of poor remuneration the public sector in Africa is loosing its human resource to the private sector. Therefore, to emphasize the issue of professionalism the issue of pay is critical.

Public-Private Partnerships was an important avenue to explore in the provision of public services, particularly in an environment where resources (both human and financial) where meager and dwindling.

The issue of “witch craft” in the public sector need to be addressed since it is a major bottle neck in most African countries.

c) Recommendations

9. The workshop recommended that:

- Leaders and managers, especially Human Resource Managers, in the public service should be open to new ideas and committed to continuous learning thereby using their position as an opportunity to guide the reforming process of the Public Service.

- Public Service in Africa should be able to adapt to changes taking place around the globe and to the demands of their citizens. To that end, the use of ICT and regular interactions with staff and the public to ensure efficient and effective service delivery, should be encouraged.

- In order to enable Human Resource managers to play their strategic role, the structure of the Public Service should position the HR function at a strategic management level and give it due status.

- The issues of motivation and the method of developing motivation strategies in the Public Service in Africa need to be addressed as a way of enhancing professionalism.

- While civil servants are expected to implement the policies that are formulated by the politicians, African governments need to clearly establish a harmonious political/administrative relationship between politicians and administrators. In this respect, service delivery should not be based on political affiliation or favoritism.

- High level public service managers, directors and HR managers should play a pivotal role in the implementation of the Charter. Among others, they should sensitize their respective ministers and politicians on the importance and aims of the Charter for its speedy ratification, domestication and implementation.

- Regional Economic Communities (RECs) should play an important role in supporting Member States’ efforts toward the ratification, domestication and implementation of the Charter.

- Human Resource managers attending this workshop should organize similar workshops at national level in their respective countries, in order to internalize and multiply the knowledge gained and enhance networking.
In order to minimize the conflicts between permanent secretaries and ministers there is a need to i) narrow the power distance between the two; ii) improve information sharing; iii) establish clear accountability channels and improve attitudes towards service delivery; and iv) prepare appropriate guidelines to improve their relationships.

Due consideration should be given to issues of public service delivery in post-conflict countries.

Tertiary Institutions, Universities, Management Development Institutes constitute critical institutions in the development of professionalism in the Public Sector. Therefore, the Management Development Institutes in Africa must always be part and parcel of the activities of the APS-HRMnet and their development must be given due attention.

Partners of the network, notably, UNDESA, UNECA, the World Bank, UNDP, AMDIN, IPMA-HR, CAFRAD and AAPAM must accomplish the tasks assigned to them during this workshop, in collaboration with the network, not only to contribute to its relevance and credibility, but also to give impetus to development and professionalism of the human resource in Africa.

While professionalizing the human resource in the Public Sector in Africa is the work of African governments, UNDESA and all the other development partners mentioned above and others should continue to prioritize in their capacity development programs support to strengthen professionalism in the Public Sector in Africa.

The African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), which has capacity building as its primary mandate, should be approach by the leadership of APS-HRMnet to become one of the partner institutions in supporting the development and the professionalization of the human resource function in Africa’s Public Sector.

The APS-HRMnet must develop strong, effective communication capacity to project its success and build reputation of success and credibility, including paying attention to Africa’s linguistic diversity.

10. The participants expressed their profound gratitude to the Government and people of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, specially the Ministry of Civil Service and the National Organizing Committee, for hosting the Workshop and for their hospitality during the five-day workshop. The participants also commended the Ministers responsible for Public Services who came all the way from their respective countries and stayed throughout the Workshop. The participants further expressed their appreciation to the international organizations and partners who provided human, financial, material and moral support that made the Workshop possible. These include: UNDESA, UNECA, UNDP, the Working Group on APS-HRMnet, the World Bank and the various African governments who funded participants to attend the workshop. Finally, the participants expressed their gratitude to the hospitality extended to them by public and private organizations over the five-day period of the Workshop and to many others who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make the Workshop a real success.

Done in Addis Ababa, the 18th day of March the year 2011