
Your Excellency Muktar Kedar, Deputy Prime Minister, Coordinator of good governance and reform cluster and Minister of Civil service of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia,

Your Excellency Guy Brice Parfait Kolelas, Ministre de la fonction publique et de la reforme de l'etat and Chairperson of the 8th conference of ministers of public service,

Honourable Ms. Sezi Prisca Mbaguta, Minister of State for Public Service and Matron of the Africa Public Sector Human Resource Managers’ Network,

Dr. Carlos Lopes, Executive Secretary of the UN Commission for Africa,

Your Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners,

Mr. George Yambesi, President of the Africa Public Sector Human Resource Managers and Members of your Executive,

My colleagues from the United Nations system,

Dear participants,

Members of the press and media,

Ladies and gentlemen

We are gathered here, in this beautiful city of Addis Ababa, to open and start the Capacity Building Workshop on Innovation and performance evaluation in Africa: The Role of Human Resource Managers. This is a joint effort of the Africa Public Sector Human Resource Managers Network (APS-HRMnet) with Ministers responsible for public service in Africa with support from UNDESA and UNECA. The workshop is generously hosted by the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia through the Ministry of Civil Service. As the facilitator of the workshop I welcome you all and I am glad to offer my services to facilitate the workshop. I feel indeed privileged to make these introductory remarks. I have served as a Public Servant at national level in Uganda, my home country, and I am now an International Civil Servant at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Those I have interacted with know my deep concern for the effectiveness of the public service and my conviction that the Public Service is a critical instrument of state action. Public Service is about two things: the human resource (the Public
servants that animate state action) and the Services which the Public sector provides. The rest is just logistics. The Long Term Strategy of the African Governance and Public Administration Program of the Conference of Ministers of Public Service (CAMPS) has Human Resources as one of its pillars. The strategy states that: “Human resources are key to the capability of any state. To ensure effective development and delivery of services the effective mobilization, utilization and management of human resources is critical to leverage other resources. The objective of this pillar is to produce ethical, efficient, effective and equitable human resource planning, development and management. It is also to ensure the full utilization of existing capacity, adequate human resource capability and competent human resource practitioners in line with the capable developmental state. In the long-term this pillar will produce human resources that embrace professionalism, ethics, integrity, service and meritocracy as stated in the African Charter”. The elements of the human resource pillar mentioned in the Long Term Strategy include: (i)Policy and architecture of human resources, (ii) Capability for human resource planning, development and management, (iii)Management & Leadership Development, (iv)Remuneration and enabling environments (v)Gender equality and equity. I invite the human resource managers and all those interested in the management of the Public Service in Africa to acquaint themselves with this Long Term Strategy especially in as far as it focuses on human resources.

I salute the Members of the Human Resource Managers Network (APS-HRMnet) for having spearheaded the efforts of bringing to the forefront the critical issue of professionalizing the management of human resources in the Public service in Africa. I would like to salute in the same breath the Ministers of Public Service who headed to your innovative call and supported you through your efforts. They are still with you and encouraging you not to give up in the face of numerous challenges.

UNDESA, UNECA and UNDP responded to your call with a modest three year project which has contributed to facilitating your resolve to professionalize the management of the human resource in the public service. Part of the agenda of the workshop we are opening today is to evaluate the project which is ending with this month. We engaged an independent consultant who evaluated the project and will present his draft report for all of us to engage with. We want to use this opportunity to chart a way forward in professionalizing the human resource management in the public service. In other words the end of the project should mark the beginning of total commitment to further strengthen the capacity to manage the public service more effectively and to pay particular attention to the capacity of those managers who are in charge of the most important resource of all natural resources in Africa (the human resource). From the UNDESA side, let me say that the end of the project is not the end of UNDESA association with and support to this cause. But I must haste to clarify that instead of being a UNDESA project beneficiary, the Africa Public Sector Human Resource Managers’ Network is from hence forth a partner. Together we will do more and better things in improving the capacity of the public service in Africa. This is why the second element on the agenda of this workshop is the linkage
between performance evaluation and innovation in the public service. Human resource managers hold the key to making the public service creative and innovative. If the developmental state in Africa has to be a reality, public servants must be motivated and inspired to be creative and innovative to find new and better ways of delivering services. The way the human resources are managed in the public service can make public servants innovative or retrogressive. I appeal to the human resource managers and Ministers of public service not to drop the ball on this critical issue! There cannot be a developmental state without development minded public servants.

Excellences, honourable Ministers, participants, ladies and gentlemen, allow me to through you express UNDESÀ’s gratitude to the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for hosting this workshop and for the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to us. I would also like to thank our colleagues in UNECA for the support provided in organizing the workshop. Honourable Ministers present, I thank you very much for the leadership you have exhibited in supporting the professionalization of human resource management in Africa’s public service. That you are present here with us tells a lot. To the human resource managers, without your resolve to create and nurture this network we would probably not be here. Apart from thanking you I pledge my continued support not only as a humble civil servant of the United Nations but also as an African concerned with the improvement of the public service for development. We always say that one of the weaknesses of the Public Sector in Africa is inadequate institutional capacity. We often forget that there are no strong institutions with weak human resources. You have started this institution, the APS-HRMnet, let it not become yet another weak institution in Africa.

For Africa’s Development I salute you all and wish a fruitful workshop and a better future.