REMARKS BY DR. AISHA L. ABDULLAHI,
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSIONER FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS
AT THE OPENING CEREMONY
OF THE CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP ON
"INNOVATION AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT EVALUATION
IN AFRICA’ S PUBLIC SERVICE: THE ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCE
MANAGERS”

11-13 December 2013
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Excellency Mr. Muktar Kedir, Deputy Prime Minister, Coordinator of the Good Governance and Reform Cluster and Minister of Civil Service of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Excellency Mr. Guy Brice Parfait Kolelas, Minister of Public Service and State Reform of the Republic of Congo, and Chairperson of the 8th African Union Conference of Ministers of Public Service

Honorable Sezi Mbaguta Prisca, Matron of the African Public Sector Human Resources Management Network and Minister of State for Public Service of Uganda

Mr. Eugene Owusu, UN Resident Coordinator and Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme

Dr. Carlos Lopes, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

Mr. George Yambesi, President of the Africa Public Sector Human Resource Managers' Network

Experts and officials from the African Union Member States

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning all. On behalf of the African Union Commission, let me start by thanking and congratulating the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Africa Public Service Human Resources Management Network for organizing this second capacity building workshop here in Addis Ababa on the theme: “Innovation and Performance Evaluation in Africa’s Public Service: the Role of Human Resource Managers”. As many of you may be aware, one of the most important programmes of the African Union Commission is the Public Service and Administration Ministerial Programme. The African Union Commission through my humble person would like to express its full support not only to the establishment of the network of Africa Public Service human resource managers but also to capacity building on different key issues enshrined in the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration.
As you are all aware, sustainable development is one of the key objectives of our Union as stated in the African Union Constitutive Act. To achieve this goal, the African Union through its ministerial programme on Public Service and Administration has been working tirelessly with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to mobilize its Member States to embark on transformation of their public service and to enhance their capacities to build capable developmental states. The African Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration adopted by the African Union Assembly on 31st January 2011 here in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia as well as the Long Term Strategy of the Africa Governance and Public Administration Programme are both designed to build capable developmental States on our continent. The Agenda 2063 for Africa shared growth and inclusive and sustainable development adopted at the May 2013 Special Summit marking the OAU/AU golden jubilee dedicated to “PanAfricanism and African Renaissance” also highlights the importance of capable developmental States in achieving the African Renaissance.

Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen

The African Union Commission believes that Public Service and Administration has a strong potential to strengthen the legitimacy of any government and to prevent destructive conflicts in Africa. This alone makes Public Service and Administration an important driver of development, peace, stability and human security in a country. But we may ask ourselves at this juncture, is it really possible to achieve development out of public service innovations and performances? As many of us know, development is a multifaceted process which happens in a competitive context where only the most innovative and performing countries succeed and survive. The example of emerging countries of Asia and Latin America speaks loudly in that regards. Development as well as African Renaissance will remain out of our reach without an individual and collective culture of innovation and performance. If Public Service and Administration, as we usually argue, is one of the engines of Africa development and African Renaissance, then it has to undergo a transformation aimed at bring about the needed development.

You will agree with me that the nature, quality as well as performance of a public service lie on its human resource. Africa through the sacrifices of its peoples has invested billions of dollars in civil service establishment and public sector reform, particularly to build the human
resource capacities since the dawn of independence. We need to ask ourselves, have African people been rewarded in terms of effective service delivery after the huge investment in Public Service development? Is there any improvement in the standard of their living? Has it reduced poverty and inequality? Were our various national public service and administration shaped to meet the complex challenges of development? How were or are the public servants selected and trained? Was the Public Service or Civil Service established by our individual Member States prepared to come up with innovations and to seek for performance or just to administer public policy and manage allocated resources? Is our public service a problem-solving and people oriented one? Was the type of Public Service inherited from colonial powers and designed after independence with the support of foreign technical Advisers innovative enough and performance oriented?

Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen

Many of us have the tendency to blame only political or public service leaders when we are confronted with the lack of innovation and poor performance in our public service and administration. We often overlook the role of the Public Service Human Resource Managers in this regards. Innovative and performing public services need specific human resource managers that have been groomed in an atmosphere of innovation and performance, but whom capacities have also been built to properly evaluate innovation and performance. Evaluation of innovation and performance is very important as it identifies gaps in Public Service and Administration and indicates both where reform is needed and what type of reform could be appropriate. In this regards, I would like to draw your attention to articles 20-22 of the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Public Service and Administration which deal with the management and development of human resources in public service in general.

Specifically, Article 20 (1) calls for institutionalization of "...a performance culture within the Public Service and Administration" in Africa. The same article, in its sub-sections 2 and 3, stipulates that "Public Service Agents shall undergo a process of performance management based on clear and measurable criteria" (Article 20(2)). It also provides that "State Parties shall carry out continuous monitoring and evaluation to assess the performance of Public Service Agents in order to determine their promotional requirements, development needs, levels of efficiency and productivity" (Article 20(3)). It clearly appears here that a performance
culture can also be built and enhanced through the implementation of performance evaluation. All these need to be implemented in the light of one of the key objectives of the Charter which is to "ensure quality and innovative service delivery that meets the requirements of all users" (Article 2(2)).

Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me to underscore here that the African Union through the Service Champions Programme of its Conference of Ministers of Public Service has developed with the technical and financial support of UNDP some tools, namely a Management Guide and a Handbook on Performance Management to be published early next year as well as a continental programme, the All Africa Public Service Innovation Awards (AAPSIA), to enhance the culture of continuous performance and innovation in African Public Service. I would like to encourage members of the Africa Public Service Human Resource Management Network to use these tools and platform not only to build their own capacities but also the one of those they manage as well as to contribute to the promotion of an innovation and a performance culture in the Africa Public Service community. The African Union would like the Ministers responsible for Public service and human resource management to encourage and support the culture of innovation and performance in the public service of their respective countries and to demonstrate leadership on these issues.

Since the termination of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) in Africa as a whole, we have not yet been able to conduct a deep, thorough and inclusive reflection to draw collectively lessons from the hardships it evokes and on the best way to reposition Public Service on our continent. Time has come to reposition Public Service in Africa in the light of the challenges of development and African Renaissance. To pave the way to such a reflection which the African Union Commission intends to institutionalize, the department of Political Affairs that I lead is thinking of creating an Africa Public Service and Administration Forum which will gather once every four or five years all the Africa Public Service Stakeholders to discuss key trends and challenges as well as emerging issues in the area of Public Service and Administration.

The Forum could bring together the members of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on Public Service,
Decentralization, Local Governance and Urban Development, the Africa Management and Development Institutes Network (AMDIM), the African Association of Public Service Commission's (AAPSCOMs), the Association of African Public Administration and Management (AAPAM) and organization such as yours, the Africa Public Service Human Resource Management Network (APS-HRMnet). I also believe that time has come to dedicate a full African Union Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government to the theme of African Public Service in Africa. This has become critical as Africa is witnessing a real economic progress while public service remains without resource and clear support. Such a situation might, if no attention is paid to it on time, jeopardise the recently recorded gains. I call on all stakeholders gathered here to advocate and support the idea as it could be one of the best guarantors of Africa’s development.

On this note, I thank you for your attention and wish you all a fruitful deliberation and outcomes.