



THE 8TH 2021 CONTINENTAL AFRICA PUBLIC SERVICE DAY (APSD)

THEME:

“Building the Africa We Want through embracing an ethical culture that underpins purpose driven leadership in the Context of a Crisis”

CONCEPT NOTE



21-23 JUNE 2021

ZIMBABWE /

CELEBRATIONS AT MEMBER STATE LEVEL

INTRODUCTION

1. Africa Public Service Day (APSD) is an African Union (AU) mandated calendar event that seeks to unite and commit African countries to the ethos and practice of good governance in the delivery of services to the African populations. The APSD primarily seeks to recognize the value and contribution of the public service in Africa and progressively develop and sustain prosperity of the African people. As part of the AU-wide initiative to annually commemorate June 23 as Africa Public Service Day, this initiative was designed to build public awareness and appreciation of the role of the Public Service in a dual sector economy which African member states are overseeing.
2. The responsibility of ensuring appropriate coordination of the 8th 2021 Continental APSD activities is entrusted to the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) of the African Union (AU) Commission. As part of the AU-Specialised Technical Committee No 8's (AU_STC No. 8) commitment to enhance the quality of public service performance and accountability across Africa, the sub-committee on Public Service was mandated to ensure that the APSD programme is properly coordinated across the continent. In this regard, the Concept note outlines the format for the celebration and explains the theme and sub-themes that will guide the events.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. The 1st Pan African Conference of Ministers of Public and Civil Service held in Tangier, Morocco in 1994 resolved in its Declaration that the 23rd of June of every year should be celebrated as the African Day of Administration and Civil Service to “celebrate the value and virtue of service to the community”. During the 4th Pan-African Ministers Conference held in Stellenbosch, South Africa in May 2003 the resultant Stellenbosch Declaration firmly entrenched the APSD initiative as part of the Governance and Public Administration Programme.
4. The Addis Ababa Declaration that came out of the 5th Pan-African Ministers' Conference held in December 2005, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia cemented the APSD as an important feature on the African Union calendar of events. The APSD initiative was subsequently endorsed by the Heads of State and Governments of the AU as a measure to reinforce public sector reforms and to entrench good governance and performance management systems in Africa's public service. The United Nations has since synchronised its Public Service Days with Africa's calendar.

5. The APSD has since assumed a measure of popularity and is celebrated annually at National level and biannually at continental level. The continental APSD has been celebrated Seven (7) times namely; in Namibia (2007); in Tanzania (2009 & 2011), in Ghana (2013), in Congo Brazzaville (2015), in Rwanda (2017) and the hugely successful Seventh (7th) continental APSD celebrations were held **on 21st - 23rd June 2019, in Nairobi, Republic of Kenya**¹ under the Theme: *“The Intersection of Youth Empowerment and Migration: Entrenching a culture of Good Governance, ICT and innovation for inclusive service delivery.”*

CONTEXTUAL ORIENTATION

6. It has to be understood that celebration of the APSD within the African Union and its Member States is an essential part of the collective effort to build a prosperous and well- governed continent. Important to this aspiration, is the desire for effective public administration institutions and efficient and responsive public servants. In the face of active delivery and our transformation and reconstruction efforts, we seldom pause to reflect on ‘public service’. The challenges of governance and delivery of goods and services are increasing daunting that we seldom take the time to celebrate the efforts of the many motivated and committed public servants in public institutions across our vast continent.
7. The Covid-19 dispensation has further complicated the terrain for service delivery. Many frontline public servants have paid the ultimate price for daring to sustain service delivery levels in spite of the imminent dangers the Covid-19 pandemic presented. Many public servants confront contextual challenges that would humble even the most capable international or developed country seasoned servant. Many public servants continue to work without proper tools to protect them against Covid infection whilst others work in under-resourced organizations with very un-conducive working conditions. It is also trite that in many countries, public servants also confront the reality of zero to low compensation and in some instances, often don’t receive these benefits on time. In such challenging contexts and situations, it is only the virtue of public service and the commitment of these individuals that allow for the continual efforts to stay the course of service delivery.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE THEME

8. As if the tradition, the African Union has decided that the theme for 2021 is *“Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want.”* This decision is

¹ See the guide for member states to stage them in-country and Continental African Public Service Day Celebrations, September 2010.

based on the understanding and appreciation of the reality that Africa is universally recognized for its rich arts and cultural diversity, given that African cultural heritage springs from different communities all over Africa. According to the AU cultural heritage, which is seen as an expression of the ways of living developed by a community and passed on from generation to generation, including customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions and values, "will for the next twelve months, be at the center of discussion in most events organized by the African Union."

9. It is common cause the APSD theme mirrors and compliments the African Union theme of the year. COVID-19 has shown that African countries have more to gain by relying on their own structures and regional solidarity than on assistance from elsewhere. With the necessary investment, the AU theme of the year, although difficult to implement in practical terms, could be a key moment that sees the acceleration of pride in Africa's rich culture and heritage amid a world in crisis. In view of the AU 2021 theme and based on the current challenges of cultivating good governance to build the Africa We Want, the 8th 2021 Continental APSD Theme is: ***“Constructing the Africa We Want through embracing an ethical culture that underpins purpose driven leadership”***
10. The rationale for this theme is premised on AU's aspirations as stipulated in Agenda 2063 whereby Africans desire to build a continent that puts its citizens at the center of all programs and projects. Two of the seven pillars of Africa Agenda 2063 envisions an Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics, an Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children. It is clear these lofty aspirations are underpinned by the African cultural mores that value hard work, strong ethical leadership and one that accrues inclusivity.
11. The fundamental purpose of African administration is to provide services to satisfy public needs. Public leaders have to take on organisational roles to decide how to best achieve the organisation's purpose of meeting human needs and enhancing human life. An ethical culture underpinning purpose driven leadership is viewed as an effective approach that will promote the broader interests of society in respect of public service delivery
12. In view of the settled theme, the following are the sub-themes for the 2021 Continental APSD:
 1. Celebrating the contribution of the public servant: a story of courage and resilience in the management of the Covid-19 Pandemic

2. Embracing Cultural diversity as a lever to strengthen institutions for a responsive and ethical public administration
 3. Deploying technology to sustain and enhance service delivery in the face of this challenging Covid-19 pandemic climate.
 4. Achieve inclusivity through harnessing Arts and culture as instruments to inform, market and build demand side capacity for effective and efficient service delivery
5. It is expected that discussions, during this year's virtual celebrations will:
1. Appropriately, identify challenges impeding delivery of efficient and effective public services to satisfy citizens' expectations; and
 2. Propose sustainable solutions and reposition Africa's public administrations to find innovative means that will guarantee service delivery continuity in the face of the rampaging Covid-19 menace.
 3. The Africa Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA) is an important initiative for participants to reflect and propose interventions that are necessary for the public administration to facilitate the success of this continental objective to grow inter-Africa's trade regime.

OBJECTIVES OF THE 2021 CONTINENTAL APSD:

4. The key objective of the 8th 2021 Continental APSD celebrations is to avail a platform for African Union member states to dialogue and discourse on the successes and challenges of service delivery in African and exchange best practice on how to transform Africa's public administration more so in this challenging environment of the Covid pandemic. Specific objectives are:
 1. to give due recognition to the activities and achievements of the Public Service and Public Servants in Africa
 2. Share and exchange best practices of how to sustain and ensure service delivery continuity during this challenging climate of the Covid-19 pandemic
 3. Prepare Africa's public administration for the post-covid-19 recovery measures and intervention towards the realization of the goals of Agenda 2063
 4. sensitize citizens and corporates of Africa on the role of the Public Service as a strategic partner for the private sector for national development
 5. remind the Public Administration and Public Servants in Africa of the need to be efficient, transparent, responsive, ethical and accountable in the translation, implementation and administration of government policy and programmes, and in the delivery of public services to citizens.

6. Propose ways to embrace ICT as an enabler to innovative service delivery more during these challenging times of the Covid menace.

WHAT CAN WE EXPECT OF THE 2021 CONTINENTAL APSD

7. Due to the current concerns and the strictures individual African Union Member States have put in place to curb the spread and transmission of Covid-19, the 8th 2021 Continental APSD celebrations will be convened and celebrated virtually. The expectation is that celebrations will be well organized and done simultaneously by majority of African States, and if feasible, by all. These celebrations will be observed under the same theme and a common message delivered by the African Union Commissioner for Political Affairs. This synchronized initiative will go a long way in helping African States evolve a common and connected approach to their public service delivery and responses and reaffirm their concerted effort to address public service challenges at national, regional and continental levels. It is against this backdrop that the African Union Department for Political Affairs has been entrusted with the responsibility to propose and coordinate the necessary activities that would deliver a common continental understanding of the Day's celebrations.
8. The 8th 2021 APSD celebrations are expected to generate activities to produce multifold, progressive and lasting outcomes. The celebrations will be marked by presentations of topical papers mainly reflecting on the role of the public service. These papers will be informed by African experiences and reflect the issues that are important to African Union Member States in their continuing quest and commitment to improve public service image, proficiency, ethics, transparency, value and responsiveness to their citizens. The papers are expected to go a long way in assisting and even reinforcing the implementation of existing Public Service Charters that have been prepared and in many domesticated by most African Union member states.
9. In support of the main APSD event on June 23, there would be a week-long build-up campaign of related public service activities at national level involving the general public to visibly remind all stakeholders of the commitment of the public sector, public service and civil service to provide efficient, ethical, accountable and responsive services to their respective constituents (private sector, civil service, parastatals, state and statutory agencies, NGOs, Community-Based Organizations and private citizens).
10. In the result, the main culminating event on June 23 would provide an invaluable podium for African Union Member States and citizens to honor and reward deserving public servants, and a befitting platform to launch new public service

initiatives as a watershed in the reconstruction and reform of the African Public Service Sector more especially post Covid-19.

STRATEGY AND FORMAT OF THE 2021 CONTINENTAL APSD CELEBRATIONS

11. The main strategy of the 8th 2021 Continental APSD celebrations is to recognize national experiences in public service delivery and showcase the works and achievements of excellence as well as the challenges and prospects for improving the impact and image of public service in Africa. A week of relevant and coordinated activities is envisaged at the country level which will culminate on June 23 with formal celebrations by the Ministries of Public Service, Public Administration and their respective civil and related public sector organs. The APSD Events on 23 June will be guided by the common AU theme and a formal message from the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs. Whilst Member States are free to adopt different formats for their own national activities and events the common APSD theme should be respected, and it is hoped that the different sub-regions will coordinate and synchronize their activities to optimize regional synergy and impact.
12. A call is made to African Union Member States to preface the Continental June 23 APSD celebrations with a weeklong buildup of coordinated national activities that will attract and engage not just government ministries and departments, or regional and local government agencies but as much as possible should facilitate the full involvement of institutions like universities, technikons, umbrella private sector organizations, parastatals, telecoms, and multi-purpose community centres and of course, the media. These platforms will also prove useful to stimulate and inform public debate and discussion on public service delivery, ethics, professionalism, performance culture, strategic management, public accountability, transparency, social responsibility and good governance, and equally identify common challenges and approaches to public sector and public service reform within national, continental and global contexts.

VENUE AND DATE:

13. The 8th 2021 Continental APSD will be held on **23rd June 2021**, in Harare, Republic of Zimbabwe. However, ***due to Covid-19 protocols, Zimbabwe offers to host the event with the AU and a few Champion member States to avoid huge numbers congregating. Local participants will be kept at the bearest minimum.***

PARTICIPANTS

14. Participants will be drawn from the AU Member States, including organizations active in the sphere of public administration, universities, the private sector, Media and other non-state organizations.

WORKING LANGUAGES:

15. The event will be conducted in the working languages of the African Union.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

16. The Symposium session will be guided by the following resource documents:
 1. The African Union Manual on African Public Service Day:
 2. The African Charter on Values and Principles of the Public Service and Administration.
 3. Thematic papers as will be commissioned by the African Union and case studies prepared by selected Member States.

CONTACT DETAILS OF THE COORDINATING TEAM

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