



9TH CONTINENTAL AFRICA PUBLIC SERVICE DAY (APSD) CELEBRATION

VICTORIA FALLS DECLARATION

“THE AFRICAN CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA (AFCFTA) WILL REQUIRE A FIT FOR PURPOSE AFRICAN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION TO SUCCEED”

1. **WE**, Member States of the African Union gathered here in Victoria Falls, in the Republic of Zimbabwe for the Nineth (9th) Biennial Continental African Public Service Day (APSD) Celebrations from 21-23 June 2023.
2. **EXPRESS** profound gratitude to the Government and People of the Republic of Zimbabwe for hosting this edition of the APSD under the auspices of the African Union Commission (AUC).
3. **NOTE WITH APPRECIATION** that 500 participants from across the Continent attended the 2023 APSD Celebrations.
4. **APPRECIATE** that the opening ceremony was graced by Honourable Prof. Paul Mavima, Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare of the Republic of Zimbabwe, on behalf of HE. Emerson Mnangagwa President of the Republic of Zimbabwe.
5. **FURTHER APPRECIATE** the presence of H.E. Ambassador FATHALLAH SIJILMASSI, Director General of the African Union Commission, Ministers from Algeria, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Tanzania, heads of delegations of Ethiopia, Burundi, South Africa, Kenya, Namibia, Eswatini as well as Civil or Public Service Personnel, Public Service Practitioners and Experts from all over Africa; Members of the Diplomatic Corps, African Association of Public Administration Management (AAPAM), UN ECA, the academia, the Private Sector, Civil Society Organizations and the Media.
6. **ACKNOWLEDGING** the importance of sharing experiences on Public Service Innovations and good practices in Africa, African Ministers of Public/Civil Service resolved and instituted 23rd June of every year as a Day to recognize the work of Public Servants and create a platform for sharing experiences on best public sector practices on the continent.

7. **AFFIRMING** the decision of African Union Heads of states declaring that the theme for 2023 is *“Acceleration of Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Implementation”*.
8. **RECOGNIZING** the trite reality that public administration is understood to be the key apparatus for the execution of the functions of the state and therefore critical to the success of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) which is the emerging Africa’s integration agenda.
9. **FURTHER RECOGNIZING** as the emerging African Integration Agenda, AfCFTA will rely on the competence and skill of public servants at national level to achieve its lofty objectives of increasing inter-Africa trade and thereby accelerate economic development among AU member States.
10. **EMBRACING** the theme for the 2023 APSD Celebrations *“The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Will Require A Fit for Purpose African Public Administration To Succeed”* as timely and appropriate;

11. GUIDED by the following sub-themes:

- a) Improved diplomacy, harmonization of legal systems and regional cooperation to combat cross border crime, to better manage coordination and implementation of AfCFTA mandates.
- b) A developmental public administration that creates an enabling environment for investment value adding industries to maximize the benefit of the AfCFTA framework.
- c) Developing core techno-bureaucratic, managerial, technical and entrepreneurial skills, to ensure better use of scarce human, financial and physical resources in achieving more efficient cross border trade
- d) Building institutional capacity at National level through deployment of new technologies to better manage, coordinate and implement AfCFTA obligations
- e) Addressing the public administration impediments to cross border trade facilitation and implementation of regional integration commitments at national level

Resolved as follows regarding the main theme and Sub-themes:

12. On the Theme: **“The African continental free trade area (AfCFTA) will require a fit for purpose African public administration to succeed”**:

Participants resolved that:

- a) It is conceivable that public administration will facilitate the growth of intra-national trade.

- b) The theme implores us to reflect and deepen the understanding of principles of effectiveness, efficiency, accountability, and transparency.
- c) The Africa citizens have a right to enjoy demand and enjoy good services and products.
- d) African systems must be innovative to transform the government beyond status qua, for a new architecture to successful planning to emerge stronger, resilient, and better.
- e) It is important for national policies, institution, and process to bear continental relevance.
- f) Political will among leaders and policy makers will be key to elimination of trade barriers and mobility of entrepreneurial capacities.
- g) The notion of competitive complementary is critical with respect to areas of competitive advantage for African Member States to benefit each other's comparative strength.
- h) What can be done to ensure skills from the universities are customised to address the current challenges?
- i) There is need to create a public administration system that is world class to fit into the globalised system that is continually in motion.
- j) The future, which is characterized by uncertainty calls for futuristic thinking to map our appropriate interventions.
- k) There are more developmental public administration dimensions coming on board in the context of inclusivity and equity – more so with regard to women, disabled people and the youth.
- l) We can no longer restrict progress on the indicator of economic growth when there are many more factors like climate change.
- m) Given the large number of countries in the AfCFTA initiative, the possibility of synergies is critical as we seek comparative advance.

13. On the Sub-theme: Developing core techno-bureaucratic, managerial, technical, and entrepreneurial skills, to ensure better use of scarce human, financial and physical resources in achieving more efficient cross border trade”:

Participants resolved that:

- a) AfCFTA related key institutions identified include core ministries such as; ministry of finance, trade & commerce, foreign affairs, finance, agriculture & industry,
- b) It was noted that generally, Africa lags in digitization and promotion of e-commerce, the agreement therefore provides a forum to synchronize and harmonize Africa's digital landscape.
- c) Recognizing trends, patterns, user behaviour in cross boarder trading is important
- d) African people need to develop and maintain a growth mindset – to avoid stagnation in business

- e) It was recognized that the African Union health strategy is critical to a healthy nation which ultimately become a wealthy nation
- f) Failure to listen to the private sector leads to challenges in cross border trade
- g) Acknowledged that Africa has very few multi-national corporations and therefore most businesses have little resources to engage on a global scale.
- h) Delegates heard that the UN ECA is working on data around informal cross border trade which exercise will start by defining this trade formation, even though data collection would not follow the conventional methodological strictures.
- i) There is need to formalize the informal sector through dialogue, capacity building and supports
- j) Better relations with the private sector need to be developed – EU best practices can guide this intervention.

14. On the Subtheme: “A developmental public administration that creates an enabling environment for investment value adding industries to maximize the benefit of the AfCFTA framework”.

Participants resolved that:

- a) Africa is the second least diversified region in the world after Oceania, in addition,
- b) the continent has the most concentrated export structure, with 83% of African countries commodity dependent,
- c) The opportunities at the disposal of the continent include the demographic dividend, endowment of natural resources and the developmental framework presented by the AfCFTA
- d) AFCFTA is posed to lift 50 million people out of poverty, raise overall incomes by 8%, increase intra-African exports by up to 109% and increase international exports by 32% by 2035.
- e) There is no team Africa pride visible which necessitate the need to work on and revisit our educational system.
- f) It was noted that a developmental state is heavy handed intervention as opposed to market driven orientation where the state develops, natures and supports private sector initiatives
- g) Academia was challenged and has a role and responsibility to revisit our curriculum on science, accounting etc, to be more African oriented
- h) We should talk about market construction, mindset change, educational contextualization
- i) There is need to transition the informal to formal market trading
- j) Most informal sectors are not sustainable due to the poor working conditions, environmental and other challenges
- k) It was explained that a developmental state is separate from the market economy but for a country that is developing and even the market is developing there is need for state intervention, to realign capital and mobilise for investment.

15. On the Sub-Theme, “Building institutional capacity at National level through deployment of new technologies to better manage, coordinate and implement AfCFTA obligations”:

Participants resolved that:

- a) It was acknowledged that African institutions have core challenges that includes bureaucracy, infrastructure, human capacity, regulations that are static, working in silos, corruption, the cost of technology and poor network distribution,
- b) Local governments are in far flung rural areas without technological penetration
- c) Moving goods in the region call for serious repositioning – issues of fairness and equity are key – traceability is critical as well
- d) Within the global context and efficiency, it is a challenge for Africa to compete
- e) There is greater need for implementation in rural areas: AfCFTA has to be owned by the ordinary African person
- f) It was noted that achieving standardization is possible if the private sector is fully engaged to provide solution through investment in innovation
- g) There is also need for government to provide incentives for the private sector to rollout digital infrastructure.
- h) There need to be a realization that the AfCFTA will take time to fully realise its set objectives AU member states can start with few sectors leveraging comparative advantages.
- i) On the matter of too much talk about the same thing, it was recognised that, in fact the current RECs have made good progress in cross border trade facilitation.
- j) It was acknowledged that resistance it typical to new approached and therefore the need for change management interventions, yet sometimes policies are not facilitative of change management.
- k) It is important to ensure that there are efficiencies in production processes to ensure local products are cheap.

16. On the Sub-Theme: “Improved diplomacy, harmonization of legal systems and regional cooperation to combat cross border crime, to better manage coordination and implementation of AfCFTA mandates”:

Participants resolved that:

- a) Through diplomatic efforts, harmonization of legal systems, and regional cooperation, AU member states can address these challenges and create a conducive environment for the successful implementation of the AfCFTA.
- b) Effective implementation of AfCFTA mandates faces challenges, including cross-border crime.

- c) There is need for increased collaboration among countries to combat cross-border crime, such as smuggling and trafficking, which can negatively impact trade and investment.
- d) A trade system that is working well, facilitates cross-border trade, and addresses cross-border crimes effectively is essential for promoting economic growth and ensuring security across borders.
- e) Both the United States and the European Union's cross-border trade system serve as good model that effectively facilitate trade while addressing cross-border crimes.
- f) Through harmonized regulations, customs cooperation, integrated border management, joint law enforcement operations can ensure the smooth flow of goods and services while effectively combating cross-border crimes.
- g) The success of these systems lies in the commitment to cooperation, information sharing, and the harmonization of regulations, ultimately promoting economic integration and security across its member states.

17. On the Sub-Theme: “Addressing the public administration impediments to cross border trade facilitation and implementation of regional integration commitments at national level”:

Participants resolved that:

- a) Effective governance is crucial for successful implementation of AfCFTA at the national level.
- b) Enhancing policy coherence, strengthening institutions, and promoting transparency are essential for overcoming governance challenges.
- c) Limited coordination among government agencies and insufficient regulatory frameworks creates ambiguity and delays.
- d) Addressing corruption, improving coordination mechanisms, and promoting free movement of goods, services, and people are critical for the success of AfCFTA
- e) Disparities in development and economic capacities among African nations pose challenges for trade integration.
- f) Inadequate infrastructure, including transport networks and digital connectivity, hampers trade operations.
- g) Cumbersome administrative procedures and bureaucratic red tape significantly hinder cross-border trade facilitation.
- h) Simplifying administrative procedures, adopting modern technologies, and implementing single-window systems can streamline trade processes.
- i) Simplifying documentation requirements and harmonizing trade-related documents can reduce paperwork.
- j) Upgrading customs systems to automated processes can enhance efficiency and accuracy.
- k) Integration initiatives in Africa often lack inclusivity and fail to effectively engage ordinary citizens and grassroots communities.
- l) The APRM citizen engagement methodologies in the evaluation of governance and development, that incorporate their perspectives into policy reforms and national plans is a best practice to be adopted.

18. Country Interventions were made by; Algeria, Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Namibia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

THE CLOSING CEREMONY

19. In their closing remarks, the AUC thanked the government and people of Zimbabwe for hosting the 9th APSD conference focusing on the accelerated implementation of AfCFTA. He further thanked all speakers for expertly facilitating a wide range of topics, and all participants for their keen attention and participation. AUC welcomed the hosting of the 10th APSD by Ethiopia

20. On final deliberations, the conference expressed appreciation to Government of Zimbabwe, especially H.E. President Emerson Mnangagwa, for facilitating the successful hosting of the 9th edition of the APSD, the people of Zimbabwe for their kind hospitality and the Elephant Hills Resort Staff and Management for deploying sufficient resources to ensure the comfort of delegates.

21. Delegates also expressed their gratitude to the AUC, development partners and sponsors for their support, and further acknowledged the speakers, adjudicators of the exhibition, resource persons and exhibitors for their valued participation.

22. Delegates congratulated winners of the innovation Awards for showcasing best practices in service delivery. The winners were as follows:

- a. Category 1 Best Managed Organization 2nd runner up Tanzania Railway Authority 1st runner up Kenya Huduma center, Overall, Winner, Coast development Authority Kenya
- b. Category 2 Most Accountable Transparent Organization 2nd runner up Ministry Industry and Commerce Zimbabwe, 1st runner up ministry Industrialization and Trade Namibia, Overall, Winner Zimbabwe Public Service Commission
- c. Category 3 Best Innovation in Citizen Centered Service Delivery 2nd runner up Ministry of Public Service Labour and Social Affairs Zimbabwe, 1st runner up Pumulanga Department of Agriculture Land and Development South Africa, Overall, Winner Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT), Kenya

23. **Welcomed** and accepted the offer of the *Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia* to host the 10th Edition of the APSD in Addis Ababa in June 2025.

ISSUED IN VICTORIA FALLS THIS, 23RD DAY OF JUNE 2023.