

REPORT OF THE
SECOND BIENNIAL PANAFRICAN CONFERENCE
OF MINISTERS OF CIVIL SERVICE

FORMAL OPENING

The Second Pan African Conference of Ministers of Public Service took place in Rabat, The Royal Kingdom of Morocco, between 13 and 15 December 1998. It was hosted by His Majesty's Government and organized jointly by CAFRAD and the U.N. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. A total of 34 countries, 22 international organizations, and 7 observers participated at the Conference.

In a welcome address delivered on Sunday, 13 December 1998, H.E. Mr. Abderrahmane YOUSSEFI, the Honourable Prime Minister of the Royal Kingdom of Morocco, noted that the conference was taking place at a crucial point in Africa's history – i.e. at a time when Africa, like the rest of the world, was in the process of weighing the gains and the constraints of the 20th century while facing up to the challenges of the next millenium.

The Hon. Prime Minister recalled the critical issues raised at the 1994 Pan African Conference held in Tangier, and expressed delight at the fact that the Declaration adopted at the Conference was largely instrumental in ensuring the adoption of the General Assembly resolution 15/225 which besides reaffirming the role of public administration in development, identified areas in which the African public service would need the assistance of the international community. The Prime Minister observed that the challenge ahead consisted in enhancing the professional capacity and changing the ethical orientation of the public service to take into account the increasing demand which civil society was placing on state institutions.

In his own statement, the Chairman of the CAFRAD Governing Board, H.E. Mr. El Houssine AZIZ, joined the Honourable Prime Minister in welcoming the delegates and the observers to the Second Pan African Conference. According to him, The Royal Kingdom of Morocco was proud to follow up on the tradition of hosting conferences devoted to African causes and development themes.

The CAFRAD Chairman reflected on the multi-dimensional, socio-economic and technological, questions discussed at the 1994 Pan African Conference. He observed that the Africa continent was going through new waves – among them, globalization, economic and political liberalization, and the information revolution. According to him, these changes, together with the down-sizing thrusts of structural adjustment reforms, have far-reaching implications for public service management reform. At the very least, they pose serious but not insurmountable challenges in the areas of performance improvement, professionalism, ethics and accountability. In view of the fact that the performance of the civil service had generally fallen below the expectations of political leaders and of civil society at large, it was essential to adopt measures likely to restore the confidence of the people in the competence, efficiency, and integrity of public officials. This indeed is the rationale behind the choice of the theme of the Second Pan African Conference – ethics and professionalism.

Before concluding his remarks, the CAFRAD Chairman intimated the Conference about the civil service reform programme being implemented in the Kingdom of Morocco. The core elements of the reforms are:

- Strengthening administrative deconcentration;
- Rationalizing and modernizing human resource management;
- Reforming and modernizing civil service legislation, and adapting regulations to the missions and tasks of public administration; and
- Instituting a good governance charter – with emphasis on the following objectives:
 - Ethics
 - Procedure rationalization and
 - Communication

In a statement presented on behalf of Mr. Nitin DESAI, the Under-Secretary General, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Assistant-Secretary General in the Department, Mr. Patrizio CIVILI, recognized the growing drive towards the elaboration of universal norms to guide the public service. As recognized in Resolution 50/225, adopted by the General Assembly, all countries need a modern, professional, competent and efficient administration in the development of their nations. In a major report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of sustainable development in Africa, recently issued by the Secretary-General, good governance was identified as one of the cornerstones for building durable peace and promoting economic growth.

However, all governments and international organizations have learned an important lesson in an environment which is changing at an unprecedented pace. The new world requires a higher degree of efficiency and a greater selectivity in determining those areas which are best pursued by the public sector. Public service, therefore, is essential, as never before. But it must meet

the highest professional and ethical standards. And it must continue in a spirit of selfless service to the public, not only among current professionals but also with future generations. The United Nations is keenly aware that though standards must be consistently high, each country must find its own path to achieving them. In this endeavour, conferences such as the present one can help all advance through an exchange of experiences and learn from each other.

The Director General of CAFRAD, Dr. M. A. WALI's statement focussed, among other things on the importance of the Conference theme. The CAFRAD Director-General noted that the theme of public service ethics and professionalism was being accorded increasing attention all over the world. This, according to him, is due to the realization that precipitated declines in ethical and professional standards constituted a threat not only to political stability but to sustainable development.

The Director-General further reported on the progress made in implementing the proposals incorporated in the 1994 Tangier Declaration. He was delighted to note that, in line with one key suggestion under the Declaration, many African countries began from 1995 to celebrate the Africa Day of Administration and Civil Service. For its own part, CAFRAD had worked out modalities for the establishment and administration of an Award for Excellence in Public Administration and Management. The Centre's Governing Board had also approved a proposal for the launching of an Exchange Programme under which senior public servants would serve for between one and two years in civil services other than their countries'.

Another major landmark in CAFRAD's history is the decision to publish an annual report focussing on best practices in governance. The indicators that would be applied in assessing progress and constraints in the area of governance include the rule of law, human rights, accountability, transparency, administrative capacity, decentralisation, gender policy, public-private partnership, and globalisation trends.

On the specific theme of the 1998 Conference, the CAFRAD Director-General observed that while public service ethics and professionalism were critical to the success of Africa's development efforts, it was equally important that steps be taken to provide purposeful leadership and create an atmosphere conducive to efficient performance. He expressed the hope that the Conference would come up with ideas aimed at restoring the shattered image of the civil service, and at repositioning the service for the challenges of the next millennium.

Country Presentation:

Ministers and delegates from various countries made presentations highlighting their experiences in tackling problems concerned with the promotion of the image of their public services in order to be prepared for new challenges emerging in the 21st Century. Everywhere efforts are being deployed to retool, re-engineer and re-focus public administration towards increased productivity, enhanced accountability, greater transparency, governance and better delivery of services to the citizens.

Important efforts are also being undertaken to enhance the human resource potential in the public sector in order to come up with a new profile of civil servants, working in an enabling environment and with determination to bring about change in a newly redynamized and reformed administration

FIRST PLENARY SESSION

TOPIC: The Civil Service in Africa : New Challenges

Resource Person : Prof. Abdelouahed OURZIK

Prof. Ourzik's paper highlights the socio-economic and technological challenges that need to be addressed by the African public service. Facing up to the economic challenges requires that the public service adapt its missions and structures to the new role of the state, take due cognisance of the impact of globalisation and liberalisation, and institute measures aimed at improving the performance and global competitiveness of the national economy. As regards the social challenges, the public service would need to strengthen the capacity of the public utilities, and undertake activities in support of human and civic rights. The technological challenges consist mainly of how to harness the benefits, while coping with the threats, of the rapidly changing information technology.

Despite the drastic measures adopted as part of structural adjustment reforms, the African public service is still being criticised by an increasingly mobilized and highly demanding public. More than ever before, and despite resource shrinkages, the public service is under pressure to find innovative solutions to wide-ranging socio-economic problems – unemployment, deterioration of educational and health facilities, worsening housing conditions, and decaying infrastructure. In other words, the contemporary public service finds itself in an unenviable position of having to do more with less. This underscores the importance of one resource – the human resource.

The economic challenges alone are of such a magnitude as to call for new capacities. An example is the capacity to anticipate and plan for the consequences of matters which, in ordinary circumstances, tend to be beyond local control. Even if structural adjustment had not taken its toll, anticipating the consequences of globalisation and trade liberalisation would have strained the capacity of the public service to breaking point.

Yet, going by the prevailing orthodoxy, the public service is under increasing pressure to shed its "excess" fat. Instead of engaging in direct productive activities, the public service has to be content with providing an "enabling environment" for growth.

According to Prof. Ourzik, the key to the puzzle lies in a judicious allocation of resources, a new preoccupation with value for money, and an accent on the timeliness impact, results and quality of service delivery

It is Prof. Ourzik's view that in responding to on-going and unfolding challenges in the socio-economic and technological fields, the public service needs to give due thought to the following measures, among others .

- a) acquisition and constant application of strategic planning and management capacity;
- b) conduct of management audits with a view to rationalising organisational goals/mission statements and revalidating or renewing mandates;
- c) systematic dismantling of highly centralised and inflexible structures, and establishment in their place of citizen-oriented, productivity and performance-based structures;
- d) elimination of bureaucratic red-tape, unjustifiable road-blocks, cumbersome procedures, and growth-stifling controls;
- e) enhancement of the capacity of economic cadres/agencies to open windows of opportunities for local enterprises, and to discharge the vital support, advisory and information networking services;
- f) design, installation and operation of a policy, institutional, and legal framework safeguarding private property rights and permitting legitimate business transactions;
- g) design and implementation of social safety-nets for the weakest and poorest sections of society;
- h) involvement of stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of programmes;
- i) enhancement of the capacity of managers to evaluate performance and monitor the impact of government programmes on the beneficiaries;
- j) review of the civil service's selection and promotion procedure to enable the sifting of genuine achievers from time-servers;
- k) the progressive adaptation of the new information technology to the needs of the public service and its diverse clientele;

- l) the development of strong linkages among public services universities, research institutions, and
- m) sustained investment in human capacity building through in-service training; and
- n) implementation of civil service pay reform (with emphasis on equity)

General Discussions:

Discussant: Professor Benoît NDI-ZAMBO

Professor Ourzik's presentation was followed by comments by Professor Benoît Ndi-Zambo of the Institute of Management of Cameroon. He agreed in general with Prof. Ourzik's presentation. He urged the governments to adopt systematic approaches to meet the new challenges. He went on to add two complementary challenges to the three mentioned by Prof. Ourzik (economic, social and technological). The two additions are the cultural and the oncological challenges both of which would be upstream from those proposed by Prof. Ourzik. By cultural challenge he meant that the public service should move from dictating and regulating to listening and being accountable with a view to meeting citizen's expectations. The oncological challenge meant that the public service should reconsider its *raison d'être*. The State should have a vision and become an active actor in the context of globalization. He ended by affirming that the status quo was no longer an option: the future was in emphasizing solidarity and citizen's empowerment taking into account diversity and subsidiarity.

General discussions

A general discussion ensued which confirmed the challenges highlighted by the presenters. It was generally recognized that genuine efforts were already under way in most African countries to meet the new challenges identified. Consensus appeared on acknowledging the key role human resources in the public sector have to play if the States are to move forward to a new culture in the 21st century which will enable Africa to narrow the development gap.

Emerging issues and challenges

A number of issues and challenges were identified. The main ideas however, can be summed up by reaffirming the critical role of good governance emphasizing transparency and strong political will. It was agreed generally that each state should formulate its vision and adapt accordingly the role of its public administration. The main challenge was to create an enabling environment for economic development and the struggle against poverty. The need for empowering women and promoting ethics in the public service was recognized.

as a priority for real change. Finally, a particular point was made on the issue of representativeness of the public service and balance of power in the public service in terms of regional/ethnic groups. A lively debate followed with various views. It was agreed that an exchange of experiences on this subject in sub-saharan Africa would be useful.

The Way Forward

There was no lack of imagination in proposing ways to go forward. In reviewing the proposals which seems to meet most participant' agreement, the following were identified :

- ◆ Promoting training of civil servants for a new administration ;
- ◆ Mobilizing resources for the public service ;
- ◆ Implementing decentralization/deconcentration : moving closer to the population;
- ◆ Creating incentives to improve motivation in the public service
- ◆ Involving civil society;
- ◆ Developing regional integration: a unified African approach and exchange of relevant experiences;
- ◆ Capacity building to harness the benefits of the information/communication revolution; and
- ◆ Enhancement of the capacity of training institutions (with particular reference to the changing role of the state and the increasing public demand for improved service equality).;
- ◆ Public sector partnership with the private sector.

model. It is one that highlights the attributes of a genuinely professional civil servant, viz, the attributes of :

- foresight and prevision (strategic, pro-active orientation)
- entrepreneurship (risk-taking, innovativeness)
- excellence/merit (constant search for perfection)
- impact - or results-orientation (focus on performance and productivity);
- moral rectitude (responsibility, political, neutrality, public spiritedness, accountability, equity, transparency, subordination of private/personal interest to public good).

Ould Daddah believes that the top cadres of the civil service have a major role to play in developing or strengthening the new professional ethos. She is also of the view that the ministry or agency responsible for the management of the civil service could restore the image and promote the morale of the service if it too is accorded the importance that it deserves.

In conclusion, Ould Daddah stresses the need to invest in human resource development. She further advocates the institution of measures aimed at rewarding performance, and at integrating public service reform with the reform of the state.

General Discussions

Commentator : Prof. Saïd BELBACHIR

Prof. Saïd Belbachir congratulated Mrs. Turkia Ould Daddah on her brilliant presentation on the issue of professionalism of the Africa Civil service. He, however, made pertinent comments on specific aspects of a professional administration. He noted that :

- (i) dialogue between the political leaders and civil servants is very important for team work in administration;
- (ii) decentralization and deconcentration lead to effective participation of citizens in the decision-making;
- (iii) there is lack of coordination between ministries and within ministries. This situation is not conducive to integrated development process.

- (iv) The national budget should reflect the national policy.
- (v) The evaluation of performance could be internal or external and should be seen as a control mechanism.
- (vi) Transparency is possible if citizens are informed about administrative decisions. To this effect, information should be available and accessible to the citizens at any time.

General discussion

On the issues of impartiality, equity, and neutrality, some Ministers underlined the fact that many civil servants were too politically biased to treat all citizens impartially and equitably in accordance with the law.

With regard to the relationship between public administration and citizens, the conference agreed that citizens should be considered as clients and services provided should be of good quality.

It was noted that the legal framework remains the key instrument for promoting professionalism in administration. Indeed, by clearly setting out the rights and duties of civil servants, and making their professional advancement dependent on the accepted criteria of efficient performance, civil service statutes offer the main guarantee of the neutrality of public servants.

The conference stressed the need to establish an atmosphere conducive to openness. It was agreed that it was necessary for the political leaders to encourage their civil service advisers to comment frankly on policy and its implementation. The issue of evaluation and control was discussed. It was agreed that acceptable and effective methods must be applied for the evaluation of results and appropriate and equitable measures taken once the results are known.

Training remains the critical element if any reform has to succeed. Indeed, human resources capable of formulating, implementing and evaluating administrative reforms in Africa are in short supply. Therefore Government should train civil servants to carry out efficiently and effectively their duties.

While the legal and technical conditions required for the implementation of reforms are of decisive importance, there is a need for strong political will to mobilize state employees.

Globalisation could be seen as something positive for Africa if the comparative advantages of Africa are clearly identified and translated into projects to be implemented.

Emerging / issues and challenges

The issues and challenges emerging from the discussion include

1. Impartiality – equity, neutrality and depoliticization for public administration
2. Openness – dialogue and transparency to develop the sense of initiative that is an indispensable element in sound management and good governance ;
3. Evaluation and budget control (in order to improve the performance of civil servants and make them more responsible of their decisions) ;
4. Development of capacities to negotiate, specially within the framework of the emerging new economic order.
5. Education and training for contemporary needs and future challenges: Training programmes should be formulated and implemented at national, sub-regional and regional levels with a view to building critical capacities for an effective management of public services and in anticipation of the challenges of the next millenium.

The way forward

Administrative professionalism cannot be developed iovernight. It needs time and efforts from all stakeholders at national and international levels. Mentalities have to be changed for a new professional culture to take root. To this effect the following is recommended :

- (i) African socio-cultural values have to be scrutinized to adapt them to the challenges of professionalism ;
- (ii) The role and missions of states should be clearly defined taking into consideration the new challenges ;
- (iii) The rule of law should be at the centre of all actions and decisions. Nobody or institution should be above the law and everybody should be equal before the law ;
- (iv) All posts in public administration should be clearly described and publicly announced when vacant ;
- (v) Education and training programmes for civil servants should be formulated and planned at national sub-regional and regional levels with the collaboration of the international community ;
- (vi) Information and communication systems must be developed in order to strengthen the relationship between citizens and their public administration ;
- (vii) Methods of evaluation and monitoring of civil servants' performance and the quality of services rendered should be developed, known and understood by civil servants and citizens .

THIRD PLENARY SESSION

Topic : Public Service in Africa : Ethics

Resource Person : Prof. J.R.A. AYEE

Professor Ayee began his presentation by observing the importance of ethics in both developed and developing countries. The ethical conduct of public officials is crucial to the legitimacy and success of governments, good governance, and the efficiency and effectiveness of the public service. He noted that his paper covered five main issues:

- the definition of ethics,
- the importance of ethics,
- ethical dilemmas,
- strategies for promoting ethics, and
- lessons learned for good governance.

Professor Ayee's paper highlights the difficulties in defining ethics and in evaluating ethical conduct. He compares ethics with a number of concepts, among them, morality, rectitude, and sense of responsibility. After noting the differences in the values underpinning each notion of "good" and "bad" judgement, he concludes by viewing as "ethical" the character and conduct of an individual relative to the obligations imposed by the individual's incumbency of public office.

Ayee further explores conditions under which the public servant might be torn between or among conflicting ethical choices. Circumstances posing serious ethical dilemmas include those in which the official is under pressure to balance personal goals with narrow sectional, political partisan, and general public expectations.

According to Ayee, consideration of public good provides the most reliable way of reconciling the moral dilemmas facing career officials. It is this consideration which guides official behaviour in agent-principal, as well as conflict-of-interest situations.

He identifies a number of strategies aimed at promoting ethical behaviour in the civil service. These include the enactment of ethical codes, pay reform (with emphasis on improvement in pay levels and conditions of service), rationalization and simplification of decision processes, provision for declaration

of assets, elimination of functions and/or regulations susceptible to abuse, establishment and empowerment of anti-corruption agencies, and the strengthening of the watch-dog capacity of civil society institutions (including the print and electronic media).

However, he argues that the success of anti-corruption measures at any point in time depends largely on :

- leadership will and commitment;
- active participation of civil society institutions (eg employees' associations, NGOs, religious bodies);
- vigorous enforcement of anti-corruption legislation; and
- relentless pursuit of violators of ethical codes; and
- the credibility of anti-corruption campaigns, in general, and of anti-corruption agencies, in particular.

General discussion

Discussant: Minister Miria Matembe for Ethics and Integrity of Uganda

Minister Matembe prefaced her comments on Professor Ayee's paper by noting the importance of a political leadership, committed to justice, equality, and a clean society. She reminded the audience that many of the people -- which the leadership and the civil service serve -- live in rural areas, with no access to books on ethics. Instead, they need to be shown through daily actions what is the proper conduct of public officials.

Minister Matembe broadly agreed with Professor Ayee's paper but wanted to enrich the section on ethical dilemmas with illustrations from the Ugandan experience. She noted that although ethics is a part of everyday life, the moral fiber of society has been destroyed by war. There is a need to return to valuing human life rather than material gain, especially for the benefit of the younger generation.

Despite codes of conduct, some civil servants continue to behave unethically because they do not respect citizens' entitlement to public services. This can be countered by strengthening the citizenry and a weak civil society, through disseminating information and promoting civic education. Administration discretion is a part and parcel of public management. However a shift in paradigm to results-orientation and consultation will strengthen accountability and reduce negative conformity among civil servants. The problem of corruption itself has to be discussed freely, to bring it out into the open. Although petty corruption can be handled by improving working conditions of civil servants, grand corruption is the real challenge.

Minister Matembe identified ways forward. First, codes of conduct must be followed. However, their enforcement is impeded by weak judicial and legal systems, which need to be strengthened. Second, the values of the people need to be reflected by governments, which should encourage African norms

and standards in fighting corruption. Finally, efforts to improve ethics in the civil service should be linked to all the branches of government. In these efforts, she highlighted that Africa is not the only region concerned about ethics. The OECD recently adopted public sector ethics principles, showing that developed countries too face this concern.

Emerging Issues and Challenges

The following points were raised during the floor discussion which ensued:

- Ethics is a very important component of administrative reform and good governance programmes;
- Ethics, integrity, morality, and combatting corruption are issues to be included in schools and other training programmes at all national levels;
- All levels of the civil service, from the Head of State to the lowest level, must demonstrate ethical conduct;
- In inculcating ethical conduct, the personal conscience, family and social environment, and the fear of punishment should work together to shape the behaviour of civil servants;
- To enhance transparency, potential areas of conflicts-of-interest needs to be declared such as assets, remuneration and gifts;
- Civil society organizations such as the media, churches, labour unions, and others need to be empowered to monitor the behaviour of public officials; and
- Civil servants need to be paid a liveable wage to reduce temptations to abuse their offices for personal gain.

The Way Forward

The floor discussion clearly highlighted the need for concrete and practical measures to be identified and implemented to address the issues address above through:

- Strengthening the legislative framework;
- Training for the public sector;
- Involving and consulting the civil society organizations; and

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- Allocating and managing adequate resources to this end among other measures.