AFRICAN ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT (AAPAM)

ASSOCIATION AFRICAINE POUR L'ADMINISTRATION PUBLIQUE ET LE MANAGEMENT (AAAPM)

# Report of the 44th Roundtable Conference

## Theme: Agile and Resilient: Partnership and Digital Transformation for Citizen-Centric Service

## Hosted by the Kingdom of Eswatini

## 2nd – 5th December 2025

**AAPAM Partners**

1. *United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)*
2. *Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)*
3. *Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)*
4. *The International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS)*
5. *Eastern and Southern Africa Management Institute (ESAMI)*
6. *South African Association of Public Administration and Management (SAAPAM)*
7. *International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA)*
8. *African Management Development Institutes' Network (AMDIN)*
9. *Kenya School of Government*
10. *Africa Public Sector Human Resource Network (APS-HRMnet)*
11. *African International Policy Research Centre (AIPRC)*
12. *African Local Government Academy (ALGA) of UCLG-Africa*
13. *Kenya Airways*

**The African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM)**

**44th Roundtable Conference Report**

Agile and Resilient: Partnership and Digital Transformation for Citizen Centric Service

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## FOREWORD

The 44th AAPAM Roundtable Conference, held in the Kingdom of Eswatini from 2nd-5th December 2025, marked a significant milestone in Africa's collective efforts to strengthen public administration and governance. Convened at a time of complex and interlinked development challenges, including economic uncertainty, rapid technological change, climate pressures and growing citizen expectations, the conference provided a vital platform for policymakers, senior public servants, scholars, development partners, private sector actors and practitioners to engage in thoughtful and forward-looking dialogue on the future of public service delivery on the continent.

The conference re-affirmed the enduring relevance of the AAPAM Roundtable as a flagship forum for knowledge exchange, peer learning, and policy reflection. Participants engaged in candid discussions on how public administrations can remain responsive, adaptive, and resilient in the face of evolving governance demands. Emphasis was placed on the need for institutions that are not only efficient and accountable, but also ethical, innovative, and firmly anchored in citizen-centred values.

Deliberations throughout the conference underscored the central role of capable and professional public administrations in advancing inclusive development, strengthening institutional trust, and achieving sustainable growth. Through high-level plenary sessions, thematic break-out discussions, technical paper presentations, and interactive exchanges, participants shared country experiences, best practices, and evidence-based policy insights aimed at improving institutional performance and strengthening governance systems across Africa and global. Attention was given to the importance of strategic partnerships, digital transformation and leadership competencies in shaping a modern and agile public service.

The conference also highlighted the value of collaboration across sectors and borders. By bringing together diverse voices from across Africa and beyond, the roundtable created space for comparative learning and the exchange of solutions that are grounded in African realities while informed by global best practices. These engagements reinforced the need for continuous capacity development, innovation in public sector management, and sustained investment in human capital.

This conference report captures the richness of the discussions, the key outcomes, and the strategic recommendations that emerged from the roundtable. It reflects the collective wisdom of participants and presents practical guidance to governments, public institutions, and development partners committed to public sector transformation. It is our hope that the insights contained herein will inform policy reforms, support capacity-building initiatives, and contribute meaningfully to ongoing national, regional, and continental conversations on effective public administration and governance.

**Dr. John Nakabago**

AAPAM, President

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The successful convening of the 44th AAPAM Roundtable Conference was made possible through the collective commitment, collaboration, and goodwill of numerous institutions and individuals. The African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM) extends its profound appreciation to the government and people of the Kingdom of Eswatini for graciously hosting the 44th Roundtable Conference, we profoundly appreciate **His Majesty King Mswati III** for appointing his representative **Prince Simelane** to officially open the Roundtable conference. Moreover, the Kingdom of Eswatini extended all courtesies and privileges to delegates ensuring a seamless experience and enabling environment that facilitated meaningful engagement, learning, and dialogue among delegates from across Africa and beyond.

We particularly acknowledge the exemplary leadership and steadfast support of the Ministry of Public Service championed by the Secretary to the Cabinet **Mr. Victor Nxumalo** and the Principal Secretary **Mr. Mthunzi Shabangu** and their stellar NOC team whose dedication, coordination, and strategic oversight was pivotal to the effective planning, organization, and successful delivery of this flagship continental event.

AAPAM is deeply grateful to all Ministers, Heads of Public Service, senior government officials, and distinguished delegates who participated in the conference and chaired various sessions. Their active engagement, policy perspectives, and leadership enriched the discussions and reinforced the importance of high-level commitment in advancing public sector reform and effective service delivery across the Continent.

We further commend the keynote speakers, panellists, paper presenters, moderators, and rapporteurs for their insightful contributions and professional stewardship of the sessions. Their expertise, thoughtful analysis, and ability to stimulate constructive dialogue significantly shaped the quality of deliberations and the formulation of key outcomes and recommendations captured in this report.

To our esteemed delegates, we appreciate your participation and contribution at the conference, we further recognize the 31 governments who entrusted AAPAM with their public servants to build their capacity on administrative effectiveness, mindset change and empower them to drive the continental development agenda to actualization. The ultimate objective of the Roundtable remains to be knowledge sharing/ generation, peer learning, networking and cultural experience. It is our hope that the Roundtable conference equally met your expectations.

Our appreciation is also extended to AAPAM partners, collaborating institutions, and development partners for their continued support and shared commitment to strengthening public administration and governance in Africa. Their collaboration contributed meaningfully to the success and impact of the Conference.

Finally, AAPAM acknowledges with deep appreciation the dedication and tireless efforts of the AAPAM Executive Committee, Council and Secretariat. Their professionalism, teamwork, and commitment ensured the seamless coordination and smooth execution of the Conference.

To all who contributed in diverse ways to the success of the 44th AAPAM Roundtable Conference, we express our sincere gratitude and highest appreciation.

**Prof. George Scott**
AAPAM, Secretary General

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 44th Annual Roundtable Conference of the African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM) was successfully co-hosted by the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini and the AAPAM Secretariat from December 2nd -5th 2025 at the Esibayeni Lodge in Matsapha, Manzini, Eswatini. The conference convened 584 delegates representing 31 countries, including ministers, heads of civil services, and researchers. Held under the theme *"Agile Public Administration: Partnership and Digital Transformation for Citizen-Centric Service Delivery,"* the conference served as a strategic platform for knowledge exchange and peer learning to strengthen administrative systems across Africa.

Thematic discussions addressed critical governance dimensions, including mindset transformation, fiscal pressures from debt, and the potential of Artificial Intelligence to expand access to services. A ministerial panel emphasized the necessity of re-imagining public administration by shifting away from colonial models toward systems that reflect African contexts and aspirations. Furthermore, sessions on youth empowerment and mental health underscored the need for inclusive, human-centered support systems to enhance institutional resilience and unlock the continent's demographic dividend.

A significant highlight of the conference was the 16th Innovative Management Awards (IMA), which attracted 49 submissions from 12 countries. Notable merit award finalists included Zambia's Local Government Integrated Information System, Kenya's KARGOPAY, and Eswatini's Temanti Chatbot, all recognized for leveraging digital tools to improve governance. Additionally, **Prof. Solosh Pillay** received the AAPAM Gold Medal 2025 Award recognizing her outstanding contributions as the theory and practice of public administration.

The conference communiqué concluded with a series of strategic recommendations, calling on African governments to accelerate investments in digital infrastructure, foster ethical leadership, and promote participatory governance. Delegates expressed deep gratitude to His Majesty King Mswati III and the people of Eswatini for their outstanding hosting and the uniquely Swati hospitality. In anticipation of future engagements, the AAPAM community formally accepted, with humility, the generous invitation from the Kingdom of Lesotho to convene the 45th Roundtable Conference in Maseru. This continuum serves as a testament to the AAPAM's enduring commitment to continental solidarity and unity.

## ATTENDANCE AT THE CONFERENCE

The 44th Annual AAPAM Roundtable Conference brought together a diverse and distinguished group of 584 delegates representing 31 countries. Participation included high-level leadership such as Ministers, Heads of Public and Civil Services, Secretaries to Cabinet, and Permanent or Principal Secretaries. The assembly also featured local elected officials, senior government representatives, and leaders from Public Service Commissions and Management Development Institutes. Complementing government officials were representatives from development partners, statutory institutions, scholars, researchers, and the AAPAM Young Professionals. The broad geographic reach of the conference included the following:

1. Angola
2. Burundi
3. Benin
4. Botswana
5. Burkina Faso
6. Cameroon
7. Egypt
8. DRC
9. Eswatini
10. Ethiopia
11. France
12. The Gambia
13. Ghana
14. Kenya
15. Lesotho
16. Liberia
17. Malawi
18. Morocco
19. Mozambique
20. Namibia
21. Nigeria
22. Rwanda
23. Sierra Leone
24. Somalia
25. South Africa
26. Tanzania
27. Uganda
28. USA
29. Mauritius
30. Zambia
31. Zimbabwe