AFRICAN ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT (AAPAM)

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

Kingdom of Lesotho

Aide Memoire

45TH ANNUAL AAPAM ROUNDTABLE CONFERENCE

Theme: From Ambition to Impact: Reimagining Public Administration for the Realization of Agenda 2063 and the SDGs towards the Africa We Want



Venue: Manthabiseng Convention Centre, Maseru, Kingdom of Lesotho

Date: 8th – 11th December 2026

INTRODUCTION

1. The 44th Annual AAPAM Roundtable Conference, held in Manzini, Eswatini, marked a pivotal moment for public administration across the continent. That gathering forged a critical consensus among over 600 delegates: the era of traditional, siloed, and slow-moving bureaucracy must give way to a new paradigm defined by agile governance, digital transformation, and cross-sectoral partnerships.

2. Yet, as powerful as that consensus was, it remained largely diagnostic. The past year has demonstrated, with renewed urgency, that strategic agreement alone cannot bridge the widening chasm between continental aspirations and on-the-ground realities. From persistent debt distress and accelerating climate shocks to the breathtaking pace of digital disruption and the unmet expectations of a burgeoning youth population, the continent's polycrisis has deepened. The question is no longer what needs to be done, Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have already provided a clear and compelling vision of The Africa and the World We Want. The urgent, unanswered question is how to achieve measurable, scalable, and sustainable impact.

3. This question animates the 45th Roundtable Conference: closing the chronic gap between ambition and implementation. Despite decades of strategic frameworks, continental commitments, and development partnerships, the evidence of lagging progress is undeniable. As noted in the 2025 Africa Sustainable Development Report by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the continent faces multiple, mutually reinforcing crises that have consistently placed most African nations at the bottom of global SDG rankings. The gap is not one of vision; it is a gap of execution, institutional capacity, and governance agility.

4. The 45th AAPAM Roundtable Conference is designed to address precisely this gap. The purpose of this gathering is deliberate and urgent: to move decisively from ambition to impact. The task at hand is not merely to refine the vision—Agenda 2063 and the SDGs have already provided that eloquent articulation. Instead, this conference seeks to reimagine the very instrument through which that vision must be delivered: public administration itself. Delegates will gather to build a public administration that does not merely aspire to The Africa We Want, but actively, efficiently, and equitably delivers it.

BACKGROUND TO THE 45TH ROUNDTABLE CONFERENCE

5. The 44th Roundtable Conference, hosted in Manzini, Eswatini, catalysed reimagining public administration across the continent. Convening over 600 delegates—including ministers, senior public officials, academics, development partners, and civil society leaders—the conference succeeded in forging a collective diagnosis of the challenges afflicting public administration and a shared vision for its renewal.

6. Three major outcomes emerged from those deliberations. First, the 44th RTC solidified a consensus around citizen-centric service delivery as the ultimate lodestar for public administration reform. Delegates agreed that bureaucracy exists not for its own preservation but for the efficient, equitable, and dignified service of citizens. This principle represents a profound cultural shift away from administrative convenience toward user-centred design, feedback mechanisms, and responsive governance. Second, the conference identified digital transparency as an indispensable enabler of trust and efficiency. From open data platforms to digital public financial management and e-procurement systems, delegates recognised that technology, when deployed strategically, can radically reduce opportunities for corruption, enhance accountability, and streamline service delivery. Third, the 44th RTC elevated multi-stakeholder collaboration from a desirable complement to a core operational necessity. The era of government acting alone is over; delivering complex public goods in an age of polycrisis requires genuine partnerships with the private sector, civil society, academia, and development finance institutions.

CONTEXTUAL ORIENTATION

7. Yet, for all its success in aligning stakeholders around a common diagnostic and vision, the 44th RTC also surfaced a series of profound, unresolved questions. These questions, debated in breakout sessions and corridor conversations alike, point directly to the implementation gap that now demands urgent attention. They are the questions that keep public service leaders awake at night:

    a) *How to institutionalise agility?* Agility is a compelling principle, but how does a public administration, bound by civil service regulations, procurement codes, and political cycles, embed flexibility, rapid iteration, and adaptive problem-solving into its daily institutional practice without sacrificing accountability or due process? What do agile budgeting, agile policy-making, and agile service delivery look like in a Ministry of Finance or a local government authority?

    b) *How to finance transformation under debt distress?* Across the continent, fiscal space is shrinking. Debt service obligations consume an ever-larger share of national budgets, leaving little room for the very investments, in digital infrastructure, skills development, climate adaptation, and institutional reform, that transformation requires. How can African nations finance the future they want when the present is already over-leveraged? What innovative financing mechanisms, partnerships, and fiscal reallocations can unlock the necessary resources?

    c) *How to turn Africa's youth bulge into a demographic dividend?* Africa has the youngest population of any continent, a source of immense potential energy and creativity. Yet too many young people confront a landscape of unemployment, underemployment, and exclusion from decision-making. How can public administration move beyond tokenistic youth consultations to genuinely co-create policy, embed youth leadership, and channel digital fluency and entrepreneurial drive

into solving public challenges? How does Africa prevent the demographic bulge from becoming a crisis of frustrated aspirations?

d) *How to protect public servant capacity and well-being?* The men and women who staff Africa's public administrations are being asked to do more with less, to navigate unprecedented complexity, and to lead transformations that often lack adequate resources or political support. Burnout, mental health challenges, and demotivation are real and growing threats. How can public administration attend to its own human foundation? What strategies, policies, and cultures are needed to sustain the well-being, resilience, and innovative capacity of the public servants upon whom all reform ultimately depends?

8. These unresolved questions are not peripheral; they are central. They represent the frontier where strategic consensus meets operational reality, and the questions form the bedrock upon which the 45th Roundtable Conference is built. It is precisely because these questions remain unanswered that the 45th RTC is conceived not as another high-level dialogue, but as the essential execution workshop for African public administration. The aim is no longer to debate since the vision of *The Africa We Want* is already clear. The objective is to co-create the *how*. The 45th RTC is designed as a practical, action-oriented, and solution-focused convening where the strategic ambition of the 44th conference is translated into actionable frameworks, institutional designs, partnership models, and accountability mechanisms. Delegates gather not to refine the diagnosis, but to build the cure. Delegates purpose to move from analysis to architecture, from principles to practice, from ambition to impact. This is the objective of the 45th Roundtable Conference, and it is work that cannot wait.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE THEME AND SUB-THEMES FOR THE 45TH RTC

9. The theme of the 45th Roundtable Conference, "From Ambition to Impact: Reimagining Public Administration for the Realization of Agenda 2063 and the SDGs towards the Africa We Want," responds directly to the central challenge identified in the Introduction and Background: the chronic gap between continental aspirations and measurable outcomes. As documented in the 2025 Africa Sustainable Development Report, while the vision of Agenda 2063 and the SDGs remains compelling, the implementation reality tells a different story. Nordic nations consistently lead global SDG rankings; most African countries occupy the bottom tiers. This is not a failure of vision—it is a failure of execution. The theme, therefore, embraces the difficult work of operationalisation, asking not what Africa wants, but how to deliver it, and what kind of public administration can transform ambition into tangible impact.

10. At the heart of this theme lies a fundamental recognition: reimagining public administration is the central lever for achieving Agenda 2063 and the SDGs. No amount of well-crafted policy, international development finance, or civil society advocacy can substitute for a public administration that is fit for purpose. The conference identifies three interconnected priorities as essential to this reimagining. First, fiscal resilience—

turning debt burdens from constraints into opportunities by designing innovative financing mechanisms, debt-for-development swaps, and blended finance models that unlock sustainable investment. Second, innovation—moving beyond episodic pilots to systematically rethink institutional cultures, processes, and tools, embedding policy labs, behavioural insights, regulatory sandboxes, and agile methodologies into daily governance. Third, youth digital agency—shifting from tokenistic consultation to genuine co-creation, empowering young people as active architects of policy, digital leaders, and entrepreneurial problem-solvers.

11. These three priorities are not discrete tracks but mutually reinforcing dimensions of a single, holistic transformation. The six sub-themes of the conference are deliberately designed to break down this vision into actionable operational components, providing concrete pathways for delegates to move from diagnosis to design. Together, they translate the overarching theme into a structured, stakeholder-validated agenda, one not for further deliberation but for action.

12. The selection of fiscal resilience, innovation, and youth digital agency as the three pillars of the 45th Roundtable Conference does not diminish the critical importance of other sectors such as health, education, or agriculture. Rather, it reflects a strategic recognition that these three pillars function as foundational enablers across all development sectors. Without fiscal resilience, health systems cannot be adequately financed, nor can essential medicines be procured or healthcare workers compensated. Without innovation, health service delivery remains trapped in outdated bureaucratic processes, unable to leverage digital tools for disease surveillance, supply chain management, or telemedicine. Without a youth digital agency, the continent risks losing the energy, creativity, and technological fluency of the generation that will inherit and sustain health systems, among other public services. In essence, fiscal resilience, innovation, and youth digital agency are not sectoral priorities but horizontal enablers: they are the underlying conditions that determine whether any sector, including health, can deliver on its commitments under Agenda 2063 and the SDGs. The conference therefore prioritises these pillars precisely because strengthening them will yield multiplicative benefits across all domains of public administration and sustainable development.

CONFERENCE SUB-THEMES

13. Delegates, presenters, and contributors are invited to engage with the following six sub-themes, which collectively constitute the intellectual architecture of the 45th Roundtable Conference.
    a) **Modernising African Public Service for Improved Service Delivery:** This sub-theme examines strategies to transform bureaucratic processes, leverage digital tools, streamline service workflows, and adopt agile methodologies that reduce wait times, eliminate corruption touchpoints, and ensure citizens receive efficient, dignified, and responsive public services. Contributors are invited to focus on practical case studies,

reform frameworks, and digital solutions that demonstrate measurable improvements in service accessibility, speed, and citizen satisfaction within specific African public sector contexts. Where possible, contributors are requested to include baseline metrics and before/after data to substantiate claimed improvements and enable comparative analysis across different reform approaches.

b) **Strengthening Institutional Integrity and Accountability:** This sub-theme addresses endemic corruption through robust oversight mechanisms, transparent procurement systems, whistleblower protections, independent audit frameworks, and citizen-driven accountability platforms that rebuild trust and ensure public resources serve intended purposes. Contributors are encouraged to present evidence-based accountability models, institutional reforms, or technological innovations that have successfully reduced corruption risks and strengthened public trust in governance institutions across the continent. Submissions are encouraged to include practical tools such as procurement templates, draft whistleblower policy language, and measurable anti-corruption key performance indicators (KPIs) that can be adapted and adopted by public institutions across different national contexts.
c) **Re-imagining Africa's Education System for Youth Inclusivity and Participation in the Economy and Youth-Led Innovation:** This sub-theme proposes fundamental reforms to curricula, pedagogy, and assessment that equip young Africans with relevant digital, entrepreneurial, and critical thinking skills, while creating pathways from education to employment and fostering ecosystems where youth-led innovation can thrive. Contributors should focus on scalable education innovations, public-private partnerships in skills development, or policy frameworks that bridge the gap between formal education systems and the dynamic demands of Africa's digital and green economies.
d) **Localising the SDGs: From Continental Policy to Community Impact**: This sub-theme develops frameworks to translate high-level SDG commitments into measurable, context-sensitive action at sub-national levels, strengthening local government capacity, engaging community actors, and ensuring that continental ambitions reach the citizens they are meant to serve. Contributors are invited to share mechanisms, tools, or governance models that effectively cascade SDG targets to local governments, integrate community participation into planning and budgeting, and track grassroots-level outcomes against national and continental goals.
e) **Financing for Development: Innovative Resource Mobilisation**: This sub-theme explores creative financing mechanisms, including blended finance, diaspora bonds, green bonds, debt-for-development swaps, public-private partnerships, and domestic resource mobilisation strategies that unlock capital for sustainable development despite fiscal constraints. Contributors should focus on actionable financing models, transaction structures, or policy enablers that have successfully mobilised resources for public goods, with particular attention to risk-sharing arrangements, return on investment, and scalability across different African national contexts.
f) **Restoring the Social Contract: The Role of Government in Restoring Citizen Trust and Confidence:** This sub-theme examines the causes of eroded trust,

corruption, inequality, exclusion, unresponsive services, and proposes governance reforms, participatory mechanisms, empathetic leadership models, and accountability innovations that rebuild the reciprocal relationship between citizens and the state. Contributors are encouraged to present frameworks, institutional designs, or participatory governance experiments that demonstrate how governments can actively listen, respond, and co-deliver solutions with citizens, thereby restoring legitimacy and fostering shared responsibility for development outcomes.

6. OBJECTIVES OF THE CONFERENCE

The primary objective of the 45th Roundtable Conference is to serve as a high-level forum where Ministers, senior officials, academia, practitioners, development partners, and NGOs can collaboratively define and evaluate the metrics needed to drive the comprehensive transformation of African public administration. The conference aims to move from conceptual agreement to the development of implementable frameworks to guide African public administrations through the "Great Transition." The specific objectives are to:

a) **Co-create an Operational Blueprint for Transformation:** Move beyond theoretical consensus to forge a practical, stakeholder-validated "blueprint" outlining the core strategies, institutional changes, and leadership actions required to build a resilient and innovative public administration.
b) **Catalyse Actionable Models for Resilient Financing:** Identify, refine, and promote commitment to innovative partnership and financing models, including next-generation Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), blended finance, and climate-linked fiscal instruments, that can unlock investment for sustainable infrastructure and service delivery within current fiscal constraints.
c) **Establish Frameworks for Youth Co-Creation and Leadership:** Develop concrete protocols and institutional mechanisms to embed meaningful youth engagement, moving from consultation to active co-creation in policy formulation, digital governance, and public innovation initiatives.
d) **Develop Integrated Policy Tools for the Dual Crisis:** Produce integrated policy frameworks and decision-support tools that enable governments to simultaneously address debt sustainability and climate resilience, turning the interconnected debt-climate crisis into an opportunity for green, inclusive growth.
e) **Advance New Metrics for Institutional Health and Accountability:** Launch a call for, and critically examine, new metrics and indicators to measure public institutional health, encompassing service delivery efficiency, public servant well-being, and partnership accountability, as critical benchmarks for SDG acceleration.
f) **A Platform to Showcase and Celebrate Africa's Innovation:** To provide a dedicated forum for highlighting and celebrating groundbreaking, home-grown innovations in public service delivery from across the continent, inspiring replication and scaling of successful models.

7. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Leveraging the collective expertise at the 45th RTC, the following outcomes are expected to provide a practical roadmap for re-engineering African public administration to navigate fiscal constraints and meet the aspirations of the SDGs as well as Agenda 2063, the Africa We Want:

a) *The Maseru Communique and Conference report that embodies a "Blueprint for a Resilient Public Administration*": A living document, synthesised from conference deliberations, outlining actionable policy recommendations, institutional reform pathways, and governance innovations required to operationalise the conference theme across different national contexts.
b) *A Compendium of Innovative Partnership Models*: A curated digital repository of case studies, contract frameworks, and evaluation reports on successful and emerging models for Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), blended finance, and multi-stakeholder alliances that effectively deliver public value in complex fiscal environments.
c) *A Framework for Youth Co-Creation in Governance*: A practical set of proposed standards, protocols, and institutional templates designed to guide national and local governments in establishing structured, meaningful mechanisms for youth engagement in policy development, budgeting, and digital economy strategies.
d) *A Strengthened Pan-African Practitioner Network:* An expanded and activated community of practice among senior officials, technical experts, academia, and innovators working at the intersection of fiscal policy, climate action, and digital governance, facilitated through a dedicated platform for continued knowledge exchange and collaboration.
e) *Winners of the AAPAM Innovation Management Awards:* The selection, recognition, and public celebration of winners from the annual AAPAM Innovation Management Awards, showcasing best-in-class, home-grown solutions in public service delivery to inspire cross-continental learning and scaling.

8. Case study development guide

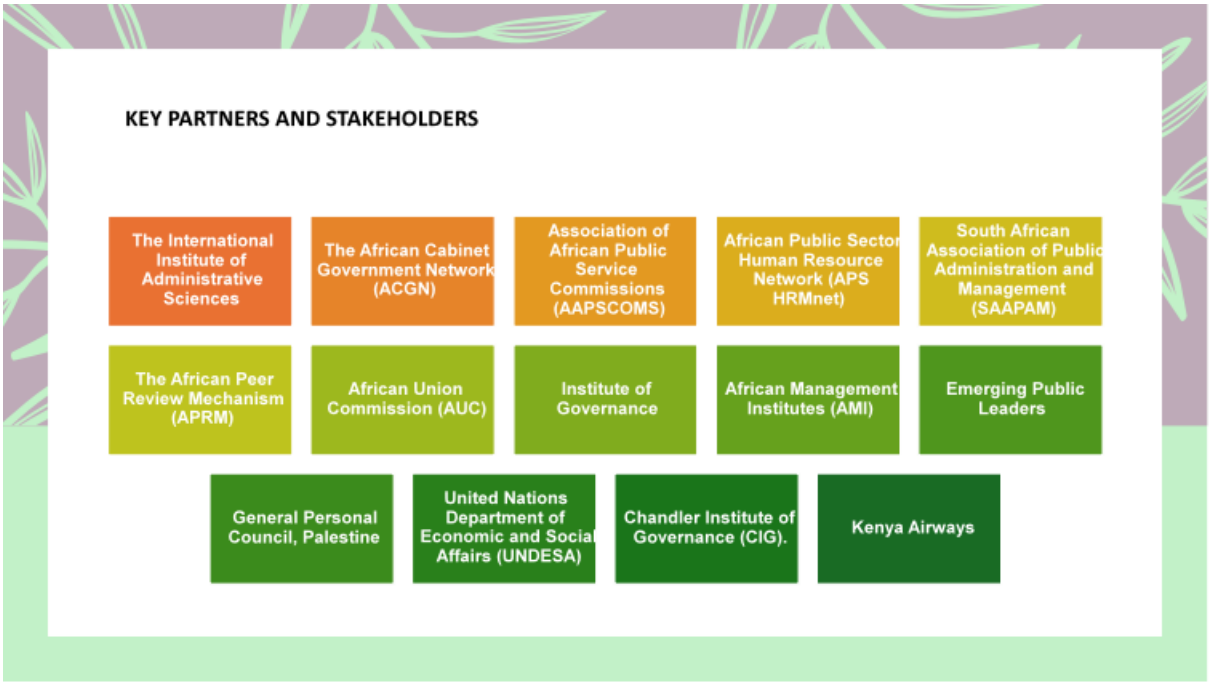
To ground the conference's ambitious themes in practical reality, we invite contributors to submit case studies that provide concrete evidence, lessons, and models from across Africa. Unlike a single focus area, this year's guide is designed to generate insights that cut across all six sub-themes, demonstrating their interdependence in practice. We seek compelling narratives that show how integrated action in one domain catalyses progress in others.

Contributors should frame their case studies around one primary sub-theme and are strongly encouraged to illustrate its connections to at least one other sub-theme. Case studies should clearly describe the context, the innovative approach or intervention, the implementation process, and, most critically, the demonstrated outcomes and lessons learned. Evidence of impact, whether qualitative or quantitative, is highly valued.

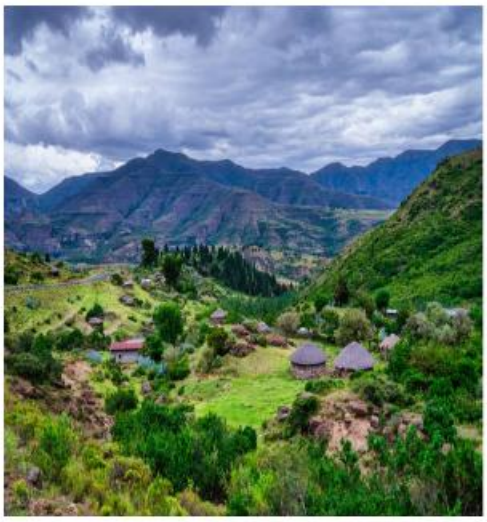
THE LOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE 45TH ROUNDTABLE CONFERENCE

1. The Roundtable conference is designed and anchored on the below framework:





Conference Delegates



Roundtable attendees represent diverse leadership across African governance:

- **Government Officials**
  - Ministers from national, provincial, local levels
- **Sector Leaders**
  - Senior representatives from public and private organizations
- **International Partners**
  - Development agencies, multilateral organizations, global experts
- **Community Voices**
  - Civil society leaders, academics, young professionals

Paper Submission Timeline : 45th AAPAM RTC (Lesotho)

Abstract

Due by 15th June 2026

Draft Paper

Due by 15th August 2026

Full Paper

Due by 15th October 2026





WORKING LANGUAGES

The working languages shall be

1. ENGLISH,
2. FRENCH, and
3. ARABIC.

REGISTRATION AND PARTICIPATION FEES

1. All participants are expected to register online:

http://www.aapam.org/conferences-and-events/event-calendar#id=109&cid=1076&wid=701 and pay registration fees at the following rates:

(a) Participants from the host country - USD $500

(b) Others / International - USD $600

(c) Accompanying Persons (spouses of participants) - USD$300

(d) Students - USD $200

2. It is recommended that delegates make payments in advance (preferably 3 weeks before the conference date), with the option to utilize bank transfer to the AAPAM Account, the details of which are provided below.



Banking Details

African Assoc for Public Admin Management
Account No. 1103297694
KCB BANK KENYA LTD
Intermediary Bank For USD: Citibank/
Bankers Trust
Bank Code: 01
Branch Code: 175

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REFERENCE MATERIAL

The discourse of the 45th Roundtable Conference is informed by a robust body of contemporary research, strategic frameworks, and foundational reports. This curated bibliography provides essential background and is categorised to align with the conference's integrated themes.

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