United Nations | Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Africa Regional Forum on Governance Innovation

Advancing Agile, Inclusive and People-Centered Services for All

21-23 June 2025
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Within the framework of the Continental Celebration of the **2025 African Public Service Day**

Concept Note

About the Event

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG), is organizing a Regional Forum on Public Service Innovation within the framework of the Continental Celebration of the 2025 African Public Service Day entitled "Enhancing the Agility and Resilience of Public Institutions to Achieve Equitable Governance and Rapidly Address Historical Service Delivery Gaps". The Africa Public Service Day is being organized by the African Union and the Ministry of Public Service and Human Resource Development of Ethiopia.

The Regional Forum will be held from **21 to 23 June 2025** at the African Union's Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The forum is directed to Ministers, Senior Public Officers at the level of Permanent Secretaries, Directors, Director Generals, Heads of Agencies and Authorities and Chairman of Boards/Board of Directors in charge of public policy implementation.

The forum is being organized within the framework of the project on "Innovating Public Service Delivery to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the Transfer and Adaptation of Omnichannel Approaches", which is being implemented by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, through its Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government, thanks to the generous contribution of the Government of Azerbaijan. The project aims to enhance the capacities of government officials in selected countries of Africa, Asia as well as Latin America and the Caribbean to promote effective and inclusive public service delivery, leaving no one behind. It will do so by enhancing their capacities to promote innovation and design action plans for omnichannel service delivery systems (online, brick-and-mortar, mobile and other channels), through one-stop-shop (OSS) mechanisms.

Objective

The overall objective of the Regional Forum is to provide a platform to explore new approaches to governance innovation and learn about innovative practices in public service delivery to strengthen governments' capacities to advance the implementation of the Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with a focus on SDG16 on strong institutions, peace and justice.

Agenda 2063 is Africa's blueprint and master plan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future. The 2030 Agenda highlights the need to build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels, in line with Goal 16. General Assembly resolution 60/34 of 17 March 2006 emphasized "the need to improve the efficiency, transparency and accountability of public administration".

Thematic Focus

The focus of the Africa Regional Forum will be on governance innovation and the delivery of agile, inclusive and people-centred services to all. Without effective, accountable, and inclusive public service delivery, there will be little progress in realizing the SDGs. Indeed, out of the 17 SDGs, all Goals have content related to public service delivery. Among 169 SDG targets there are 59 (35%) related to public service delivery. Among 230 indicators, 66 of them (29%) require some specific public service to be delivered by the public sector. In a global Survey administered as part of the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations, people from all regions of the world were asked to indicate their top priority. "The immediate priority of most respondents everywhere is improved access to basic services."

While public institutions have a lead role in implementing the SDGs through the policies they make and public services they deliver, several developing countries are not well equipped to effectively deliver public services that leave no one behind. The 2030 Agenda calls for an ambitious integrated framework, which requires whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches, including for public service delivery. The United Nations Secretary General, António Guterres, has emphasized in "Our Common Agenda" that building trust in government is one of the key actions to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs, with a special focus on improving people's experiences with public institutions and basic services.

In its seventeenth session in 2018, the Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) adopted 11 principles of effective governance. The principles, endorsed by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2018/12, highlight the need for pragmatic and ongoing improvements in national and local governance capabilities to achieve the Sustainable Development. CEPA has developed a wide range of commonly used strategies for operationalization of the principles. One of the principles is on competence which highlights that to perform their functions effectively, institutions are to have sufficient expertise, resources, and tools to deal adequately with the mandates under their authority. Commonly used strategies to

operationalize this principle include the promotion of a professional public sector workforce, strategic human resources management, leadership development and training of civil servants, performance management, results-based management, financial management and control, efficient and fair revenue administration. Changing mindsets is essential for transformational change in the public sector and better services for all.

To provide effective, accountable, and inclusive public services, many countries around the world are delivering services through citizen centric omnichannel service delivery systems. These systems are a mechanism, which may be a stationary or a mobile service point, where citizens and/or businesses can access all relevant information relating to all public services through a "single front door". They can conduct all transactions without the necessity of visiting multiple public offices multiple times. This can also be a vehicle for providing inclusive public service delivery to vulnerable groups. People living in sparsely populated and/or far-flung areas usually belong to disadvantaged groups, who cannot avail services offered by the brick-and-mortar or web-based OSSs. When properly designed and implemented, omnichannel service delivery systems, through OSS, add public value by : a) providing ways to increase citizen participation and awareness; b) improving regulatory delivery, c) increasing accountability; d) reducing corruption; e) enhancing social inclusion; f) decreasing fragmentation in public service delivery, thereby improving people's satisfaction with public service delivery; g) increasing citizens' trust in government; h) enhancing national competitiveness, thus contributing to accelerating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Structure

The forum will feature presentations by experts, discussions on innovative practices for peer-to-peer learning and hands-on activities for action planning. It will be conducted in English with simultaneous interpretation in French.
Panel discussions and presentations at the meeting will be structured as follows:

- Roundtable Discussion on *Transforming Public Service Delivery for a Sustainable Future*
- Session 1 on New Trends in Public Service Delivery
- Session 2 on Building blocks of omni channel service delivery
- Session 3 on Public Service Delivery Gap Assessment
- Session 4 on Identifying Priorities for Effective and Inclusive Service Delivery

- Session 5 on Next Steps and Timeline

Expected Outcomes

By the end of the forum, participants will have:

- Enhanced understanding and knowledge of what omnichannel service delivery systems are, and how they can contribute to the advancement of the SDGs through the presentation of innovative practices.
- Improved awareness of the mindsets required to ensure more effective, inclusive, and innovative service delivery.
- Conducted and completed a gap analysis in delivering effective and inclusive services.
- Developed strategies, roadmaps, and action plans to implement and/or strengthen innovative omnichannel systems for more effective and inclusive service delivery.

It is anticipated that actionable and innovative governance strategies, which can be applied to participants' specific contexts, will be discussed. Through group discussions and activities, the forum is also expected to strengthen collaboration among public sector leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders, which is key to addressing future challenges.