

Enhancing Professionalization of Human Resource Management in the Public Sector in Africa: The Africa Public Sector Human Resource Managers' Network (APS-HRMnet)



1. Background

In the Communiqué issued at the end of its 30th Roundtable Conference held in Accra, Ghana, from 6 to 10 October 2008, the African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM) endorsed the efforts to form the Africa Public Sector Human Resource Managers' Network (APS-HRMnet) in the following terms: “There is need to modernize and professionalize the human resource function in public service organizations. In that regard, African public services must position the human resource management function by recruiting competent and professional HR practitioners, providing training and development opportunities and according them a supportive work environment. To this effect, the participants endorsed the initiative being taken to establish an Africa public sector human Resource Managers' Network and urged African governments to accord it the required support. It was noted that the Government of Tanzania has already started working with United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) to organize capacity building training in human resource development in the public sector. All African Governments are urged to send human resource managers for this training”.

2. The APS-HRMnet Launched in Arusha, Tanzania

During the “Workshop on Capacity Building for Human Resource Development Policy and Strategy in the Public Service in Africa” held in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, from 23 to 27 February 2009, the founding documents of the APS-HRMnet were discussed and adopted, its Executive Council elected, an interim Executive Secretary appointed and two Ministers responsible for Public Service accepted to be its Matrons. The following is the leadership of the APS-HRMnet.



Mr. George Yambesi, President of the APS-HRMnet,
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- **Matrons:** Hon. Ms. Hawa Ghasia Minister of Public Service of the United Republic of Tanzania and Ms. Prisca Sezi Mbaguta, Minister of State, Ministry of Public Service of the Republic of Uganda
- **President:** Mr. George D. Yambesi, Permanent Secretary, Public Service Management President's Office, Tanzania
- **Deputy President:** Ms. Odette Ramsingh, Director general of the Public Service Commission of South Africa
- **Vice-President for Southern Africa:** Ms. Martha Mbombo, Undersecretary Department of Public Service Management, Office of the Prime Minister, Namibia
- **Vice-President for East Africa:** Ms. Florence N. Wachira, Director Recruitment and Selection, Public Service Commission of Kenya
- **Vice-President for West Africa:** Mr. Amidou Adamou, Directeur de Cabinet du Ministre de la Reforme Administrative et Institutionnelle, Benin
- Vice-President for North Africa: Vacant
- **Interim Executive Secretary:** Ms. Adah Kabarokole Muwanga, Director of Human Resource Management, Ministry of Public Service, Uganda



The Chairperson of the 6th Pan African Conference of Ministers of Public Service Hon. Dalmas Anyango Otieno, Minister of State for Public Service of Kenya (in the middle) with the two Matrons of the APS-HRMnet: Hon. Ms. Prisca Sezi Mbaguta Minister of State, Public Service of Uganda on the right), and Hon. Ms. Hawa Ghasia, Minister of Public Service of the United Republic of Tanzania (on the left).

The successful workshop during which the APS-HRMnet was formally launched was financially sponsored by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the United Nations Development Program, the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania, and the various African governments who sponsored human resource managers to participate in the workshop. It was officially opened by the Vice President of Tanzania, Honourable Ali Mohammed Shein, and attended by five Ministers including the Chairperson of the Pan African Conference of Ministers of Public Service. In all 137 participants from 22 countries attended the workshop and constituted the founding members of the APS-HRMnet to adopt its founding

documents and elect its executive. A number of organisations concerned with human resource management and development attended the workshop. They included the African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM) represented by its Secretary General who represented its President, the Africa Management Development Institutes Network (AMDIN), the International Public Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the United Nations Development program (UNDP). AAPAM offered to host the Secretariat of the APS-HRMnet.



Members of the Executive Council of the APS-HRMnet in Arusha after the inaugural meeting of the Council: In the middle seated is the President Mr. George Yambesi. Behind him is the Vice President Mr, Amidou Adamou for West Africa and Ms. Adah Muwanga the Executive Secretary. Ms. Florence Wachira the Vice president for East Africa is seated on his left and the Vice president for South Africa, Ms. Martha Mbombo is seated on his right.



Ms. Odette Ramsingh, Deputy President of the APS-HRMnet and a Member of the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA)

This communiqué gives the rationale of the APS-HRMnet, the path that was followed to galvanize support for its establishment, its objectives, activities, structure, membership and resources.

3. Rationale

The quality of human resources is critical to the development of any country. Whether it is in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals as agreed during the United Nations Millennium Summit, or other intergovernmental commitments such as the Plan of Action for Sustainable Development as set at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, or regional commitments such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the various development strategies formulated at the country level, it is imperative that the translation of such aspirations into tangible results be placed in the hands of capable human resources. Global, regional

and national commitments to sustainable development and poverty reduction need human capacities in the public sector to transform these commitments into results. The knowledge, know-how and skills, networks and attitudes of personnel in the public sector are at the heart of the performance of countries because it is through them and by them that services are planned and delivered, critical innovations conceived and realized and needed reforms carried out. It is believed that the financial and economic crisis and all the other crises Africa faces will not be adequately addressed without capable human resource to search for and implement appropriate remedies.

Therefore, public sector human resource managers occupy a strategic position in the development of a country. However, in many African countries, it has been found out that this strategic position is not recognized in the formulation of strategies and human resource managers in the public sector may not be professionally tuned to the critical role they should play. “While many governments have professional, and sometimes very prestigious, cadres or corps in some areas, with members who include graduates of elite academies.....the human resource management function is commonly discharged by generalist administrators, often coming under an administrative cadre, corps or similar structures, playing a restricted, bureaucratic and reactive role, confined by and large to routine decisions about staff entitlement to pay increments and the like, very many of which could be “read” off the administrative regulations governing staff behavior, with little or no real input into strategic decisions about staff management, let alone decisions on how to achieve the overall core objectives of government”¹

Challenges facing African countries are associated with inadequate capacity for managing the human resources. Clearly, for this situation to change there is need to adopt a model of the human resource management (HRM) function which will best enable governments to manage their staff so as to achieve their key objectives. Such a model will enable HR managers to play the roles of:

- Strategy expert
- Work organization expert,
- Employee champion, and
- Agent of continuous transformation as adviser on change management.

To achieve these ideals, the sharing of knowledge and insights amongst African public sector human resource management professionals is regarded as imperative. However, there has been a lack of a continental network dedicated to human resource management. This gives the rationale for establishing the Africa Public Sector Human Resource Managers’ Network (APS-HRMnet).

4. The path of establishing the APS-HRMnet

4.1. Inspiration from Cape Town:

The International Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR) held a historic International Symposium in Cape Town South Africa during the week of 17th April 2007. Among the participants were representatives of African countries including South Africa, Swaziland, Uganda, Lesotho, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, Malawi, and Mauritius. Seizing the historic moment, participants from these countries held a small side meeting during which the idea of establishing the Africa Public Sector Human Resource Managers’ Network (APS-HRMnet) was born. In addition to the representatives from the African countries, the side meeting was attended by: Mr. Kingston Rhodes, the Chairman of the International Civil Service Commission, Mr. John Lavelle of the World Bank, and Dr. John-Mary Kauzya of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs as well as Mr. Neil Reichenberg and Mr. Jackson of the IPMA-HR.

¹ See United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Unlocking the Human Potential for Public Sector Performance: World Public Sector Report 2005: (United nations, New York, www.unpan.org)

The participants from African countries observed that their participation in the symposium was an eye opener to the need for professionalizing human resource management in the public sector in Africa and networking for purposes of enhancing the capacity of human resource management in the public sector. They expressed congratulations to the Public Service Commission of South Africa for having organized and hosted a very successful Symposium, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) for having funded their participation, and the IPMA-HR for having accepted to hold its international symposium and conference for the first time in Africa.

It was then proposed that the participants from African countries gathered in Cape Town be a nucleus to form an international network of human resource managers in the public sector in Africa to mobilize, coordinate and support the growth and strengthening of the capacity of human resource managers in the public sector in Africa. The idea was well received and discussions were held on how to take the first steps to move forward to nurture and implement the formation of the network. It was proposed that there be a smaller group of seven people to work and concretize the proposal of forming the network especially in preparing background documents that would help to shape the thinking further. The background documents would be shared first among the members of the smaller group and then later shared with the rest of the participants in the Cape Town meeting. Participants were invited to volunteer to be part of the working group and the following volunteered: Mr. Mpendulo Mazibuko, Principal Human Resources Officer from Ministry of Public Service and information of Swaziland; Ms. Odette Ramsingh the Director General of the Public Service Commission of South Africa²; Ms. Adah Kabarokole Muwanga, Director Human Resource Management, Ministry of Public Service of Uganda; Ms. Jennifer Karimi Njiru, from the Public Service Commission of Kenya³; Ms. Nonurse July Ledimo, Human Resources Manager, Cabinet Office, of the Kingdom of Lesotho; Ms. Thecla Shangali, Secretary to the Public Service Commission of Tanzania⁴; Ms. Angelina Ungele, AAPAM Young Professional at Mzumbe University Faculty of Public Administration and Human Resource Management, Tanzania; and Ms. Rose Shanice Chowawa Maleta, Human Resource Development Officer, Department of Human Resources Management and Development, Malawi. Ms. Odette Ramsingh was requested to chair the group and Mr. Mazibuko and Ms. Muwanga volunteered to prepare the first draft of the background document.

The Working Group on Establishing the APS-HRMnet later expanded and comprised of: **Ms. Odette Ramsingh**, Director General, Public Service Commission, South Africa; **Mrs. Thecla Shangali**, Secretary Public Service Commission, Tanzania; **Ms. Adah Kabarokole Muwanga**, Director Human Resource Management, Ministry of Public Service, Uganda; **Mr. Mpendulo Mazibuko**, Principal Human Resource Officer, Ministry of Public Service and Information, Swaziland; **Ms. Nonurse July Ledimo**, Director Human Resources, Prime Minister's Office, Kingdom of Lesotho; **Ms. Jennifer Karimi Njiru**, Councillor, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kenya; **Ms. Rose Shanice Chowawa Maleta**, Human Resource Development Officer, Department of Human Resources Management and Development, Malawi; **Ms. Angelina Ungele**, AAPAM Young professional, Mzumbe University, Tanzania; **Mr. Admill H Simpson**, Deputy Director General Public Service Commission, South Africa; **Mr. Donald S Ndagula**, Deputy Secretary Public Service Commission, Tanzania, **Mr. Tesfamichael Tekle Degaga**, Head Organization and Position Classification, Federal Civil Service Agency, Ethiopia; **Mr. John-Mary Kauzya**, Chief of Governance and Public Administration Branch, UNDESA; and **Prof. Yolamu Barongo**, Secretary General, of the African Association for Public

² Mrs. Odette Ramsingh has since ceased to be the Director General of the Public Service Commission of South Africa. It is however noteworthy that she is currently a Member of the United Nations Committee on Public Administration (CEPA).

³ Ms. Jennifer Karimi Njiru is currently a Foreign Service officer in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kenya

⁴ Ms. Thecla Shangali has since retired for the Public Service of Tanzania

Administration and Management (AAPAM). Thus, the Working Group of the APS-HRMnet increased in composition from 7 to 13 Members. The Group has been administratively supported by Ms. Almaz Atnafu Woldekidane, Senior Governance and Public Administration officer of UNDESA

4.2. Encouragement from Mbabane

The idea of establishing the Africa Public Sector Human Resource Managers' Network and professionalising human resource management in the public sector in Africa was presented and discussed extensively during the 29th AAPAM Roundtable Conference which took place in Mbabane, Swaziland, from 3 to 7 September 2007. The AAPAM Roundtable conference constituted a bigger Working Group to discuss the problems of professionalising human resource management in the public sector in Africa. The Group was composed of 30 members from ten countries and Dr. John-Mary Kauzya a representative of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

The Conference Working Group in Mbabane underscored the need for strengthening professional capacities for human resource management in the public sector in Africa and considered it critical that the initiative of professionalising human resource management in the public sector in Africa be given serious attention because:

- Professional human resource management is a critical component of strategic public service delivery given their understanding of human resources and what makes them productive.
- The value of professional human resource management is either misunderstood or not appreciated within most bureaucratic structures
- Human resource management experts are very few or non-existent not positioned strategically and in most cases marginalised from strategic decision-making structures.
- There is a need to formulate, and advise on best practices in designing human resource policies and strategies
- Human resource policies and strategies have to be geared towards the effective utilisation of resources towards bringing about change that adds value to the bottom-line of public service delivery
- Professional human resource management has to be premised on competence and ethics and be supported by standards, codes and legislation
- Like other professions, human resource management professionals need to develop their capacity through their home-grown networks and institutes.
- Reputable human resource management networks, associations and institutes are critical in developing and professionalising human resource management.

Further emphasizing the need for professionalizing the management of human resources in Africa, the Conference Working Group in Mbabane made the following observations on the African context in relation to human resource management in the public sector:

- Some ministries still operate in the personnel administration paradigm as opposed to the human resource management paradigm
- Consequently some ministries and countries relegate human resource issues and challenges to administrative/clerk levels while others position human resource management at strategic/director levels.

- Some countries have legislation for the human resource management profession that stipulates: minimum qualifications, accreditation, human resource management training courses, certification, human resource management practitioners based on career paths, codified human resource management ethics, continuous certified professional development, etc.
- Some employers insist on statutory and professional requirements for human resource managers
- Some executive managers have negative attitudes towards human resource management practitioners
- Some bureaucracies have rigid rules that frustrate human resource management innovation
- There are no regulatory mechanisms for human resource management variables
- Some ministries lack documented human resource management and development policies and strategies
- In such contexts some ministries still depend on external human resource management consultants

The Conference Working Group confirmed that the establishment of the Africa Public Sector Human Resource Manager's Network would contribute in no small measure to the promotion of the development of sound human resource management capacity throughout the African continent. The primary objective of the establishment of such a network would be to facilitate the sharing of knowledge, information, best practices, and capacity building amongst African public sector human resource management professionals

The Conference Working Group encouraged the initial Group that was formed in Cape Town to continue working on the establishment of the APS-HRMnet and presented its conclusions and recommendations in a plenary session of the AAPAM Roundtable Conference which were accepted. The Communiqué issued by the AAPAM Roundtable Conference reaffirmed the support for the initiative of forming APS-HRMnet in the following terms: "The Conference noted that the human resource management functions continued to be taken as clerical/operational functions in the public services. This tends to downplay the critical strategic role of human resources in organizational performance. There is need for countries to accord this function a higher status and develop some specific training for the cadres responsible for this function. In that regard, the Conference commended the efforts to launch an initiative for strengthening and professionalizing the management of the human resource function in the public sector in Africa. This initiative should be encouraged and supported as a key component or a network operating under the auspices of AAPAM". It was recommended that the initial efforts should be put into creating a strong Africa Public Sector Human Resource Managers' Network (APS-HRMnet) which may then later be turned into an Association if need be. The Group further requested UNDESA to continue supporting the initial nurturing of the Network in collaboration with AAPAM as part of its support for capacity building of the public service in Africa.

4.3. Further encouragement from Kampala

Following the encouraging response and recommendation from the Mbabane AAPAM Roundtable Conference, the Working Group met at a UNDESA sponsored workshop; 'Capacity Building Workshop for Human Resource Management in Africa: Professionalizing Human Resource Management in the Public Service' which was held during the "Workshop for Enhancing the

Performance of African Public Service Commissions and other Appointing Commissions/Authorities” that took place in Kampala, Uganda from 7 to 11 April 2008 hosted by the Uganda Public Service Commission under the auspices of the African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM) and with support from the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC).

During the workshop, the Working Group which was joined by Ethiopia and the Secretary General of AAPAM held a meeting with Uganda’s Minister of State in the Ministry of Public Service, Hon. Mrs. Prisca Sezi Mbaguta and further discussed the APS-HRMnet proposed objectives, activities, and the way forward. The Minister encouraged the Group and assured them of political support in the work of establishing the APS-HRMnet and professionalizing human resource management in the public sector in Africa. The Working Group laid out a calendar for the way forward including the following preparatory activities:

- Briefing the Chairperson of the Pan Africa Conference of Ministers of Public Service, Mrs. Geraldine Frazer Moleketi the then Minister of Public Service and Administration of South Africa;
- finalizing the preparatory documents establishing the APS-HRMnet;
- putting a news letter announcing the APS-HRMnet on the websites of AAPAM, UNPAN, IPMA-HR and other friendly organizations who share the same concern for strengthening the capacity of human resource managers in the public sector in Africa;
- holding another meeting of the Working Group during the 30th AAPAM Roundtable Conference in Accra, Ghana in October 2008 to present the documents of the APS-HRMnet to the AAPAM Roundtable;
- organizing the very first capacity building workshop for the APS-HRMnet on “Capacity Building for Human Resource Development Policy and Strategy in Africa” to take place in Tanzania, in February 2009 and to be attended by Ministers responsible for public service in Africa, human resource managers in Ministries of Public Service and Public Service Commissions and other appointing authorities, representatives of Management Development Institutes in Africa and development partners interested in supporting the public sector in Africa to develop its capacities for managing its human resources; and
- officially launching the APS-HRMnet during that Workshop.

4.4. Support from the Pan African Conference of Ministers of Public Service

Following the workshop, Dr. John-Mary Kauzya of UNDESA met with the Chairperson of the Pan African Conference of Ministers of Public Service, Mrs. Geraldine Frazer Moleketi, Minister of Public Service and Administration of South Africa in New York in April 2008 and in Ankara, Turkey in June 2008 and briefed her on the progress and objectives of establishing the APS-HRMnet and requested her to present it to her colleagues, the Ministers responsible for Public Service in Africa, to ensure that the activities of the Network are part and parcel of the program of the Pan Africa Conference of Ministers of Public Service in its quest for improved public service capacities in the continent. The Minister was enthusiastic about the idea and in August 2008 the documents of the APS-HRMnet that had so far been in a draft form were forwarded to her.

4.5. Endorsement by AAPAM in Accra

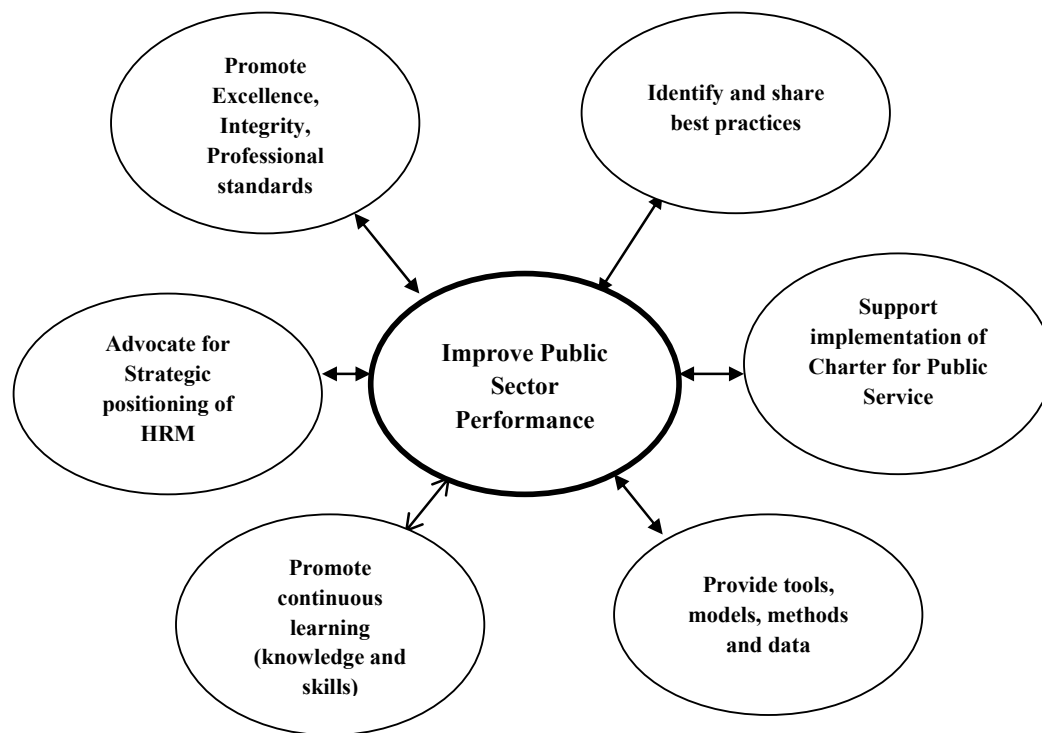
A Communiqué on the Establishment of the African Public Sector Human Resource Managers Network was prepared and distributed during the 30th AAPAM Roundtable Conference held in Accra Ghana from 6 to 10 October 2008. The Working Group organized another workshop during the Roundtable Conference during which period the draft Constitution and Rules of the Network were discussed and improved by a wider audience. The Conference Working Group that discussed the Constitution had representatives from 22 African countries as well as representatives of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

4.6. Launching of the APS-HRMnet in Arusha

Less than two years after the idea of its establishment was conceived in Cape Town, the Africa Public Sector Human Resource Managers' Network was formally launched on 27th February 2009 in Arusha Tanzania.

5. Objectives of the Africa Public Sector Human Resource Managers' Network

The overall objective of the APS-HRMnet is to provide human resource managers in the public sector in Africa with a networking platform for advocacy, human resources management professional development, information and knowledge sharing to enhance organizational and individual capacity for effective performance in the public sector.



The specific objectives of the Network are to:

- Promote excellence, integrity and professional standards in the practice of human resource management in the public sector in Africa

- Identify and share best practices in human resource management so as to assist public sector organizations improve their performance in human resource management and public service in general.
- Provide human resource management practitioners in the public sector in Africa with tools, models, skills, methods, and data to improve the effectiveness of their human resource management and development programs.
- Promote continuous learning, enhance knowledge, improve skills, and develop the current and next generation of human resource management professionals and leaders in the public sector in Africa. In pursuance of this objective establish a system aimed at the certification of human resource management professionals in partnership and/or collaboration with Africa-based and global management development institutes
- Support and advocate for the strategic positioning of human resource managers as prominent and essential strategic partners in public service development planning and management as well as reforms.
- Support continental and regional efforts in Africa to implement harmonized Public Service commitments such as the Charter for Public Service in Africa.



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6: Activities of APS-HRMnet

The core activities of the African Public Sector Human Resource Managers' Network will include the following:

- Research, documentation, publications and information dissemination on human resource management in the public sector in Africa
- Education, training and professional development of human resource managers in the Public sector in Africa through conferences, seminars, workshops and other appropriate training modalities such as online-courses, coaching and staff exchanges
- Organization for certification of human resource managers in the public sector to contribute to their professionalization

- Networking nationally, regionally and internationally for developing the capacity and profession of human resource management in Africa’s public sector institutions
- Providing advisory services to governments and other public organizations in various aspects of human resource management
- Mobilization of resources including funds to support the Network activities
- Organizing and undertaking advocacy activities to promote good practice in human resource management in the public sector



APS-HRMnet Executive Council in session at KIA Nairobi October 2009. In this session the Executive Council was joined by Members of its Advisory Technical Committee



APS-HRMnet Vice President for East Africa, Ms. Florence Wachira Director, Recruitment and Selection, Public Service Commission of Kenya, fnwachira@publicservice.go.ke

7. Membership

The Africa Public Sector Human Resource Managers’ Network will have a membership composed of: Individual Membership, Corporate Membership, and Honorary Membership. Any individual of good standing in the community whose profession and activities serve to promote the interest and objectives of the network can become a member of the network.

8. Structure and Organization of the African Public Sector Human Resource Managers' Network

The Africa Public Sector Human Resource Managers' Network will have three governing organs namely, The Members' Assembly, The Executive Council and the Secretariat.

9. Resources

The funds of the African Public Sector Human Resource Managers' Network shall be obtained from membership fees, subscription fees, contributions, donations, levies and from income generating activities as approved by the Executive Council. The African Public Sector Human Resource Managers' Network will be registered as a non-profit making organization.



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