



**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE AUDITOR-GENERAL OF NAMIBIA,
AT THE SIGNING OF THE
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
BETWEEN API AND NIPA
ON 11 JUNE 2024, WINDHOEK, NAMIBIA**

Thank you Director of the program for giving me the floor. Firstly, let me recognize the presence of esteemed invited guests and participants, by standing on the protocol as established by the program director.

A very good afternoon to you all.

Let me also use this opportunity to thank the organizers for organizing this event, and for inviting me to give insight on the inception of the API program, my involvement and the importance of public sector professionalization.

We have all heard from previous speakers that African Professionalisation Initiative (API) is a partnership between Accountants' General, the accountancy profession, supreme audit institutions and accountancy academics in Africa.

We have read and followed that the API is contributing to the strengthening of Public Value Management systems in order to achieve value creation, fiscal discipline, effective resource allocation and effective service delivery to citizens. We have been enlightened that API has been established to support the growth in capacity of accountancy professionals who have the competencies needed in an evolving public sector role.

Furthermore, information has been shared at different platforms of API that through support of country-led initiatives, capacity of incumbents working in accounting and auditing in the public sector will be strengthened.

Stakeholders are expected to work with local Professional Accountancy Organisations (PAOs) to include a public sector component in the accounting and auditing education and training curricula.

African Professionalization Initiative needs support of stakeholders such as but not limited to:

Accountants-General, Auditors-General, Regulators of Public Accountants and Auditors), Professional Accountancy Organizations, civil service commissions, academia, political leadership at executive and legislature who are involved in adopting acceptable financial reporting framework in a form of an act of parliament.

This support is needed to ensure that African public sector is capacitated with competent and ethical profession that contributes to good governance.

Director of the program,

SAIs are members of INTOSAI and they use INTOSAI standards referred to as ISSAIs (which stands for International Standards of Supreme Audit Institutions, used on public sector auditing. The purpose is to ensure the quality of the audits conducted and to strengthen the credibility of the audit reports for users.

I would like to make reference to ISSA 150 which is about Auditor competence. Auditor Competence is intended to be used in conjunction with other standards and with due consideration of SAIs' mandates, enabling legislation, structure, size, legislation dealing with

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human resource practices and other considerations. The standard also allows for flexibility in the application of the organisational requirements to cater for specific considerations that are unique to the relevant SAI. Standards on auditor competence at organisational level, emphasise that the employment of competent auditors is an integral part of a SAI's identity, professionalism, credibility and relevance.

It is against this background that public sector accountants and auditors, to fulfil their mandates and conduct high-quality work, it depends to a large extent on an individual quality, integrity and competence. The competency includes how they are recruited and developed to be professionals in Public Financial Management.

It is therefore my understanding that when a country lacks such competence, the solution is to create an environment where employees can be trained. API is expected to fill that competency gap through PAOs and support from other stakeholders in order to enhance accountability, transparency and good financial governance in the public sector.

Namibia is a member of AFROSAI-E Governing Board and I have been involved in its formation in 2005 as its founding chairperson up to 2011. In 2014 at the Governing Board, the Auditors-General approved professionalizing public sector auditing and accounting as a strategic imperative.

To establish a regional professional framework, aligned with international practices that provides for the recognising and accreditation of public sector auditing and accounting.

To drive the Professionalism Strategy, the first step was to elect an Interim Oversight Board (IOB) made up of some Auditors-General, which was done at the 2015 Governing Board meeting.

AFROSAI- E Secretariat reported that, due to funding constraints in 2015, the vacant position at the Secretariat was not filled which delayed the development of the Terms of Reference as well as hosting the first meeting of the IOB.

Several engagements were held throughout the year with key role-players and professional accountancy organizations (PAOs) to lay the groundwork for continued work on this imperative.

This included engagements with the INTOSAI Capacity Building Committee (CBC), and meetings with the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) and Pan African Federation of Accountants PAFA to discuss options and strategies for professionalization.

It has been a concern that, the African public sector experiences a severe shortage of professional accountants and auditors. Typically, professional accountants and auditors in governments have only been exposed to private sector theory during their initial professional development and they therefore often lack an understanding of public sector challenges and expectations relating to their position.

This professionalization strategy seeks to put in place coordinating structures in collaboration with key stakeholders at a regional level to support and direct the professionalization of public sector accounting and auditing in Africa.

The strategy was activated in 2016 after funding was secured for the project. The Interim Oversight Board (IOB) on Professionalisation met for their first meeting.

At this meeting the objectives of the strategy were affirmed and initial terms of reference for the IOB were established. The round table discussions that took place ushered in the next phase of the strategy, which was to start actively engaging a variety of stakeholders to create awareness of this initiative and to come up with a practical solution for Africa.

A full-time person was appointed in 2016 to manage this program. Presentations were made at the Professional Accounting Organisation Development Committee (PAODC) of the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC), and the African Organisation of Public Accounts Committees (AFROPAC).

In addition, the Pan African Federation of Accountants (PAFA) agreed to partner with AFROSAI-E on the strategy and to nominate some heads of professional accounting organisations (PAOs) to participate in the IOB.

In 2017, in partnership with PAFA and GIZ, efforts were made on securing support for the professionalization.

The strategy was also shared with a variety of stakeholders in Zimbabwe where a fully-funded professionalization initiative through IFAC was being implemented which closely aligned to this strategy.

AFROSAI-E partnered with the Public Accountants and Auditors Board (PAAB) in Zimbabwe to share knowledge, resources and experiences as they embark on their professionalization drive. The Zimbabwe PAAB insisted that the AFROSAI-E competency framework for auditors and accountants be used as a baseline. The inputs received from them, were incorporated into the framework.

Other member SAIs including Namibia showed interest in the program. The Auditor -General of Namibia as a Governing Board member of AFROSAI- E, the Accountant - General as member of the AAAG and NIPA as a member of PAFA confirmed their interest in API. The PAAB secretariat of Namibia also attended the signing ceremony of the MOU between API and PAAB Zimbabwe.

I shared this information to participants to follow efforts made by stakeholders regarding the professionalization journey.

In conclusion I would like to make it clear that this MOU does not affect any other existing or future professionalization initiatives with other stakeholders. My expectation is however that the implementation of this program should be affordable, meet expectations of the participants in order to improve service delivery because taxpayers expect value for their money.

I thank you.