
[29 Sept 2013]

Press Conference Release

APAC opened its 14th conference in Port Elizabeth this weekend

The Association of Public Accounts Committees (APAC) which is made of the Public Accounts Committees (PACs/SCOPAs) from National Assembly and provincial legislatures is gathering in Port Elizabeth in order to implement its 14th annual conference. Since its inception, APAC has had its annual conference and AGM hosted rotationally by all jurisdictions, of which this year's is an elective one. This year's conference is very important as it is convened on the eve of the conclusion of the Operation 2014 Clean Audit Campaign. We will be reflecting on our success towards achieving the objectives of the 2014 Clean Audit Campaign. We believe that the ideal of 2014 Clean Audit is realisable and still an achievable target for the public sector in South Africa. Testimony to this is the various departments, municipalities and entities that were able to achieve clean audit opinions. Clean audit opinions are about departments, municipalities and entities being able to achieve the following indications in their audit opinions:

- Financial statements should present fairly
- Compliance with all relevant laws and regulations
- No findings on predetermined objectives

The jurisdictions that are represented at this year's conference include the National Assembly and Provincial Legislatures of South Africa, various South African municipalities, Australia, Namibia, Botswana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe

It is because of this background that this year's conference takes place under the theme: **"Strengthening oversight processes to achieve clean administration by 2014 and beyond"**. The theme is aimed at strengthening and enhancing the dynamic role for PACs in transparency, accountability and oversight. This theme will be supported five subthemes, namely:

- *Sub-theme 1: "Building strong leadership and management in the public sector "*
- *Sub-theme 2: "Recourse to non-compliance with laws and regulations governing the use of public resources"*

- *Sub-theme 3: "Eliminating corruption by prohibiting public servants who conduct business with the state"*
- *Sub-theme 4: "Public participation as a tool for oversight"*
- *Subtheme 5: "Improving local government financial accountability"*

The APAC conference has been known for providing an opportunity to the most influential speakers to challenge status-quo thinking of delegates around oversight issues and provoke them to look at new fresher ways of enhancing oversight and accountability in the public sector. This year's conference is no different, it will be opened by Hon Thandi Memela, Deputy Chairperson of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) who is expected to give a strategic view of what oversight structures have been able to do in order to ensure that they assist the Executive to realise the ideal of 2014 clean audit outcomes.

The Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA): Hon Lechesa Tsenoli, Deputy Minister of Public Service & Administration: Hon Ayanda Dlodlo, the Auditor-General, Mr Terence Nombembe, the Public Protector: Adv Thuli Madonsela, the Chairperson of the Public Service Commission: Mr Ben Mthembu, the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), the Chairperson of the Southern African chapter of International Association of Public Participation (IAP²): Mr Ken Smith, the Director of Centre for Accountable Governance (CAG): Mr Derek Luyt and Mr Jimmy Gotyana: President of SANGOCO will tackle the various subtheme topics.

APAC continues to hold in high regard the strategic relations it has with many institutions. Amongst these, is the relationship with AGSA which has continued to add value to the work of APAC and oversight structures in general. APAC is also in a process of entering into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Public Service Commission. The conference promises to be an exciting platform because the local government sphere will be well-represented through the municipal Speakers, Mayors and MPAC Chairpersons that will be in attendance. Some of the important guests to this year's conference include Hon Kom Kom Geng, Chairperson of African Organisation of Public Accounts Committees (AFROPAC) from South Sudan, Hon Edward B Dagoseh, Chairperson of West Africa Association of Public Accounts Committees (WAAPAC) from Liberia. We are also expecting to have Hon Wadri Kassiano, Chairperson of East Africa Association of Public Accounts Committees (EAAPAC).

This conference is also coinciding with the end of the AG's term of office at the end of November 2013. APAC wishes to extend its well wishes to the AG and appreciate his contributions to the work of oversight in South Africa in supporting and strengthening democracy. APAC wishes to reiterate that the relationship with AGSA is important to its long-term sustainability.

This conference is preceded by two APAC constitutional meetings this afternoon: a Council of Delegates meeting where in the Auditor-General, Terence Nombembe is sharing his insights on the 2012-13 PFMA audit outcomes. This evening we will be bidding farewell to the Auditor-General, Mr Terence Nombembe. APAC is please to have had such a fruitful relationship with the AG and the institution (AGSA). The majority of the victories we have secured have been due to this strategic collaboration.

APAC wishes to reinforce its commitment to making a difference in the local government sphere through building the capacity of MPACs.

APAC also wishes to call upon on all its jurisdictions to conduct oversight and accountability of the Developmental Account (D Account) on royalties collected on mining houses which is supposed to be utilised for service delivery in the various mining communities.

We further embrace public participation as a new paradigm and recognise its importance in deepening oversight processes in the public sector.

We are confident that this conference will come up dynamic resolutions that will enhance oversight work to greater heights in the coming year.

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