

Guidelines for Chairs of the 9th African Population Conference

Role of the Chair

Thank you for agreeing to serve as Chair of a session at the 9th APC. The quality and tenor of the session depends significantly on your role. Your function as chair comprises pre-conference preparation by reaching out to all presenters in your session and session facilitation at the conference. You can build a network among the presenters; set the tone for the session; make connections among the panelists, the participants, and the topics; ensure equitable allocation of the time available; and foster collegial and professional exchange. You will be looked to for guidance and leadership if any challenges arise before or during your session.

The Scientific Committee offers these guidelines to the Chair of a regular or invited session.

1. Pre-conference: At least one month before the conference (20th April 2024), please contact all presenters of your session, including discussants.

1.1 Set the ground rules for the session: Lay out the plan for the session and specify the time to be allocated to each of the presenters and discussant. If you wish to enforce a slide limit in the interest of time, make sure to tell presenters in advance. Be sure to reserve a decent amount of time for audience questions at the end.

Sessions last 90 minutes! For a typical four paper session, a benchmark schedule would be 13 minutes per paper, 15 minutes for the discussant (or 8 minutes each if you have two discussants), and 20 minutes for audience questions.

1.2 Kindly remind presenters to submit their papers to the African Population Conference website by May 1, 2024, to ensure they are accessible to the discussant of the session. It is possible that some presenters may overlook the deadline for posting their papers, while others may not have finished them by then. Should the discussant be willing to consider papers submitted after the deadline, you and the presenters can discuss and agree upon a new extended deadline. Nevertheless, it is important to communicate clearly to the participants that there is a strict cutoff point beyond which the discussant is not obliged to review any papers received late, and that uploading papers to the conference website is strongly encouraged.

1.3 Urge presenters to share their materials in advance of the session including presentations, papers, or resource links. This allows presenters to build upon each other's work, identify linkages in their presentations, and save time by not repeating the obvious from others' presentations.

1.4 Ensure that there is a laptop available for the session. Ask speakers to send you their presentations at least 24 hours before the session. Kindly, follow up with any presenter who has not sent a presentation and plan to get the presentation on the laptop at least 15 minutes before the session begins. This saves time during the session. Between one hour and 30 minutes prior to the session, check the room and confirm that the computer will connect with the projection equipment. Please consider that Macs might require a special connector that will enable it to plug into a standard VGA cable.

2. At the session:

2.1. Arrive early to your session location. Locate the room, identify the speakers, and welcome all attendees. Make sure you have the correct pronunciation of participants' names. Welcome the audience,

introduce yourself (name and affiliation) as the chair, briefly present the session topic, introduce the speakers, and invite them to the podium.

2.2. Open the session. Start on time and end on time. This maximizes the time allocated for content and allows the next group the time they need to set up for an on-time start to their session. Do not hesitate to “move the conversation into the halls” if discussion is going beyond the allocated time of your session.

2.3. Introduce each presentation. Transition between presentations by thanking the previous presenter and introducing the next, noting the name and affiliation of the individual or group and the general topic if this has not been done at the beginning of the session.

2.4. Keep to the order listed in the program. Some people come to listen to one speaker and may be disappointed if speakers do not in the published order.

2.5. Keep an eye on the clock. Warn your speakers as their time draws to a close using written notes indicating the time remaining (typically 5 minutes, 2 minutes, and a hard stop). Be firm, but kind. It is imperative that you stop any presenter who exceeds the allocated time. There are several ways to do this. You can signal to the speaker and the audience that the time is up by politely telling the speaker it is important to stop now. You may try initiating applause during the next pause, simply walk to the front and stand next to the speaker, or finally get up and thank the presenter for the presentation, noting that the session must move on to the next presenter. This will be far easier if you have laid the ground rules in advance of the session via email and reminded the presenters about your responsibility before the session starts.

2.6. Facilitate the audience discussion. Audience discussion is a crucial element of every session, and many audience members are disappointed if they don't have the opportunity to engage with the panel. Audience discussion should wait until all presenters and discussants have finished their presentations. As a general rule, you should be opening the floor for discussion at least 20 minutes prior to the scheduled end time. If you have ample time, you may want to ask the presenters if they want to briefly respond to discussant comments before allowing audience participation. However, do not let this interfere with the audience's opportunity to participate.

2.7. During discussion periods, scan the entire audience for raised hands and call on people in turn, trying to first select people who raised their hands early. Set an expectation for professional, courteous, discourse. Ask that questions be short and targeted and encourage attendees to follow-up after the session as well. If there are many people with questions, avoid letting one person monopolize the discussion. People should introduce themselves (name and affiliation) before they ask questions.

2.8. Ask people who pose a question to stand if possible and to speak up so that everyone can hear the question. If the audience cannot hear the question, ask the presenter to briefly restate the question before answering it.

2.9. Wrap-up and end. Clearly define the conclusion of the session by thanking the presenters and the audience and stating that the session has concluded. At the end of the session, if there is a session following, ask that everyone leave the room and continue the discussion outside in the foyer or hallway so that the next session will have time to set up.

2.10. Troubleshoot. As the chair, people will turn to you should problems arise, and expect you to manage the session and respond to challenges. Kindly monitor the room. Should the projector not work, the room be too hot or too cold, or something happen to the room itself (a spill, noise intrusion, etc.), please contact

the conference secretariat at conference@afidep.org or 9apc_science@uaps-uepa.org and on phone +233(0)535377360.

We wish you a wonderful session!