

# **REVISITING THE AFRICAN PEER REVIEW MECHANISM: THE CASE FOR LEADERSHIP AND GOOD GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**T**his paper examines the protocols of engagement of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) since its launch, three years ago. The African peer review mechanism was established in 2003 as an instrument to monitor the performance of participating African countries based on the protocols of engagement as identified in the document of inception. The main purpose is to foster the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration through the sharing of experiences and reinforcement of successful and best practice. It is argued that while the African peer review process is the most decisive element towards attaining the objectives set forth in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), its focus needs to be revisited. Targeting critical governance and continental policies and the provision of incentives are paramount for effective and successful implementation.

## **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

**T**he African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is an instrument to monitor and evaluate the political, economic and corporate governance of African states. The idea of establishing an African monitoring mechanism came as a response to governance

challenges and problems that the continent has experienced since independence and the subsequent poor economic performance. For many years, African states relied on the outside world – bilateral and multilateral development partners – for their governance and development needs. This approach has had limited impact as political turmoil, poverty and underdevelopment continue to hit the continent. In 2001, African leaders initiated a development plan, the New Partnership for Africa's Development "NEPAD", to lever the continent out of the cycle of poverty, political instability and marginalization in the global system. Philosophically, NEPAD takes its roots on a new thinking that Africans should own and drive their countries to recovery. A key element of the NEPAD is the recognition that good governance is prerequisite for Africa's development. Thus, at the first meeting of the Heads of States and Government Implementation Committee (HSIC) of NEPAD in Abuja, Nigeria, 2001, African leaders agreed to set up parameters FOR good governance, which would guide their political and economic operations in order to achieve the objectives that were set in the NEPAD programme. In June 2002, in Italy, the third meeting of the HISC approved a code of good governance, the *Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance* and the APRM as instruments to lead African countries to good governance and economic development.

The idea of the APRM, which is somewhat similar to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) peer review, refers to the systematic examination and assessment of the performance of a state by other states (peers), by designated institutions, or by a combination of states and designated institutions (OECD, 2003:9). The ultimate objective of the process is to help the country reviewed, improve its policies, comply with established codes and standards of governance and adopt best practices. In Africa, the mechanism of peer review is expected to advance the practice of good governance by promoting the rule of law, human and property rights, and efficient management of public resources, which will lead to political and economic stability and attract aid and investments.

Participation in the APRM is voluntary and open to all member states of the African Union. Voluntary participation departs from the principle of sovereignty of states and recognizes that a state cannot be compelled to follow any prescribed model of governance. Instead, the APRM seeks to help willing countries improve governance as precondition for integration and development, and at the same time acknowledging that each country is unique in terms of the socio-political, economic and cultural environment and that these self-characteristics should inform recommendations for improvement. Furthermore, the mechanism of peer review is a non-adversarial and non-punitive process, in which trust among participating countries is crucial for its success. It rests for compliance on the mutual understanding and commitment to the values, and acceptance of standards and criteria that are used to evaluate performance. While politically these principles are acceptable, they, however, compromise the effective implementation of the new partnership, in particular its core values of good governance. This article critically analyses the issues of implementation of the APRM. First, it examines the implementation progress of the mechanism. It investigates whether or not the introduction of the African peer review is changing the dynamics of governance in Africa, and whether the relationship and dialogue with the developed

countries and multilateral institutions has improved. Second, the paper discusses the factors impeding effective African peer review implementation. The paper concludes by suggesting a revisit of the protocols of engagement of the APRM to enhance the procurement of good governance and the attainment of NEPAD/APRM objectives.

## ARPM: IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS

To date, 23 member states of the African Union have signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the African Peer Review Mechanism, thus voluntarily acceding to the peer review process. These are: Angola, Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda (NEPAD Annual Report 2003/2004:37).

The peer review started with four countries, namely Ghana, Rwanda, Kenya, and Mauritius that volunteered to begin the process. Currently, only two of the four countries, namely Ghana and Rwanda have reached the completion stage and their final reports submitted to the Committee of Heads of State of participating countries, *APR Forum* (the highest authority on the APRM) for consideration and adoption (Communiqué issued at the 3<sup>rd</sup> APR Forum of June 2005 <http://www.nepad.org/2005/files/aprmforum.php>). According to the rules of the APRM process, these reports will be available for public consumption, six months after deliberation by the APR Forum. In addition to these countries, three other African states participating in the APRM, namely, Nigeria, Algeria, and Uganda have this year of 2005, received the first support missions explaining the APRM process, and have started their self-assessment and to drafting the preliminary Programme of Action (<http://www.nepad.org/2005/files/aprm.php>).

Recently, the Minister for Public Service and Administration of South Africa, Honorable Fraser-Moleketi, whose Department has been designated as the national APR Focal Point, briefed the media on the peer review process in South Africa that is scheduled to commence late September 2005 (SABC News, 13 September, 2005). In total, eight African countries have been or are in the process of peer review. Initially, two country reviews were planned to be undertaken quarterly so that within two fiscal years, namely April 2004/March 2005 and April 2005/March 2006 as per the proposed calendar for review, 16 countries would be at some stage of peer review. However, as the progress of the peer review shows, these targets are far from being attained. Besides a significant number of countries that have already committed to abide by the principles and standards of good governance, the advent of peer assessment in Africa has induced positive change in leadership and governance as well as in relations with Africa's development partners.

## IMPROVING GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP IMPERATIVES

Since the inception of NEPAD and the APRM, successful elections and peaceful changes of leadership, in Mozambique, Malawi, Rwanda and Namibia among others, have become common trends, something that was of an exception a few

decades ago. In Burundi, people have peacefully ended the transition and elected their president after 12 years of civil unrest. The number of conflicts in Africa continues to decrease. On the economic front, improved macro-economic management has also been recorded making it possible to improve economic aggregates. The average economic growth rate for the continent in 2004 was 5,1 percent (the highest in eight years) and the IMF projects economic growth of over 5,3% for 2005, and average inflation of 9,9% compared with 41% over twenty years ago (Nkhulu, 2005; G8 Gleneagles, 2005).

The dynamics of governance in Africa have also improved. The African peer review process has allowed non-state actors to actively participate in the governance and development of their country. The APRM requires each participating country to establish a national coordinating structure that includes all stakeholders' representatives from e.g. government officials, to parliamentarians, opposition representatives, business community, NGOs, community-based organizations, women associations and youth groups. The process gives the opportunity to the African society not only to evaluate the performance of their governments but also to be part of the policy making process, through the development of a Program of Action, which is envisaged under the APRM to address shortcomings identified during the assessment.

An active involvement of civil society has been noticed especially in the media sector – print, audio and visual media – which is heavily involved in gathering and reporting information relating to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). This has increased the availability, in the public arena, of information on the processes and progress of the peer review. Since the launch of the NEPAD and the APRM, civil society organizations have held several conferences and seminars to debate these new frameworks for governance and development in Africa, and to determine their roles in these processes. An example is the African Social Forum created in 2002 as a continental space for social movements, organizations and institutions from across the continent to debate and formulate proposals that promote democratic governance and sustainable development. This gathering brings together, each year, civil society activists and experts from all African countries (see <http://www.africansocialforum.org/english/fsa2004.htm>).

In all the countries undergoing the peer review, the process has opened up a space for civil society participation. For instance, Ghana has commissioned four independent, non-government technical advisory bodies to assist with the assessment process in the focus areas of the APRM. The lead NGOs are the Centre for Democratic Development (political governance and democracy), the Centre for Economic Policy Analysis (economic management and governance), the Private Enterprise Foundation (corporate governance) and the Institute for Statistical, Social and Economic Research (socio-economic development) (Communiqué of the APRM Support Mission to Ghana, of 29 May 2004 accessed at <http://www.nepad.org>).

In Rwanda, among the 50 members of the APR National Commission, 17 are representatives of various civil society organizations and business community (NEPAD Rwanda Magazine, 2005). Recently in Kenya, the experts drawn from various civil society organisations rejected the national draft paper, saying it did not reflect the

voice of Kenyans and questioning its softness on corruption. This has led to a meeting between APR Focal Point and stakeholders to rework on the country review report (Business News, Friday, September 2, 2005, accessed online [http://www.eastandard.net/hm\\_news/news.php?articleid=28248](http://www.eastandard.net/hm_news/news.php?articleid=28248)). Thus, although the independence and capacity of interest groups and other stakeholders to participate in the evaluation process may be different, nonetheless the APRM has set the stage for a process of dialogue and partnership in governance.

## PARTNERSHIP WITH DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

**A**dherence to good governance and economic policy and the use of the APRM are the requisites for the new partnership between Africa and the donor community, and subsequently, the key to the success of NEPAD. In exchange, the G8 countries, through the Africa Action Plan, have promised *enhanced partnerships* if African countries can hold themselves to the principles of democratic and economic reform and social investment, through the self-monitoring instrument of the APRM. Paragraph 7 of the AAP is very informative in this regard: "The peer review process will inform our considerations of eligibility for enhanced partnerships" (G8 Africa Action Plan, 2002:2).

Since the Africa Action Plan agreed at Kananaskis, Canada, in 2002, developed countries have taken remarkable actions in support of NEPAD/APRM programmes and objectives. In the areas, such as of addressing conflict on the continent, the AU has received a sizeable amount of support from the G8. The G8 members have provided substantial support to the AU Peace and Security institutions and operations in the areas of expertise, equipment, training, logistics, and finance (NEPAD Annual Report 2003/04:47).

In addition to this, aid and debt relief have also received a special attention. At Gleneagles, the G8 leaders agreed a doubling of aid for Africa by \$25 billion a year by 2010. Moreover, G8 countries have individually committed to meet commitments to earmark 0,7 percent of their national income GNI to aid by 2015. On the area of debt relief, the G8 countries have in principle, agreed a proposal to cancel 100% of outstanding debts of eligible Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) to the IMF, World Bank and African Development Fund. Eligibility for debt relief under the HIPC is conditional upon good governance and political stability. In June 2005, the Ministers of Finance of G8 countries ahead of their Heads of State Summit in Gleneagles struck a deal to cancel \$40 billion worth of debts owed by 18 HIPC (G8 Gleneagles Report, 2005: 12-13).

The following fourteen African countries benefited of the June HIPC decision: Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia ([www.worldbank.org/hipc](http://www.worldbank.org/hipc)) Negotiations for total debt cancellation are still ongoing. Noting the progress made to support Africa, the amount committed so far nonetheless falls short of the estimates of US \$50 billion a year needed, according to the Commission for Africa, to enable Africa to achieve the new millennium development goals by 2015 (Commission for Africa, 2005:16).

## IMPLEMENTING THE AFRICAN PEER REVIEW MECHANISM: NEW CONSIDERATIONS

Kuye (2005:6) argues that although the crisis of the developmental state in African countries poses a critical problem, it should be noted that the central role of the state in public administration, development planning and economic management should have a strong resonance in the activities of most African countries calling for change and reforms. Targeting constructive policies for implementation purposes must be seen as a major precursor for reforms. Kuye (2005:9) posits that targeted policies should be designed as part of comprehensive national development strategies for both poverty alleviation and other human development issues. Subsequently, he argues that such reforms must uphold the principles of good governance and democracy.

In spite of the enthusiasm the idea of peer review has raised in Africa and beyond, its implementation is not crisis free. So far, only 23 African countries have signed for the peer review mechanism, while another 30 are uncertain or unwilling to subject to rigorous evaluations and peer dialogue. In some circles in Africa, the initiative has created ideological differences among states, business people, academia and civil societies. For some it is a donor imposed plan repackaged under the alleged African ownership (Olukoshi, 2002:9). nEPAD and the APRM commitment to uphold global standards of democracy and good governance (NEPAD, 2001: para 79) begs the question of knowing if there exist other values such as African or Asia values and may, to some extent, explain why some countries have refrained from joining the peer review. This, indeed points to lack of shared understanding and commitment over the norms and principles of the APRM, which is detrimental to its successful implementation.

Implementation is not only hindered by lack of consensus on values. Research on the implementation of policies and programs is very informative on the difficulties and challenges that occur once values have been authoritatively proclaimed. It has been discovered that implementation is a complex political process that involves a number of variables that have to be controlled and satisfied for successful implementation rather than a mechanical administrative one (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973). Implementation becomes even more complex and difficult in the context of international regimes, such as the APRM. This is so because the implementation of international agreements depends largely on the willingness of individual countries. As sovereign states, countries cannot be compelled to implement commitments by force, instead in most of the cases, compliance with international commitments is sought through *soft law* (Pagani, 2002), that is mechanisms of dialogue and persuasion.

### VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participation in the APRM is voluntary. This institutional configuration is however flawed. African leaders agreed in the new blueprint for Africa's development that good political governance and sound economic management are prerequisites for sustainable development and committed to work both individually and collectively to promote these principles. Why, therefore, with all the commitments and political will that African

leaders have shown in the NEPAD, have they made the APRM a voluntary mechanism?

This question is easier posed than answered. A number of issues exist that need to be evoked. First, the issue of national sovereignty, which is enshrined in the Constitutive Act of the AU, must be respected. However, this sovereignty has, for many years protected dictators in Africa under the banner of non-interference in internal affairs. Although the new Constitutive Act gives the AU the right to intervene in internal affairs, this can only happen in cases of grave circumstances, namely war crimes, genocide, and crime against humanity (Article 4(h) of the Constitutive Act of the AU of 2000). For many African leaders, the idea of external evaluators coming to analyse and criticise the way a country manage its affairs is absurd. This is illustrated by these comments of President Wade: "It is unrealistic," Wade said, "How do you think I can tell a president in a country that his election or his treatment of the press was not regular... I do not believe in it"(Reuters, July 8, 2002). Indeed, the practice of peer review, which allows countries to assess other countries' governance, is new in Africa. Developed countries have accepted intrusive regular peer reviews for many years under the auspices of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), but these have been primarily economic. No doubt, the APRM is a sensitive political process that will take time and means of engagement for African leaders to accept the idea of external review, particularly in the political domain.

Second, the ideals of democracy that the APRM seeks to induce in countries force the mechanism to exemplify these democratic values. Thus, to be legitimate participation in the APRM must be voluntary. Third, voluntary participation is the best way, which gives assurance that those countries that have freely agreed to enter into peer review agreements, are aware of the requirements and constraints brought by the APRM and would do what it takes to abide by the commitments they have made.

However, voluntary participation in the APRM constitutes a serious impediment to the attainment of the NEPAD goals. Indeed, NEPAD's viability if measured in terms of creating enhanced partnerships in the forms of greater aid and investment flows, then voluntary participation is inconsistent with NEPAD since it undermines collective efforts to address the biggest Africa's development obstacles, including negative perceptions of the continent. Experience in Africa has demonstrated that poor governance in one country can have far reaching negative implications on the whole region. Often than not, companies make investment decisions based on perceptions rather than objective criteria. Research indicates that investors additionally discount African economies more than other economies (Humphreys and Bates, 2002:3). Hence, for the proponents of the peer review, adherence to the principles and norms of good governance and opening up for the APRM reviews should be compulsory to all African states wanting to benefit from NEPAD (South African Minister of Finance in Business Day, September 15, 2004).

## ABSENCE OF ENFORCEMENT MECHANISMS

**T**he African peer review mechanism has been lampooned by critics for lacking teeth (Cilliers, 2003:14; Herbert, 2003:9). The APRM is a non-punitive, non-adversarial process. It assumes, like the managerial school on international regimes (Chayes

and Chayes, 1995:9) that participating countries will act in good faith, and that problems of non-compliance that may arise are to be found in financial constraints or political difficulties, which need to be solved through cooperative efforts and not sanctions. President Obasanjo, at the third Summit of the APR Forum in Abuja Nigeria, June 2005, reiterated this character of the APRM. He said, “the APRM, in case anyone is still in doubt, is not an instrument for punishment or exclusion, but rather it is a mechanism to identify our strong points, share experiences, and help rectify our weak areas” ([http://www.nepad.org/2005/files/communiques/speech\\_19605abuja.pdf](http://www.nepad.org/2005/files/communiques/speech_19605abuja.pdf)).

Thus, from an African stand, the peer review process is more a peer learning process, a framework allowing set-objectives to be met over time, rather than an instrument of benchmarking and punishing poor performers. The challenge however, is how this approach can ensure that mutually agreed commitments are implemented. It is important to highlight the protocols of engagement in a situation a country fails to comply with its commitments. The APRM base document states the following:

If the Government of the country in question shows a demonstrable will to rectify the shortcomings, then it will be incumbent upon participating Governments to provide what assistance they can, as well as to urge donor governments and agencies also to come to the assistance of the country reviewed. However, if the political will is not forthcoming from the Government, the participating states should first do everything practicable to engage it in constructive dialogue, offering in the process technical and other appropriate assistance. If dialogue proves unavailing, the participating Heads of State and Government may wish to put the Government on notice of their collective intention to proceed with appropriate measures by a given date. The interval should concentrate the mind of the Government and provide a further opportunity for addressing the identified shortcomings under a process of constructive dialogue. All considered, such measures should always be utilized as a last resort (APRM, 2003:5).

From the above statement, it is clear that measures to be taken against failing countries are not specified. Understandably, taking some measures against failing states may be a source of international discord and contention, which may jeopardize all cooperative undertakings in Africa. However, the assumption of countries acting in good faith is also defective. In most of African countries, poor governance does not result from lack of policies and institutions of enforcement. Bad governance is in many cases the consequence of bad choices by power-holders/ leaders, whose main concern has been the consolidation of their power and political control (Ake, 1996). Thus, the non-enforcement approach of the African peer review is likely to reinforce the incentive for non-compliance.

## ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Scholarship on implementation concurs that administrative capacity is a requisite for effective implementation of any policy or project (Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1981, O’Toole, 1986). It refers to the availability of resources, the financial and human resources to carry out the changes desired by policies or programs. Indeed, the credibility and sustainability of APRM does not only depend on the political will of African leaders



to open up their governments to scrutiny, but also on the competence and administrative capacity of institutions carrying out the peer review.

To strengthen the APR Secretariat capacity, APR Forum approved three categories of Partner Institutions to support the peer review process: the Organs/Units of the African Union; the African Development Bank (ADB); the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA); and the UN Development Program Regional Bureau for Africa (APRM Organisation & Process, 2003:7). The ADB has provided assistance in developing the tools for the implementation of the APRM; it is engaged in technical capacity enhancement of the APR Secretariat, it provides background information on countries; and participates in Support Missions for the APRM. The African Union has contributed to the development of the tools and documents of the APRM, especially in the area of democracy and political governance. UNECA has provided assistance in the development of tools for the economic governance of the APRM; it also provides background information on countries and participates in the Support Missions. The UNDP has provided preparatory assistance to the APR Panel and Secretariat; it participates in the Support Missions. Lastly, there is a pool of experts/ consultants, which are occasionally used as members of the evaluation team (NEPAD Annual Report, 2003/04:38-39).

The issue of human capacity does not end with the competence and expertise of the staff. Kanbur argues that the staff may be technically competent, but “if it is asked to do too much, and it is stretched too thin” it will fail to deliver (Kanbur, 2004:9). Indeed, the menu developed for peer assessment is too broad, and too detailed to be sensibly handled. Botswana made similar arguments in explaining her reluctance to join the APRM process. Botswana has indicated that it would not participate in the review process because of its nature of operation. The Permanent Secretary for Development in Botswana, Modise Modise has indicated that Botswana feels that the focus of the APRM should be on political issues. “On some issues that the APRM is concerned with, such as economic matters, there may already be institutions that African countries belong to, such as the African Development Bank, Economic Commission for Africa, World Bank, IMF, UN whose reports could be utilised to avoid unnecessary duplication” the minister said (in Tautona Times, 2004 accessed at <http://www.sarpn.org.za/documents/d0000725/index.php>). The claim of duplication looks tenuous because the APR reviews will work best if they are part of a wide range of evaluations, in which case their findings can be challenged, or on the other hand, can provide a counterweight to donor and other external assessments. However, this paper also supports the streamlining of the content of the peer review to focus on those policies and issues that are critical for the success of NEPAD goals.

Administrative capacity for the implementation of the peer review process is problematic at the national level. First, in many African countries, the capacity to analyse policies is weak among government agencies, academia, and civil society organizations. These were the conclusions of the workshop organized by the Development Bank of Southern Africa, the African Development Bank and the World Bank (2000) on the capacity of monitoring and evaluation systems in Africa. Research has revealed that when evaluations are carried out, they deal more with compliance with rules than with impacts of policies. Furthermore, in Africa, there are relatively few systematic and accurate data available

for analysis, which results from either lack of correct systems or qualified statisticians (Odhiambo, 2000:71; Koranteng, 2000:78).

Second, to start up a process of dialogue about national policies and governance issues is challenging, especially that popular participation is foreign to many African countries and that institutions to oversee the process are weak. Oversight institutions, such as the parliament, the judiciary, and civil society have little knowledge of the APRM and lack the capacity to effectively assume their roles. These are some of the elements that emerged during the *Parliamentarians' Forum on Good Governance in Africa* convened on October 21 and 22, 2004 in Berlin, Germany (<http://www.inwent.org/ef-texte/africa/rep.htm>). Thus, a strong political commitment is imperative to drive the necessary changes demanded by the APRM. The process is likely to be stalled if at the national level this commitment is not available.

In terms of finance, the African peer review process is funded by contributions from participating countries and financial support from donors. When the first Summit of the APR Forum met in Kigali, February 2004, they unanimously approved that each participating country must avail a minimum of US \$100, 000 for the operationalisation of the APRM (Communiqué of the 1<sup>st</sup> APR Forum meeting, 2004:4). This amount however does not include funding the APR processes at the country level. Furthermore, an *APRM Trust Fund* was established in which donors and African countries can put their financial support. So far the UNDP has contributed \$ 2,7 million, Algeria \$1 million, and Canada \$587 000 and the UK department for International Development has pledged \$2 million (APRM Secretariat, 2005).

Funding the process from African coffers would ensure African ownership and leadership of the APRM. According to the study conducted by the South African Institute of International Affairs, this amount is relatively low, as a comprehensive peer review is estimated to cost about US \$400 000 for each country (Herbert, 2003:10). However, even with the amount to which they commonly agree, African leaders are failing to pay their contributions. The remarks of President Obasanjo, the chair of the APR Forum and the HISGC at the third Summit of the APR Forum in Abuja, June 2005, suggest a crisis in funding the APRM. ([www.nepad.org/2005/files/communiqués/speech\\_19605abuja.pdf](http://www.nepad.org/2005/files/communiqués/speech_19605abuja.pdf)).

While for some poor countries, depending on aid and struggling to provide services to their citizens, setting aside US \$100 000 for the peer review may be challenging, there appears to be a habit among African states of not paying their dues. For instance in 2004, the member states have paid up only \$13 million of the AU's \$43 million annual budget. Seven countries face AU sanctions, including Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo and Guinea Bissau, for nonpayment of AU dues, thereby losing their voting rights (<http://www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=42108>).

The process of peer review is a costly exercise and countries must be ready to commit sufficient financial resources not only for a professional process but also for the sustainability and ownership of the APRM. There have been claims that very few participating countries have paid their financial contributions and that APRM operations are largely maintained by funds from donors and the South African government. If these claims are true, then the sustainability of the APRM is in jeopardy because there is no guarantee

that the unwavering support from South Africa will remain; especially once President Mbeki, “the African Renaissance man” as he is affectionately referred to, is out of office. Permitting free riders discourages willing and *bona fide* members. African leaders would have therefore to develop some formula, which would look at how every participating country can contribute according to its financial capacity. The formula needs however to be in line with AU provisions, in particular the principle of sovereign equality, to avoid problems that might arise from *big brother* attitude. It is imperative to have a stable source of funding. Ignoring this would be signing a death warrant of the APRM.

## REALISING A CREDIBLE AND EFFECTIVE AFRICAN PEER REVIEW MECHANISM

**A**lthough the APRM still faces many institutional and implementation hurdles, these can be overcome and allow willing states to improve their governance capabilities. The challenge facing the APRM and African leaders championing the principles of good governance is that while in politics the soft approach might be the correct *modus operandi* this arrangement will do little to change the behaviour of rotten leaders by bringing them to implement policies that are in line with the APRM values and principles. The approach is also unlikely to convince donors and investors that fundamental changes are afoot, which may be the financing strategies of the NEPAD. Thus, to gain credibility and respect, mechanisms for faster roll-out of good governance in Africa must be taken seriously; otherwise, the continent runs the risk of being further marginalized in the world economy. Revitalising the peer review mechanism can be done on two main fronts: first by targeting the critical governance and policy issues, which are believed to be the pillars of the new partnership for Africa’s development; and second, by building and strengthening incentives for good governance and implementation of the peer review.

## TARGETING CRITICAL GOVERNANCE AND POLICY ISSUES

**T**he mandate of the APRM is overly ambitious covering a broad range of issues, with no sufficient resources at its hand to address them. Targeting will allow the peer review to focus on the most critical aspects of governance. Already the APRM menu consists of four areas, the political, economic, corporate and socio-economic development. Some suggestions want to see the APRM focusing on the political review (see Botswana government’ comments; Kanbur, 2004). The supporters of a peer review that focuses on the political governance argue that annual economic reviews by international lending organisations and donor agencies, including the macroeconomic reviews of the IMF, and the Poverty Reduction Strategies of World Bank, are sufficient for economic analysis and discipline. The argument is taken further that Africa’s development tragedy is in many respects a consequence of bad political governance, placing particular emphasis on corruption and lack of accountability – something, they argue, enables corrupt governments to survive and irrational economic policies to remain in place (Ake, 1996; Annan, 1998, Mohiddin, 1998).

This article proposes that the APRM be narrowed to two focal areas, the political and economic governance, packing together similar important themes. Political reforms are imperative to render political actors accountable and deter their corrupt practices. Similarly, an African dialogue on economic policies is essential despite the IMF/World Bank reviews. The experience and research of economic policies in Africa, (for instance the structural adjustment policies) has shown that, in most of the time, African leaders have had limited choice over their economic policy decisions. Economic reviews by Africans themselves are therefore important and can counterbalance the reviews and recommendations of the Bretton Woods Institutions.

Thus, the political governance could cover the fundamental issues such as prevent and reduce intra and inter-country conflicts; constitutional democracy and the rule of law; uphold separation of powers including independence of the judiciary and parliament; ensure accountable, efficient and effective public service; and fight corruption. The economic governance would encompass critical issues of economic and corporate governance, such as ensuring macro-economic stability, promoting sound public finance, trade policies and regional integration management, and promoting corporate growth and social responsibility. A thorough and extensive study of this proposal will be necessary as this is a mere illustration of how the narrowing down can be done.

## STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

The effectiveness of the APRM will depend on countries, individually and collectively, upholding the principles and practices of good governance as outlined in the Declaration on democracy, political, economic and corporate governance. However, successful implementation is also contingent upon a number of elements specifically designed to motivate politicians to join the peer review process and to comply with the peer review recommendations. The following can be sources of positive incentives for good governance.

*Donor's support and mutual accountability:* governance is function of the political system and the environment within which it is embedded. Thus, domestic political commitments alone cannot tackle governance issues. The response from donor countries and international financial institutions is also critical in this endeavour. The history of governance and development in Africa shows how foreign policies have been inconsistent in relation to democracy and good governance, which has encouraged manipulative practices of authoritarian leaders and allow them to sustain their regimes. The international community, notably the G8 countries, must be accountable for their consistency in support of democracy and good governance on the continent and meeting the financial commitments they have made. A mechanism that would monitor and evaluate donor's performance in relation to these commitments should be established.

*Financial incentives:* participating in the peer review reveals itself to be a costly exercise. In addition to US \$100,000, there are costs for setting up at the country level institutions, organizing meetings with stakeholders, conducting national surveys etc. Thus, there must be some compensatory mechanisms. Countries that agree to

undergo the peer review process should be financially supported to run up the process. Substantial financial support, such as debt relief, and greater aid flows are high motivating factors that would compel countries to join the APRM and sustain political and economic reforms.

*Enforcement mechanisms:* enforcement mechanism is essential to ensure that countries comply with agreed commitments. The danger of overlooking this issue is that the peer review process may fall in the same trap of talk show as previous initiatives while little gets off the ground. Leaders should show their determination to root out bad governance. an array of diplomatic options exist, such as a collective public condemnation, suspension in NEPAD activities. These should be explored. Africans should not expect the West to keep up their financial commitments if they fail to hold each other accountable and denounce poor governance and leadership. After all, the leaders of rich nations are accountable to the taxpayers, whose money is used in development assistance.

*Pressure from interest groups:* interest groups and other organized groups are powerful instrument of accountability. Those groups, whose support to political elite is important to remain in power, may exert pressure, demanding governments to join the peer review process, since this promises good governance that will lead to political stability and economic development. Interest groups may however be a double-edged sword, which can hinder the process if their interests are likely to be jeopardized.

*Awareness creation:* there has been wide concern about the low level of knowledge that exists among African citizens about the APRM. It is important to publicise the APRM through media and other mechanisms through which the population can access the information on NEPAD and the APRM. There exist many ways through which the APRM process can incorporate the voices of communities and other stakeholders. These include broad consultations during the country review visit, broad participation in drafting the Programme of Action (PoA), and continuous involvement in the monitoring of the implementation of the PoA. To make the message of NEPAD and APRM accessible to the ordinary African, there is also the need to translate these documents, which are written in alien languages into African languages.

*Institutional capacity building:* strong and effective institutions are critical to the success of the peer review process. Institutions, which are the catalyst and custodian of good governance, such as the legislature, the judiciary, the ombudsman, the audit of accounts, and civil society must be strengthened and their independence ensured. The findings from the peer review will be effectively implemented if there exist capable and effective institutions that can ensure that policies and recommendations contained in the Program of Action are translated into binding political commitments to be implemented. This necessitates capacity building or strengthening of these national oversight institutions to enable them to perform their roles effectively. Similarly, the bureaucracy, which is the principal implementing agent of public policies, requires continuous capacity building to be at the top of its challenging duties, especially in the context of partnerships and networks policy implementation. Enhanced partnerships from the G8 must press for the development of these institutions.

## CONCLUSION: REVISITING THE APRM: CASE FOR LEADERSHIP AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Although the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) could be considered to be a potentially important tool of cooperation between AU Member States for the achievement of NEPAD goals, it must be realized that the tenets of the inception of this great idea, is based on the premise of voluntary cooperation and good will. Peer assessments afford African countries the opportunity to exchange ideas and share their experiences and international best practices in relation to governance and policy matters. It is, therefore, a forum of peer learning and regional/continental cooperation in which the challenges facing African countries, both individually and collectively, can be tackled. However, the mechanism is fraught with challenges. Voluntary participation and lack of enforcement measures are likely to hold back the process of procuring necessary governance and policy reforms on the continent. In today highly competitive world, faster rollout of good governance is imperative if Africa is to avoid further marginalization in the world affairs.

For the peer review to be credible, effective and sustainable, a number of issues must be addressed. These include the streamlining of the APRM for a rational focused menu to address core developmental problems. It is equally important to have a stable source of funding the peer review process, without which the APRM is a dead initiative. A wider involvement of citizens in the APRM, in the making, implementation and monitoring processes of the Programme of Action is paramount. Effective participation calls for capacity building of all stakeholders, and particularly the oversight institutions, such as the parliament and civil society groups to ensure that the APRM findings are translated into binding political commitments to be implemented.

While this article does not pretend to be exhaustive, it has highlighted some of the issues that must be addressed for this most innovative and decisive instrument of the APRM to be a successful one. The prime responsibility for good governance and development remains on “actors” of the leadership of the African continent. Political and leadership reforms must be based on constructive governance imperatives embedded within the confines of global dialogue and continental disposition.

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