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African Governance Report

2005

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Data Notes

The African Governance Report is based on data and analysis from the National Country Reports on governance submitted by the national research institutes contracted by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in 27 countries as part of a large-scale project on measuring and monitoring progress towards good governance in Africa. All information and data presented are extracted directly from the report unless otherwise indicated.

Because much of the analysis is based on perceptions, considerable caution should be exercised in cross-country comparisons, since the political, social and economic environment differs significantly from one country to another. The perceptions research provides a picture of the state of governance in each country only as perceived by citizens of each country at the time of the research.

Furthermore, when tallying data, responses do not add up to 100% because of non-responses.

Foreword

The *African Governance Report (AGR)* is the result of extensive research covering governance practices in 27 African countries undertaken by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) through national research institutions, which altogether sampled opinions from over 50,000 households and 2,000 experts. The findings, which were submitted to ECA between 2002 and 2004, were subjected to a rigorous process of reviews that involved both national and international experts working on governance, political and economic issues.

The report is the first major Africa-driven study of its kind, which aimed at gauging more empirically citizens' perceptions of the state of governance in their countries, while identifying major capacity deficits in governance practices and institutions and recommending best practices and solutions to address them. Emphasis was placed on local ownership of the resultant empirical body of knowledge to strengthen the legitimacy and effectiveness of policy-making and advocacy at the country and subregional levels. The data thus generated can be used as performance benchmarks by governments and all major stakeholders in addressing the concerns expressed by the citizenry and serve to monitor how faithfully the compact between them is carried forward. We have been careful not to be too prescriptive. The AGR contains recommendations that are essentially informed by country-specific realities as governance must be contextualized and home grown for it to be sustainable.

When ECA embarked on discussions for this project, the political will of African leaders to improve governance was already evolving across the continent. Consider the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which identifies democracy, human rights and good governance as the core challenges for moving the continent forward. Today, a new group of African leaders is committed to systems and institutions that are more accountable, more transparent and more sensitive to human rights and the rule of law. Nonetheless, much more is needed to advance the emerging consensus on the primacy of the capable state to sustain peace and security, promote the flourishing of civil society and the private sector, create an enabling environment for sustainable growth and development, and ensure a more just and equitable society.

The positive news is that the research findings show encouraging governance trends across the continent in significant areas. To begin with, democratic electoral transitions are becoming the constitutionally accepted mechanism for changes of power. Several African governments are in their third successive era of democratic changeover of power. Furthermore, Africa's political dispensations are

increasingly becoming more inclusive of all social groups, contributing to political stability. Women's participation in all political institutions, especially in the legislative and the executive branches, has improved significantly in some countries, though for most, it falls short of the thresholds recommended in the Beijing +10 Platform for Action.

The findings also show movement towards greater voice and accountability in the political process. More civil society groups, including the media, can now operate with much greater freedom and participate in different spheres of decision-making than in the past, though several of these organizations suffer from their own governance and capacity deficiencies. Mindful of the glare and scrutiny of these non-state actors, governments are becoming more responsive and transparent. Public financial management and accountability have also improved considerably. More countries are recording smaller budget deficits, meeting their revenue mobilization targets, demonstrating more transparency in monetary policies and improving the auditing of public funds.

Despite the considerable positive changes taking place, many challenges remain—some more daunting than others. Based on citizens' perceptions, a few noteworthy areas deserve considerable attention. Many countries still score quite low on the control of corruption, the integrity of tax systems and on the transparency, accountability and effectiveness of most branches of government, especially the civil service. Most respondents ranked the quality of government service delivery as very poor and decentralization processes as inadequate. Almost without exception, citizens and experts alike acknowledged the lack of capacity, or the inadequacy of human and material resources, as a major source of the ineffectiveness of governance institutions.

Notwithstanding the developments on the continent, it is generally accepted that better governance in Africa cannot be entrenched without the active support of our development partners. Recent encouraging actions include the joint initiatives such as the Mutual Review of Development Effectiveness, a joint ECA-OECD mechanism for ensuring that the commitment to good governance, fair trade, more resources for Africa's development and debt relief are met. The recent publication of the Commission for Africa report, which is far-reaching in its analysis of Africa's development path, and its attendant recommendations, when implemented, will go a long way in alleviating poverty and meeting the Millennium Development Goals. Lastly, there is the recent momentous decision by the G8 to cancel the debt of 18 developing countries, of which 14 are African. There is also a commitment to cancel the debt of many more in the future.

A synopsis of this report, *Striving for Good Governance in Africa*, was discussed at the Fourth African Development Forum (ADF IV), held in Addis Ababa from 11-18 October 2004 under the theme of "Governance for a Progressing Africa". The deliberations produced a consensus statement that endorsed the key findings of the report and an action plan for addressing capacity deficits in all institutions of governance (see annex 1). Moving forward will require concerted and painstaking efforts to address all the core elements of good governance—political governance, institutional effectiveness and accountability, and economic management and corporate governance. With utmost urgency and creativity, Africans and their

development partners must address the challenge of capacity by ensuring that demand-driven cross-cutting initiatives are sustainable—by developing, improving and retaining local knowledge. This must not be about resources alone, but about how to change institutional cultures and past policies at odds with effective capacity development and use.

In preparation to further this work in other countries, we took a step backwards in order to examine some of the lessons learned in the process. At an expert group meeting with the research institutes, we garnered solid advice on refining and improving the methodology and our collaborative efforts to ensure the highest levels of quality control while controlling costs, which we embrace wholeheartedly. In the meantime, as a concrete extension of our governance work, we have been making technical contributions to the African Peer Review Mechanism in partnership with the African Union, the African Development Bank, the United Nations Development Programme and the secretariat of NEPAD. Some 23 African countries have now acceded to the mechanism, reinforcing their commitment to institute good governance as the way forward. ECA has already contributed to technical support missions to Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, Rwanda and Uganda and is committed to expanding this research to more countries and through broader partnerships for capacity development.

Since we completed the study in May 2004, there have been no major changes in the overall state of governance to significantly alter the main findings and recommendations. However, some notable developments, particularly in the area of universal suffrage, deserve mention to account for some of the emerging positive trends that were unfolding over the course of 2004 and 2005. For example there were elections in Benin and Nigeria in 2003, in Botswana, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, and South Africa in 2004, and in Mauritius in 2005. And in Ethiopia, the May 2005 third multi-party elections were more open, free and participatory than any previous election the country had ever had. Unexpectedly, though, the process was marred by the outbreak of violence following the release of the preliminary results. In Uganda, voters overwhelmingly restored a multiparty political system in a constitutional referendum held on 28 July 2005. All these electoral developments augur well for a future of Africa, where unconstitutional political usurpation will be a thing of the past, and where the power of the bullet will irreversibly give way to the power of the ballot.

This notwithstanding, there are still a number of areas where progress needs to be accelerated. One such area is the practice of “president for life”. Although, this seems to be fading away and may before long become a relic of the past, political leaders in some countries seem reluctant to let go the fervent desire to cling to power and preserve their rule through attempts to secure amendments to constitutional term limits, thus permitting them to run for third or indefinite terms. However, not all of these efforts have succeeded due in part to the increasing vigilance and perseverance of civil society and opposition parties against them.

In conclusion, let me say that I am mindful of the fact that governance is a process, subject to the vagaries of endogenous and exogenous challenges. It is therefore to be expected that current positive trends will be subjected to these imperatives as

the natural birth pangs of any transition, especially one that is so recent as Africa's. I do not wish to underestimate what lies ahead, but at the same time I am very hopeful that bold and innovative policy choices will secure a brighter future for the continent.

K.Y. Amoako

Executive Secretary

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

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