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Speech of the Minister For Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Hon. Bernard Membe (MP), at the Opening of a Training Workshop on “Enhancing the Role and Effective Participation of Parliamentarians in the APRM Process”

12th November, 2008

Hotel Oceanic Bay, Bagamoyo, Tanzania

The Chairman of the National Governing Council (NGC) of APRM Tanzania, and Chairperson of this session, Prof. Hasa Mlawa,

Honourable Fred Jachan Omach, Minister for Planning of the Republic of Uganda

Your Excellencies, ambassadors

United Nations Resident Coordinator, Mr. Oscar Fernandez-Taranco

UNDP Country Director, Mr. Alain Noudehou

Representatives of the UNECA

Representatives of the Pan African Parliament (PAP)

Honourable Parliamentarians

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

I feel greatly honoured to be accorded this opportunity to make a few opening remarks to kick-start your training workshop this morning. Before I perform the official opening, however, I wish to join hands with the chairman of the Tanzania APRM National Governing Council to warmly welcome to Tanzania, those of you who have traveled from various countries to attend this training workshop. I hope you will find your stay in

Tanzania and at the historical town of Bagamoyo in particular, a rewarding and memorable experience. KARIBUNI SANA.

The theme that runs this workshop is the enhancement of the role and participation of parliamentarians in the African Peer Review Process. This is a topic that is really timely at this stage of the political development of Africa.

When the Heads of State and Government decided to establish the African Peer Review Mechanism they were serious and purposeful about ensuring that, from that time on, African states would be encouraged and urged to exercise political leadership and manage development on the basis of all criteria of good governance.

They were purposeful in the pursuit of this goal of good governance when they deliberately chose to review each other periodically, so that the exercise would not be a one-off event but would continue to encourage the adoption of standards and the development of a culture of good governance.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Although I would like to say this with modesty, it is a fact that Africa has achieved commendable success with the review of governance in the APRM. In just five years of the existence of the Mechanism, 29 states have joined it voluntarily. I wish to stress this point because it is not often realized that in the recent past states all over the world, and not just Africa, were reluctant to open themselves up for scrutiny by others even in limited areas of assessment. For example, it took ten years from 1966 to

1976 to get just ten states in the world to ratify the Covenants on Human Rights so that they could begin operating.

With regard to APRM, the comparison is highly favourable to African states. In that short time 29 of them have willingly accepted to be bound by their undertaking to be thoroughly scrutinized on whether they undertake good governance on human rights and most other aspects as well.

The current willingness by African States to be comprehensively scrutinized is being implemented in practice by these states since nearly all of them are engaged in the actual assessment right now, and nine of them have completed the first cycle of periodic review – Ghana, Rwanda, Kenya, South Africa, Algeria, Benin, Uganda, Nigeria and Burkina Faso.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

While our mode of intervention for good governance in APRM is to encourage and urge states to comply with and adopt standards of good governance, there are also provisions for taking other measures against states that continue to violate codes of good governance despite contrary advice from peers. This is why Mauritania, the 29th member of APRM family, has been suspended from APRM, following unconstitutional changes of government in August 2008, which is similar to the Coup de E'tat of August 2005 in the same country. This example of zero tolerance of bad governance is a demonstration of the commitment of African states to good governance, and it is an inspiration generated by the culture of the African Peer Review Mechanism.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

While the APRM itself was preceded and enriched by several undertakings of governance by African states, it has become a standard-setter for other initiatives. For example the African Union (AU) regards its charter of Democracy, Elections and Governance, adopted in 2007, as an inspiration and a confirmation of the adherence and perpetuation of values of good governance by APRM. In short, ladies and gentlemen, Africa is now in an era of commitment to good governance, to which APRM has contributed immensely.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This workshop is timely because it seeks to widen and deepen this commitment to good governance by bringing together this important group, of the legislators of our countries, to learn more about the process of review in APRM, to share experiences so that the review can be improved and the participation of parliamentarians enhanced, and to highlight the good practices already identified in conducting the processes so that parliamentarians can be more effective in their participation.

I do not have the slightest doubt that in its design this workshop will equip parliamentarians with the necessary tools for playing an effective role in the APRM processes. That shows the great importance of this workshop, since its results will be a practical demonstration of APRM's cardinal principles of participation and inclusiveness.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At this stage perhaps I should talk a little about my own country's commitment to APRM and to the principles of participation and inclusiveness. I will do so only in general terms, since I am told that there will be a paper that will analyse our country's experience in greater detail.

The United Republic of Tanzania signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of APRM in May 2004 and was formally accepted by its peers in the APRM family in July 2004. However, internally the process of joining the APRM could not be completed unless there was the participation and authorization of the Parliament. In order for this to occur it was necessary for the government, through its focal point, to organize a seminar for all parliamentarians, which was done in February 2005. After the Parliamentarians had ratified the MoU in February 2005, the government felt it necessary to conduct a workshop on APRM for all stakeholders, which took place here in Bagamoyo in March 2006.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This workshop of stakeholders of March 2006 was critical in the sense that it was very representative of the leading Tanzanian opinion groups, and therefore it was used to chart the way forward for APRM Tanzania.

In particular it was this workshop of stakeholders that laid the basis for the structures and composition of APRM Tanzania. Although the final make-up of the National Governing Council came later in the year, it was this representative workshop that

laid the parameters of Civil Society and Government representation. This was to crystallize in the landmark decision of the President of the United Republic of Tanzania to exclude Ministers from the Council when he met and signed the MoU for starting the review with Professor Adedeji of the Panel of Eminent Persons in June 2006. The exclusion of ministers from the NGC was intended to minimize the influence of the government in the Council, and to bolster the position of civil society in it. Civil society representatives, including academia, constitute 80% of the Council.

It is important to add that although the Focal Point Ministry that I represent works closely with APRM Tanzania structures, especially through a focal point officer of ambassadorial rank, it is not represented in the Council itself, nor is it part of the Secretariat. The result, ladies and gentlemen, is that APRM Tanzania has significant independence in decision-making and implementation, a design whose basis was laid in the representative stakeholder workshop of March 2006.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The government held three more stakeholder workshops in Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar towards the end of 2006 before the organization structure of APRM Tanzania was established, demonstrating yet again its commitment and the desire to spread education on APRM while preparing to get it off the ground.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since the establishment of APRM Tanzania the government has committed itself to playing a supporting and liaison role in the

process. My ministry ensured that APRM Tanzania had adequate premises and equipment and was properly staffed, although the recruitment authority was fully vested in the NGC. We have supported and argued for a fuller APRM budget throughout, which included adequate funding for its numerous activities and attractive salaries for its staff. Allow me here, ladies and gentlemen, to thank our parliamentarians, because they have usually passed the APRM budget as requested, even if its disbursement has been modified sometimes according to understandable financial constraints facing our government.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

APRM Tanzania provides the Ministry with regular reports of the progress of its activities, and I would like to inform you that two other critical branches of the government – the Presidency and the Parliament – have sought and received an update of the Tanzanian review process at various times.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would now like to make a comment that specifically highlights the involvement of Parliament and the other legislative house – the House of Representatives in Zanzibar. For us in Government it was critical that we involve the legislators very early. This is why, in addition to informal consultations with some of them prior to 2005, we found it crucial to hold a sensitization seminar for them before we could ask them to ratify the APRM MoU. Since 2005, however, the composition of Parliament has changed following the General Elections of that year, and so we found it important and have worked with APRM Tanzania to ensure that a second sensitization seminar

was conducted for the Tanzanian Parliament. Similarly, it was important that Members of the House of Representatives also be sensitized. It was in pursuit of these objectives that we supported APRM Tanzania in their successful sensitization of the House of Representatives and Parliament in February and August respectively in 2008.

Let me also mention that the government was fully supportive of having the legislators represented in the NGC. Although we had to balance that need with the desire not to load the NGC with too many politicians, we were able to constitute the NGC with two parliamentarians, one of whom is an opposition MP.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Although we expect that it is the Report discussed by Heads of State and Government in APRM, with its accompanying National Programme of Action (NPoA), that will highlight the deficits and strengths of our governance, pointing out what to do next, it is incumbent upon responsive governments to keep improving their countries' governance. So we do not have to wait until the Report is complete to make certain improvements. In that respect we have in recent times undertaken to strengthen our laws and institutions against corruption, money laundering and bad financial practices, while we continue to bolster our good record in having regular, competitive elections without interruption since 1965 with numerous electoral reforms.

The list of these positive government interventions for good governance that is in consonance with APRM is long and would require another long speech to enumerate. So I am not going

into details, but hopefully you will have time in this workshop to review some of our efforts.

Whatever the case, I wish to assure this august gathering that this workshop is a highly welcome event in our country and to reiterate our thanks to you all that you chose to deliberate on this important area of governance in our country.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish this workshop fruitful deliberations and great success

And now, I declare the workshop open