



Foreword

The creation of capable states is one of the most fundamental challenges in Africa today. A capable state is one in which peace and security are guaranteed and sustained. Without peace, there can be no long-term development. And without good governance, there is seldom peace.

The capable state creates an enabling political and legal environment for economic growth and promotes the equitable distribution of the fruits of growth. But growth must also be coupled with policies that deliberately attack poverty and promote education, health and social safety nets. The capable state also builds an enabling environment for the private sector to generate economic growth, jobs and income. At the core of all this is political and policy stability and a fair and consistent application of the rule of law.

This report is a synopsis of ECA's forthcoming African Governance Report. It was prepared for the 4th African Development Forum (ADF IV) convened by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in close partnership with the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the African Union (AU), in Addis Ababa on 11–15 October 2004.

The objective of the research was to ascertain current public perceptions of the state of governance in the region. By placing strong emphasis on local and national surveys, and incorporating the views of a wide cross-section of society, it aimed not only to take a snapshot of the perception of governance in various countries, but also to highlight key capacity deficits and encourage the sharing of intraregional experience and knowledge on the challenges to good governance.

The research shows, despite the many hurdles still to overcome, that governance overall is getting better in Africa and that the situation across the continent is markedly different from that a decade ago. Indeed, we are making steady progress, with citizens in many African countries expressing perceptions of positive results in several areas. For example, the political space has been liberalised, human rights and the rule of law are more widely respected and the media and civil society are advancing in many countries.

But the research also reveals considerable country variations in governance. Some

countries score consistently better than the sample average—some consistently worse. There are countries with impressive governance improvements that come from resolving conflicts and resolutely embarking on broad-based social and economic development. But there are also weak states, with the poorest performance in countries in conflict.

The citizens surveyed also spotlight areas of governance in need of far more attention. Most countries score lowest on the decentralisation of government structures. They also have low scores for the efficiency of government services, the control of corruption, the integrity of the tax system and the transparency and accountability of the civil services. So the agenda in moving forward is broad.

In summary, our findings show that there is a pressing need for the implementation of a bold and innovative programme to effectively develop and use Africa's governance capacity. We need to implement a bold, cross-cutting and comprehensive, Africa-led programme for capacity development, backed with substantial funding from our international development partners. This effort should support a concerted push to address the 10 priority areas highlighted in this report.

I hope that the 4th African Development Forum will give us the opportunity to discuss this and other ideas for meeting Africa's main capacity challenges in governance and to reach a consensus on the way forward.

I would like to end by thanking all the research institutions we worked with to collect and analyse the survey results in the 28 countries reviewed. This report would not have been possible without their considerable effort and input. In addition, we are particularly grateful to the development partners that supported us with the financial resources to undertake our African Governance Project: Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Their support has greatly assisted ECA's ability to deepen our work in the area of governance in recent years. I also would like to thank the African Development Bank and the World Bank for their significant contributions.

K.Y. Amoako

Executive Secretary
Economic Commission for Africa