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United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa



APR Panel Retreat with Strategic Partners:

Theme “Strengthening the Partnership for Transforming Africa’s Governance”

Concept Note

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United Nations Conference Centre

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

BACKGROUND

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) was launched by the Sixth Summit of the Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee (HSGIC) of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) on 9 March 2003, in Abuja, Nigeria.

The Mechanism is mandated with ensuring that the policies and practices of participating countries conform with the values, principles, codes and standards enshrined in the Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance. The APRM is one of the most innovative and transformative governance initiatives on the continent since independence. It has the potential to develop a culture of dialogue and mutual accountability between governments and the people, to encourage transparency in the functions of government at all levels, and to highlight best practices and encourage peer learning and experience sharing among African countries.

In establishing the APRM, the Heads of State and Government anticipated that the APRM Secretariat would be lean and rely on the expertise of various partner institutions.

At the conceptual stage, partner institutions were tasked to support at least one substantive area of the following four pillars of the APRM:

The APRM Base Document entitled "APRM: Organization and Processes" (NEPAD/HSGIC-3-003/APRM/Guideline/O&P) dated 9 March 2003, states: "The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has been requested to conduct technical assessments in economic governance and management and the African Development Bank (AfDB) in banking and financial standards. The two institutions will be the primary resource institutions in their respective areas of competence."

The 2004 Inaugural Summit of the Committee of Participating Heads of State and Government in the APRM held in Kigali, designated the African Development Bank (AfDB), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) - Regional Bureau for Africa as Strategic Partners due to their strategic position and comparative advantage in several areas relevant to the APRM.

The APRM Base Document titled "Organization and Processes" further stipulates that:

"On matters relating to Human Rights, democracy and political governance, the APR Forum will request the appropriate organs; Committees of the African Union already legally tasked with similar specific assessment responsibilities and have the capacity to conduct the assessments (Paragraph 6.3, NEPAD/HSGIC-3-2003/APRM/Guidelines/O&P, 9 March 2003).

I. RATIONAL FOR THE RETREAT

In adopting the strategic partner institutions during the 1st APR Forum, the Heads of State and Government further mandated the APR Panel to work on the modalities for establishing relations with institutions that may be able to assist and facilitate its work.

One of these modalities was the elaboration of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the African Peer Review Mechanism and Partner Institutions (NEPAD/APRM/12-2003/draft1 (Annex I)). This agreement spells out 11 broad areas of possible collaboration with Partner institutions, including:

- a. Awareness raising, public education and giving visibility to the APRM including through seminars and workshops.
- b. Providing relevant advice to the APR Secretariat;
- c. Providing access to data sources, and sharing of information and experiences including through electronic or internet hyperlinks;
- d. Assisting countries to prepare for and to participate in the APRM;
- e. Assisting countries to undertake self assessment and to prepare the Draft Programme of Action;
- f. Assisting the APR Secretariat to develop the Issue Paper on the countries to be reviewed;
- g. Undertaking technical assessments;
- h. Assisting countries to prepare for the Country Review Visit;
- i. Building capacity and assisting countries to implement the APRM National Programme of Action and the recommendations of the APR Team.
- j. Contributing to the technical capacity at the APR Secretariat in terms of facilitating the acquisition of competent staff for the secretariat and support for such staff as well as contribution to the library of the Secretariat.
- k. Any other assistance to the APR Secretariat as may be required and extended by the Partner Institution.

However, to date, no partner institution has signed the MOU.¹ This has been partly due to technical difficulties relating to the undefined legal status of the APR Secretariat at inception. Additionally, some preference was given for the flexibility offered by ad hoc arrangement since the APRM was evolving at the time. On the whole, the arrangement with strategic partners has therefore worked on an ad hoc basis based on the expressed needs of the APR Secretariat and the participating countries.

Based on the above, the APR Panel, the Strategic Partners and the new Transitional Management of the Secretariat, agreed to hold a Retreat to:

- develop strategies to enhance the effectiveness of the APRM;
- clarify the respective role of partners as well as institutionalize their working arrangements;

¹ UNECA and APRM Secretariat drafted a MOU in Oct 2013, unfortunately because of some administrative and legal issues of APRM the signature was postponed.

- strengthen resource mobilisation for APRM, and;
- align the APRM work program with the African Union’s Agenda 2063 and the UN Post-2015 development agenda.

II. STRATEGIC PARTNERS SUPPORT TO THE APRM

The three Strategic Partners, the UNECA, the AfDB and the UNDP-Africa Bureau have been providing significant support to the APRM. This has included the provision of technical assistance to Support and Review Missions; contributing to Background Papers (BPs) and Issues Papers (IPs); participating in Support Missions (SMs) and Country Review Missions (CRMs); contributing to the drafting of the Country Review Reports and; organizing sensitization workshops and national technical workshops on the implementation of the National Programme of Actions (NPOA) through harmonization with existing national development plans. In addition, some strategic partners have provided financial support to the APR Secretariat’s projects. Below is a snapshot of the Strategic Partners support to the APRM.

2-1 African Development Bank (AfDB)

The AfDB participated in the initial meetings to flesh out documents for the operationalisation of the APRM, in particular, the questionnaire for country assessments. In the initial set up of the Secretariat, AfDB provided financial support for the remuneration of one (1) staff position in the area of corporate governance. AfDB has also been instrumental in providing information to enhance the country background papers prepared by the Secretariat by for example sharing with the APRM the AfDB Country Governance Profile. In addition, AfDB has participated in review missions through its own staff or sourcing of experts.

The AfDB has financed the project on “Fast tracking and Streamlining the APRM Process (Revision of the APRM Questionnaire and Development of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework)” to the tune of USD 694,000. The revised APRM Questionnaire was approved by the APRM Forum during its Summit in January 2012. Furthermore, the AfDB provided USD 70,000 in support of APRM’s 10th Anniversary Commemorative events, in particular sponsoring participants to the APRM Colloquium.

2-2 UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa

Within the overall support to NEPAD, particularly the component on support to Democracy and Political Governance, UNDP has contributed to the development of the APRM concept as well as associated instruments notably, the initial APRM Questionnaire.

UNDP also organised the first stakeholders’ workshop in Cape Town in July 2003 that provided an opportunity for the Panel of Eminent Persons who had just been appointed to oversee the APRM and the 16 countries that had acceded at the time, to get together for the first time. The workshop enhanced their understanding of the APRM concept and helped chart the way forward for the operationalisation of the APRM.

Similarly, the UNDP/RBA has participated in Support and Review missions through its own staff or sourcing of experts. Other UNDP support to the APRM has been provided through:

- Advocacy and resource mobilization support
- Raising awareness through workshops
- Management of the Trust Fund

UNDP country offices also support various review related activities especially with regards to self-assessments, including the following:

- a. Financial Support: A number of UNDP country offices in the reviewed countries or preparing to be reviewed have actively provided financial support including the setting up and managing local APRM Trust Funds.
- b. Institutional, advisory and technical support to the review process.
- c. Advocacy and awareness rising: UNDP country offices have supported the launching and awareness rising of the APRM in the member countries.
- d. Administrative and logistical support: UNDP country offices have been called upon to provide administrative and logistical support to APRM meetings being organized or a Country Review Visit.
- e. Co-organization with ECA workshops on the implementation of the NPOA

In addition UNDP dedicated the sixth Africa Governance Forum (AGF VI) of 2006 to the discussion, analysis and recommendations on the best way to improve the APRM and its impact drawing on the experiences of countries which had so far commenced the review process. The 8th AGF was dedicated to further analyze selected cross-cutting issues which have emerged from APRM reviews, namely “Democracy, Elections and Management of Diversity”.

2-3 UNECA

UNECA contributed to the inception of the process and has also been active in the area of technical assistance for the implementation of the APRM including, contributing to the background documents in support of support missions and substantively participating in review missions. UNECA has also been active in the national sensitization of key APRM stakeholders including, civil society organizations, the media, and parliamentarians in order to deepen ownership and better prepare for the review process. UNECA supported three thematic areas² during the external reviews by providing its own experts.³

UNECA interventions can be summarized as follows:

- Technical assistance with the secondment of a senior advisor and backstopping advice to the APR Secretariat;

² Political and Economic Governance as well as Socioeconomic development

³ UNECA has provided the greatest support in terms of expert numbers in Support and Country Review Missions.

- Providing support at each of the five stages of the peer review process—from Country Support Missions to the finalization of the Country Review Report and to the implementation of the National Program of Action;
- Providing data and documents in the areas of governance and socioeconomic development for country profiles and background reports especially- The Economic Report on Africa (ERA) and the African Governance Report (AGR);
- Conducting national and regional capacity building workshops to improve the implementation of the process and strengthen its structures;
- Conducting research and developing analytical studies on various aspects of the APRM, such as cross-cutting issues on election and diversity management, corruption, land governance, gender equality etc.;
- Producing various technical reports, guidelines and manuals to support member states to effectively implement APRM process through lessons learnt;
- Establishing an African Experts Database for external reviews missions, and;
- Developing a framework and providing technical support on the harmonization of APRM-National Programme of Action (NPOA) with existing national development plans in collaboration with UNDP.

UNECA fully sponsored the APRM documentary which was produced in 2013 to celebrate its 10 year Anniversary. The budget for the documentary was about USD 200,000. It documents Africa’s governance achievements, challenges and prospects, as seen through the evolution of the APRM process since 2003. The APRM Documentary provides a narrative that promotes better widespread understanding of the APRM as “Africa’s most innovative thinking on governance”.

III. CHALLENGES TO THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Overall, the organizational relationship has worked fairly well with Strategic Partners responding as much as possible to the requests from the APRM. However, the ad hoc nature of the arrangement has created some challenges regarding the delineation of roles and modalities for the operationalisation of the strategic partnership in certain instances. Some challenges include:

3-1 From the APRM perspective:

- a) Apparent waning support for the country review process (e.g. number and level of experts on the Review Missions, participation for only part of the Missions and increased use of one or a few consultants by some Strategic Partners);
- b) Removal of APRM support units and programs during the restructuring of Strategic partner programmes (e.g. UNECA, UNDP)
- c) Limited involvement of the APR Secretariat in activities initiated by the Strategic Partners on the APRM;
- d) Lack of brainstorming platforms for strategic partners that are appropriate for APRM contributions, and;
- e) Insufficient technical and financial support in view of massive APRM work.

3-2 Strategic Partners perspective

- a) Ad hoc scheduling of missions and short notice to participate;
- b) Lack of Annual Work Plan;
- c) Lack of clarity about their roles during APRM Missions and with respect to the APRM as a whole;
- d) Limited capacity of the APR Secretariat;
- e) Lack of legal framework to institutionalize the role of Strategic Partners;
- f) Delay in the integration of the APRM into the African Union;
- g) Multiplicity of actors which delays decision making and;
- h) APRM in decision in allowing Strategic Partners to attend certain meetings (particularly meetings of the APR Forum). The APR Forum recently clarified that the heads of Strategic Partner Institutions can participate in the APR Forum meetings but the participation of technical staff in these meetings remains unclear.

IV. APRM: IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS, CHALLENGES AND PRIORITY ACTIONS

4-1 Implementation progress

Eleven years on, the APRM, as a self-monitoring mechanism, has demonstrated its real potential for improving governance through “collective leadership and responsibility” by bringing together all key stakeholders in government, civil society and private society to discuss societal challenges and ways to overcome them. The APRM Country Review Report and the National Plan of Action are important outcomes of the review process, which articulate the shared visions and goals to be implemented by the state.

In terms of the number of countries acceding to the APRM, considerable progress has been made. The recent accession of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea during the APRM Forum of January 2014 brings the membership of the APRM to 34 (Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Rep. of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, and Zambia). Seventeen (17) of these countries have completed the first cycle of the review process, have been peer reviewed by the APRM Forum and have started the implementation of their NPOAs.⁴ Among the countries that have completed the first cycle of implementation of their NPOA, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, and South Africa are now preparing for the second review.

⁴They are the following: *Ghana, Rwanda, Kenya, South Africa, Algeria, Benin, Uganda, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mozambique, Lesotho, Mauritius, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Zambia and Tanzania.*

A number of other countries are at various stages of the review process, i.e. Support Missions, Country Review Missions, and 2nd CRMs. [See the attached APRM Work Plan for 2015]

4-2 Challenges

Although 50 percent of APRM members have completed the review process, the other 50 percent are yet to engage in the process beyond the signing of the Memorandum of Accession. The reasons are either lack of political will or a lack of technical and financial capacity to implement the review process. Furthermore, the APRM is yet to witness the voluntary accession of all member states of the African Union.

In most countries, civil society and private sector actors have not been sufficiently and systematically involved and engaged in the APRM process. Limited public awareness of the APRM thus remains the most critical challenge facing the Mechanism. There is therefore an urgent need to devise strategies to increase the awareness and ownership of the APRM at all levels (from national to the grassroots), to the RECs and all AU institutions.

National APRM structures (APRM Focal Point, the National Governing Council and the National Secretariat) are important vehicles for effectively driving the implementation of the APRM process at the country-level, including ensuring the popularization of the APRM and national ownership. There is a need to develop a “Guideline Manual” that clearly defines their mandate and responsibilities **prior to, during and post the review process.**

The implementation of the National Programme of Action once a country has completed the review process is currently one of the biggest challenges. In many instances, the NPOA is largely a shopping list that does not critically prioritize what is implementable and the realistic timelines to implement the recommendations. Few countries have integrated the NPOA into their National Development Plans (NDPs). The harmonization and integration of the APRM-NPOA into NDPs will facilitate the implementation of APRM recommendations, avoid duplication and rationalize the utilization of resources. To this end, in 2011, UNDP and UNECA developed a framework document on the subject and organized several technical workshops to facilitate the integration of NPOAs into NDPs. However few countries have harmonized their NPOAs with their development strategies. It is therefore important that more attention be given to the NPOA. In addition, there is a need to revive enthusiasm and interest in the APRM including in the countries that have already gone through the review process.

4-3 APRM Priorities

APRM priorities are consistent with the APRM Strategic Plan 2013-2016 and seek to specifically respond to the challenges facing the Mechanism, with a view to reposition the APRM as the governance flagship of the African Union. The strategic plan aims to:

1. Fast track the implementation of the APRM process in Member States where the process has stalled or not moved beyond the signing of the accession MOU;
2. Acceleration of the integration of APRM into the African Union;

3. Improve APRM institutions and processes, including strengthening the capacity of the APRM Secretariat;
4. Design and implement a robust communications strategy for public awareness and increasing the momentum and interest in the APRM. This may require using *continental champions* to lead the process of advocacy and renewal;
5. Peer learning and sharing of best practices and cross-cutting issues at all levels beyond the peer review which is done at the APR Forum level;
6. Systematically mainstream the NPOA into National Development Plans and MTEFs and implement a Monitoring and Evaluation framework;
7. Timely submission of the Annual Progress Reports;
8. Strengthen the partnership between APRM Strategic Partners, NEPAD, the RECs and AU organs and structures, and;
9. Promote technical cooperation with other UN and international organisations in areas of common interest (e.g. UNOSAA, UN Women, UN Global Compact, OECD, etc.) which have already expressed interest to partner with APRM. This will increase the global visibility of the APRM and its work.

V- CRITICAL ISSUES TO INFORM THE AGENDA OF THE RETREAT

1. What mechanisms can be employed to help accelerate APRM accession and implementation in more countries?
2. How can partners help assess the impact of the Peer Review process to date in order to inform strategies for enhancing the APRM?
3. What are the challenges and opportunities for NPOA implementation? How can opportunities be leveraged and challenges addressed?
4. What strategies can the APRM employ to transform Africa's governance through better alignment with the AU Agenda 2063 and the UN Post-2015 Development agenda?
5. How can the APRM knowledge management system be institutionalized and how can the APRM's corporate image be revitalized?
6. In what ways can the APRM be better integrated into AU structures and processes?
7. How can Strategic Partners and APRM institutionalise ways of working together and collaborating? (bilateral MOU or composite MOU)
8. What should APRM consider in developing a Resource Mobilization Strategy and how can the APRM Trust Fund be effectively managed?
9. How to build/ strengthen synergies between the various programmes undertaken by Strategic Partners and the APRM [e.g. African Governance Report (AGR), African Governance Forum (AGF), APRM- Country Review Reports, AfDB Country Governance Profile]
10. How can Strategic Partners optimize their technical support to the APRM Secretariat?

VI. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

1. Clarified division of labour amongst Strategic Partners focused on their respective expertise.
2. Signed bilateral MOU between the APRM and each Strategic Partner or a composite MOU with the APRM Secretariat
3. Strengthened technical support (during Support and Review Missions, workshops, etc)
4. Shared and discussed the contribution of each Strategic Partner in the 2014 (Oct-Dec) and 2015 work plan
5. More support and collaboration for the implementation of the NPOA
6. Established information sharing system between the APRM and Strategic Partners
7. Resource mobilisation strategy
8. Strategy on repositioning the APRM

VII- Documentation

The following documents will be shared with participants:

- The Concept Note of the Retreat;
- The provisional agenda of the Retreat;
- The draft 2015 Work Plan of the APRM;
- Sample of a Memorandum of Understandings between the APRM Panel of Eminent persons and Strategic Partners; and
- Status of participation of Strategic Partners in the Country Review Missions

VIII- Partnerships and Participation

The Retreat will be organized by the APR Panel, the APRM Secretariat and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

The main participants will be the APR Panel of Eminent Persons, the APRM continental Secretariat and the APRM Strategic Partners: United Nations Development Program Regional Centre for Africa, African Development Bank and the Economic Commission for Africa

IX- Venue

The Retreat will be held on 24 January 2015 at the United Nations Conference Centre, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

X- Contacts

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