

**South African Institute of International Affairs**  
**Scoping Workshop: Development of Capacity in Civil Society**  
**to Track Implementation on the National APRM Programme**  
**12 October 2010**

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Programme Director,

Head of the South African Institute of International Affairs,

Members of Civil Society,

Members of Business,

Members from Academia,

Invited guests,

Ladies and gentleman,

It is an honour for us, as government, to address a gathering of this magnitude and in such an important aspect of our work. As a focal point for the APRM process in South Africa I always enjoy and look forward to addressing people on the work of the APRM NGC.

Ladies and gentleman,

On 29-30 of September 2010, APRM experts met in Kampala, Uganda to explore strategies for harmonizing APRM Plans of Action with development Plans of Action in APRM participating countries. The issue of civil society's capacity to play its role in national APRM programmes was discussed at length and the general consensus was that countries need to continue to explore creative ways to strengthen civil society involvement in the African Review Mechanism.

Let me by way of introduction to my input reflect on the background of the South Africa's APRM programme.

The national APRM programme is anchored by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, national priorities, AU Guidelines for APRM Participating countries, the NEPAD Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance, as well as by national, continental and international instruments for the protection of human rights - including the rights of women, children and persons with disabilities.

The African Peer Review Mechanism or APRM is a mutually agreed upon self-monitoring mechanism voluntarily acceded to by Member States of the African Union. 30 out of 52 countries have already signed up for the APRM. The primary purpose of this instrument 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. This is an African initiative, for African countries and managed by Africans themselves.

The African Peer Review Mechanism further encourages country level APRM programmes to strengthen capability by sharing and reinforcement of APRM experience and best practice, as well as by identification of implementation deficiencies and assessment of capacity development needs.

The capacity for civil society to deliver on the responsibilities of the national APRM programmes is critical. Furthermore, civil society participation in monitoring of implementation of the national PoA is one of the requirements of the APRM.

When South Africa acceded to the APRM on 09 March 2003, we did so understanding that we were obliged to mobilise stakeholder participation in the national APRM programme. This was not a new principle to Government. As you all know, while there is always room for improvement, the South African Government has always encouraged governance processes to include civil society participation. The myriad of Government partnerships through Departments and other Government structures are examples in this regard. The izimbizo, door to door and community visits with citizens, as well as the Presidential hotline are also examples of Government's commitment to engage with our people.

Indeed, the issues of especially financial capacity in civil society - coupled with inadequate participation of the myriad of community based organisations in governance processes, have always undermined sustainable and meaningful involvement of civil society in governance processes.

This capacity issue is a challenge to us all and we need to jointly explore viable strategies to effect changes for the better.

## **Status of the National APRM Programme**

A very broad overview on the **architecture of the national APRM programme**, the **APRM implementation status** and the **APRM role of civil society** will provide us with the baseline we need to determine with some accuracy, the capacity civil society needs to deliver on APRM obligations.

### **1. Key SA APRM Architecture Structures**

The Minister in the Department of Public Service and Administration is the national APRM Focal Point and an APRM Unit has been established by MPSA to serve as the national secretariat for the Focal Point.

In compliance with APRM norms and standards, South Africa was peer reviewed in July 2007. This facilitated the development of the national APRM Plan of Action (PoA). The Country Review Report was released in September 2007 and subsequently, South Africa prepared its First Progress Report on the Implementation of the Programme of Action (PoA). This report was tabled at the Summit of the AU Heads of States and Governments in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2009.

The APRM National Plan of Action is in place and is scheduled for review in 2012/13 when we prepare for the 2<sup>nd</sup> country peer review.

We have the National Governing Council and APRM Focal Points in Departments and Provinces

## **2. APRM Implementation Status**

As already indicated, the 2<sup>nd</sup> PoA progress report will be ready for tabling at the Summit for AU Heads of States and Governments in January 2011 and it will be a public document thereafter. As I speak to you we have just finished consolidating inputs we received at our APRM NGC on 04<sup>th</sup> of October, and also those we received from other role players such as SAIIA. We thank all those who participated in ensuring that our report is indeed a

country report that reflects a diverse of views from South Africa about itself.

You will all recall that the struggle for liberation was driven by aspirations for human dignity, access to quality life, holistic inclusivity in national processes, development of the human potential and other human rights principles. It is our hope that the same applies in the Business sector and other APRM relevant organs of civil society.

My office is currently engaged in a process that seeks to facilitate that Departments integrate annual APRM performance targets in their 2011/12 operational plans. We wish to encourage civil society and the corporate sector to also explore processes that achieve the same in their organisations. Individual and collective performance on these targets is what will indicate continuous APRM improvement on an annual basis in our PoA progress reports to the AU.

The annual targets approach will also enable our APRM M&E systems to focus oversight on targets PoA implementing agencies have outlined for themselves.

### **3. APRM Role of Civil Society**

The role of civil society in the national APRM programme needs to be seen against the roles of the National Focal Point and the National Governing Council. The Civil Society component is arguably the most important component of the APRM process, it is what makes our NGC complete. Without active participation from our Civil Society sector this process would be devoid of any legitimacy. It is Civil Society that tells us, as government, if we are working, doing the right things and doing them right or if we are doing neither. The voices of the millions of South Africans who are the intended beneficiaries of this process is heard through the Civil Society sector.

Therefore, the participation of this sector cannot be overemphasized. However, throughout the continent there are challenges with regards to organising and marshalling this sector to assume its rightful position, of holding government and business accountable for promises they made. Our interactions with our counter-parts in the continent have revealed to us that there is a lot of work that still needs to be done is assisting our Civil society in order to see materialize the objectives of the APRM.

Interaction with our own civil society here in South Africa, on their participation in the APRM, has revealed that, in the main, our civil

society experience challenges in relation to ownership, access to information and financial resources.

Ladies and gentleman;

### **Lack of National Ownership of the APRM**

There is inadequate awareness in the country on the APRM and the national project. This does not only compromise meaningful broad-based participation in APRM processes (a key principle of the APRM), however, more significantly, poses a major threat to the successful implementation of the NPoA and sustainability of the initiative in its entirety. This situation should be corrected to build the needed foundation – common ownership and commitment to its success, through continuous public education and engagement.

As government we took a conscious and deliberate decision to decentralize the APRM process, this also extends to the production of our Annual Progress report. As you already know we traversed all nine provinces in collecting information that will go into our report. In this way we have ensured that at least at a provincial level the APRM process is embraced. Of course we still need to market it further to the regions, sub-regions, and

wards to ensure that every South African claims ownership of this process. This we cannot and we will not do alone we will work with our stakeholders.

### **Access to Information**

The quality and regularity of the information provided by the National and Continental Secretariats for public consumption directly affects the extent to which interested civil society and other stakeholders can make a meaningful contribution to the process. Information sharing thus becomes of critical importance. Of import, in this regard, is the provision of this information in user-friendly formats (i.e. mother-tongue publications).

In this regard as government we have developed booklets that explain the APRM process and these booklets are in all eleven official languages. By this action we are hoping that the gap that currently exist will be bridged as more and more people become aware of this process and how it works, including the benefits of their participation.

### **Lack of Financial Resources**

For the APRM to be successful there is a need for national governments to plan for and allocate sufficient resources to

enable the successful implementation of the APRM programme. The lack of financial resources for civil society has been identified as one of the key challenges in the participation of all identified stakeholders with the APRM and by extension their ability to monitor the implementation of the NPoA. Government needs to commit to drawing up credible cost-estimates and budgets for projects that are geared towards the implementation and monitoring of the NPoA.

Ladies and gentleman,

I should be quick to add that the list of challenges is not exhaustive nor is it uniform. Obviously different NGO's experience different challenges. Your big NGO's such as yourself are seldom confronted with funding challenges and they also have access to all relevant information. However, your small NGO's are the most vulnerable one's when it comes to these challenges and it is with these NGO's where we experience the greatest difficulty. What compounds the problem is that due to their location they represent the most vulnerable group in our society, and these challenges prevent those vulnerable voices from being heard. And this is the biggest challenge for us as government.

In solving this challenge we will need all to pull together, we will need business to contribute financially in supporting these critical role-players and as government we will also play our part in ensuring that the little that we have is apportioned according to need.

On the African continent we also see that some of the civil society challenges are not so much different from our own civil society. In this regard while in Kampala, Uganda we learned that some of the APRM related challenges experienced in other parts of the continent are:

- The alignment within this sector regarding the understanding, interpretation of issues in the development of programmes. It has been observed that there is often differential understanding of issues, processes and procedures among community based organisations, NGOs and development agencies. As we all know, differential understanding in a sectors cause unnecessary tensions. This challenge must therefore be addressed if APRM participating countries are to benefit fully from this process.
- The national APRM agenda may not always align with that of development agencies funding organs of civil society

- Civil society APRM structures need sustainable financial support

I wish to suggest therefore, that this workshop finds time, to reflect on these challenges and propose solutions to some, if not all of them. My office will be ready to meet with you for further reflection on possible strategies. We will also be available to struggle together with you in exploring and mapping out viable strategies to mobilise resources for APRM PoA implementation in civil society

## **Conclusion**

The APRM continues to be the key governance monitoring instrument on the continent. It aspires to advance delivery on public service and administration, to address the issues of accountability, corruption, as well as integrity in governance. It strengthens civil society participation in governance processes and it seeks to strengthen public service reforms.

Partnerships between Governments and Civil Society structures stand to ensure continuous improvement on public service and

governance practices. It is critical therefore, that these partnerships continue to be strengthened across the continent.

In South Africa, Government acknowledges that civil society cannot always agree with decisions taken in Government. I have yet to see a country where this has been achieved. Indeed, this is understood because the rationale that drives civil society is not always aligned to what drives decision making in Government. Government institutions straddle a myriad of national implications when it takes governance decisions.

It is not uncommon; therefore, that civil society and Government periodically agree to disagree on issues. What is of importance, is to ensure that disagreement in this context, does not undermine the APRM aspiration to foster the adoption of critical policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development, as well as accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration.

Lastly, I wish you a very fruitful meeting.

Thank you.