



RECOMMENDATIONS

To the APRM Secretariat:

- The APRM Secretariat should initiate dialogue with the aim of finding synergies and linkages with other African Union organs to rejuvenate interest and garner momentum in the APRM and NPOA processes.
- The APRM Secretariat should support and exchange information and dialogue with national champions, for example, CSOs, NGOs and focal points, on the need and advantage of integrating NPOA with other NDPs.

To the Technical Institutes (TIs):

- TIs supporting the APRM process at continental levels – including the UN Economic Commission for Africa, UN Developmental Programme and the African Development Bank, among others – should support CSOs to enhance their oversight role. This could take the form of regular information sharing and consultative meetings on the advantages of aligning NPOA with other national development goals and vice versa, as well as the importance of integrating NPOA into the common medium-term expenditure frameworks.

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Aligning NPOA with Other Frameworks for National Development: A Formula to Revitalise Forward-looking, Broad-based and Participatory Development in Africa?

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The loss of momentum of one of the most ingenious African-initiated and African-led mechanisms for monitoring governance reforms and deficiencies, and nurturing African solutions to African problems, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), is most worrying. Reasons cited for the diminishing interest at continental, regional and national levels are various. They include a lack of interest from heads of state, who often view the recommendations arising from the review process as criticism of their leadership; and the inability of state institutions or focal points to undertake the exercise, to facilitate the implementation of the recommendations, or to continually monitor and evaluate progress made amidst other tasks of national interest. This is exacerbated by a lack of financial support and the non-appreciation of the National Programmes of Action (NPOA), which is meant to strengthen National Developmental Plans (NDPs), as well as other development agendas and goals.

The policy briefing suggests that currently two avenues could be readily used to renew the interest of both the state and society at all governance levels in the APRM process. First is the alignment of the NPOA with national development processes, including NDPs and related national development initiatives, such as the integration of the

RECOMMENDATIONS CONTINUED

- TIs should also provide more technical assistance to the NGCs, focal points and relevant African Union organs, for example, NEPAD and the RECs. More technical assistance supported by ongoing transparent dialogue and information sharing could restore interest in the NPOA.

To the CSOs:

- National CSOs should explore the possibility of appointing a CSO focal group to monitor the progress of NPOA integration and the APRM process on a continual basis.
- NGCs should review their work to ensure greater engagement of CSOs with the focal points and relevant government departments on an ongoing basis.
- CSOs should investigate entry points for more effective communication of their views on the integration of NPOA into national and regional development plans to African Union organs and institutions focused on the APRM process and related governance questions.

planning documents. Second is the linkage of the process (and especially lessons learnt and best practices accrued from the process) with other African Union organs and institutions, for example, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, and the regional economic communities in particular. This will help to refocus attention on the original objective of the APRM process, namely to contribute at all levels of government and to contribute to the development, integration and stability of Africa. This policy briefing will concentrate on the former objective.

INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS THE APRM?

The APRM is a mutually agreed-upon instrument

for self-monitoring by the participating member states of the African Union. The primary purpose of the APRM is to foster the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development, and accelerated subregional and continental economic integration through the sharing of experiences and reinforcement of successful and best practice, including identifying deficiencies and assessing the needs for capacity building.² The Country Self-Assessment Reports, together with the National Programmes of Action (NPOA), are the most important products of the extensive countrywide consultations. Since its inception in March 2003, 31 countries have acceded to the APRM voluntarily. These countries are Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda and Zambia. Out of these countries, 15 have thus far been reviewed: Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Uganda. On 26 January 2013 at the 18th APR Summit, two countries, Tunisia and Chad, signed a Memorandum of Understanding to accede to the APRM, making them the 32nd and 33rd countries to embrace the mechanism.³

NATIONAL PROGRAMMES OF ACTION

Central to the APRM is the country self-assessment process, with its elaborate methodology encompassing nationwide consultations with various stakeholders in political, economic, corporate and socio-economic governance. Critical documents, the NPOA are products of this exercise. NPOA identify shortcomings in a nation's socio-economic, political, economic and corporate governance. They not only highlight the various deficiencies in these governance areas, but also seek to provide clear commitments that are realisable within a specific time period

by the responsible ministry or focal point for implementing the outlined recommendations. The objectives, which are captured in a matrix, are aimed at guiding and mobilising efforts from the requisite institutions to implement the necessary changes for improvements in these governance areas. NPOA also outline the necessary capacities to be put in place, both in terms of monetary injection and expertise to achieve the targeted objectives. NPOA are envisaged to be the guiding documents of actions towards a country's holistic national development. The difference between NPOA and National Developmental Plans (NDPs) is that the former are programmes of action strategically articulating tangible changes in the four pillars of governance, whereas the latter are elaborate policies that primarily guide the socio-economic developmental path of a country. This is the catch point. NPOA are meant to build on, incorporate and synergise with the relevant elements of various existing programmes, policies and strategies that address the key APRM objectives, for example, Poverty Reduction Structural Papers, good governance programmes, human rights action plans, gender equity strategies and the millennium development plans.⁴

THE NEGLECT AND DEMISE OF NPOA

Despite their immense potential to bring about change, the NPOA have been neglected, their implementation has not garnered enough momentum, or, in some instances, they have been shelved altogether. This lack of support and authority of NPOA has been exacerbated by the declining role of the National Governing Councils (NGCs) and the overall lethargy and loss of interest in the APRM process by both the state and society. This is unfortunate, as NPOA have tremendous potential to support dialogue between the state and society on key development challenges facing the region and the proposed roadmaps to address these.

THE ADVANTAGES OF NPOA

- **NPOA as measurable indicators:** NPOA clearly show governments and their citizenry where progress has been realised and where efforts need to be galvanised to bring about transformation.
- **NPOA showcase best practices:** Different country-level best practices that have worked to bring about transformation are outlined in a country's NPOA. This showcasing is a strong tool for experience sharing of best practices that have worked in certain contexts and which can be replicated, albeit with adjustments in other contexts.
- **NPOA as a process to facilitate participatory development:** NPOA provide a broad framework of participatory development, where both governments and the citizenry feel included in matters that affect their lives and well-being.
- **NPOA as a learning tool:** Apart from participating in development, citizens are exposed to the process of national planning. Citizens begin to understand how governments allocate both finances and expertise to a nation's different development objectives.
- **NPOA as a powerful instrument of transparency and accountability:** Given the intense consultative exercise, NPOA lay bare different socio-economic, political and economic management priorities that need to be addressed, as well as the change to be realised by involving different actors. Given this transparency, NPOA are a powerful instrument to hold governments accountable and to demand accountability for action or non-action from the different focal points and agencies of implementation.
- **NPOA as an advocacy tool:** Meeting the governance standards and realising the changes outlined in the NPOA can be a strong advocacy tool, especially in the global and international governance arena. Countries can demonstrate, both qualitatively and quantitatively, how they have improved and responded to the various governance

challenges facing them in the political, socio-economic, corporate and economic management fields.

REVIVING NPOA

NPOA are extremely important for a government's overall development. The following are ways in which NPOA could be revived and given the place of prominence that they deserve in NDPs.

- **Finding champions:** Civil society organisations (CSOs) and especially the NGCs are of profound importance in holding different implementation agencies to account. As important, however, is their recognition of the efforts, goals and objectives that have been accomplished. The APRM Secretariat and its various strategic partners could provide technical skills and other forms of support to the NGCs and CSOs.
- **Creating channels of influence:** Regional economic communities (RECs) are important channels of influence, as they have established structures, mechanisms and plans that are directed at regional integration as an outcome of national economic development aspirations. Given that their consultative channels and avenues of influence are intimately tied to the national and regional concerns of member states, the findings of the NPOA are hugely relevant for the overall goals and strategic positioning of the RECs. The integration of the findings of the NPOA at a regional level could have profound implications for the way that the RECs engage their members on their developmental goals and aspirations. This also creates an opportunity to discuss how these goals could be integrated into a common and stronger regional vision.
- **Finding synergies:** The findings of the NPOA could be integrated with the activities of other governance structures at the African Union

level. These include institutions and initiatives such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Pan African Parliament, the Peace and Security Council, the Economic, Social and Cultural Council, and the RECs. This integration will boost the cohesion and convening power of the APRM process, as well as helping other important continental initiatives that share the same goal.

- **Managing diversity:** NPOA provide an overarching framework under which all other national development initiatives such as NDPs and Millennium Development Goals should reside. Given their consultative approach, NPOA create an opportunity to manage and appropriately channel diverse expectations and interventions in the pursuit of national development. As discussed, these frameworks are critical in other *niveaux* of influence, for example, at the RECs and African Union levels.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Roseline M Achieng is the head of the Governance and APRM programme at the South African Institute of International Affairs. She wishes to thank Jeggan Grey Johnson at the Open Society Institute, African Governance and Monitoring Project, Grant Masterson at the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa and Desiree Assogbavi at the Oxfam Liaison Office to the African Union for their valuable input.
- 2 The APRM base document is available at NEPAD, <http://www.nepad.org>.
- 3 See APRM, <http://aprm-au.org/news/launch-commemoration-aprm-10th-anniversary>.
- 4 UN Economic and Social Council, *APRM and the Quest for a Developmental State: The Role of CSOs in Implementing the National Programme of Action*. Addis Ababa: Economic Commission for Africa, 2013.

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