Final Conference Communiqué
"The APRM + 10: Reviewing A Decade Of Peer Learning and Projecting a Future for Governance in Africa"

We, participants at the conference titled: "The APRM + 10: Reviewing A Decade Of Peer Learning and Projecting a Future for Governance in Africa", reflecting on the significant moment commemorated by the OAU/AU 50 year anniversary and 10th anniversary of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), reiterate our shared commitment to strengthening the APRM and the core principles that it supports;

We recall the commitments made by civil society during its "APRM: Taking Peer Learning to the Next Level" conference in Kampala, Uganda in July 2010 to continue to strengthen and sustain civil society participation in the APRM through strategic and effective partnerships and collaboration between state and non-state actors to dispense responsibility towards consolidating the gains made within the mechanism, and address short comings and obstacles that hinder the progress of the APRM at national, regional and continental levels;

We affirm our support to the work of the APRM to promote democracy and good governance in Africa, and the strengthening state-society relations;

We re-affirm the vision of the APRM's founders, and recognise the importance of strengthening the mechanism's institutions at continental and national levels, including the Committee of Participating Heads of State and Government (APR Forum), the APR Panel of Eminent Persons, the APRM Secretariat, National Focal Points, National Governing Councils (NGCs) and Secretariats;

We recall that the African Union has, over the last decade, established several imperatives that support governance in Africa namely: the Peace and Security Architecture, African Governance Architecture, the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, an initiative to strengthen Values and Principles of the Public Service and Administration in African, a Human Rights strategy for Africa and the Shared Values agenda. These and other normative frameworks and mechanisms adopted by the African Heads of State and Government present a unique opportunity for the APRM to serve as a bridging mechanism towards deepening democracy, prompting human rights, economic justice and good governance in Africa;

We recognise that after a decade in existence, the APRM still remains relevant and represents a shared commitment by participating countries to redress Africa's developmental and governance challenges, as demonstrated by the 33 nations, representing over 800 million people on the African continent, who have acceded to the process;

We fully appreciate the achievements and results registered under the APRM, an innovative mechanism that has facilitated and widened political space for citizens to participate in national dialogue, which has at times, led to positive outcomes of government policies towards governance and national development agendas. The profiling of best practices and diagnosis of national challenges through the peer learning exercise has also further facilitated a channel for meaningful collaboration of African leaders to resolve problems collectively at continental level;

We are cognisant of the fact that the APRM has also created an environment for knowledge creation and generation, whereby the legitimacy of the design of indicators, and output of research that guide the processes of the exercise remain relevant, with high potential for utility at multiple levels and sectors, adding tremendous value to the diverse sectors that positively impact on the progress of the African continent and its citizens;

We are fully aware that 17 countries have completed their reviews, presenting an opportunity for the APRM structures to focus on mainstreaming the National Programmes of Action (NPoAs) into national planning processes, to ensure their effective harmonisation and implementation;

We are confident that with a new leadership at the level of the Forum and Panel of Eminent Persons overseeing the APRM since May 2013, and after ten years in existence, the mechanism has the impetus to rejuvenate and consolidate its gains, learn from its challenges, and further improve on its vision and mission to promote and broaden governance through a citizenry-driven process in Africa;

We appreciate the fact that the APRM process is costly, lengthy and complicated, which places heavy demands on both state and non-state actors wishing to remain engaged throughout the process. The lack of standardisation of structures, progress, timelines and delegated line ministries (focal points) across member states further compounds this challenge. It oftentimes serves to isolate the APRM processes, especially the implementation phases of the NPoAs, which are in many cases segregated from national planning processes and policies. This has led to lack of prioritisation within NPoAs, which are also pegged to unrealistic budgets;

We are concerned that the funding structure also continues to undermine ownership, whereby international donor organisations remain largely responsible for resourcing processes as well as plans of action within the APRM structures, policies and practices both at national and continental levels;

We are further concerned that the different levels of understanding about the APRM amongst state, APRM institutions and civil society are still prevalent, after ten years of the existence of the mechanism. This has contributed to the APRM being unable to reach its full potential in broadening participation and dialogue on governance and development, further impinging on accountability and transparency by governments engaged in the process;

It is in this spirit of partnership and collaboration of peer learning, as well as information-sharing over a decade of reflection, that participants of this conference identified areas that state and non-state actors engaged in the APRM should address, in order to ensure that the primary governance instrument remains a relevant and dynamic contributor to the values and lives of the African citizenry:

Recommendations:
APRM Institutions:
- Integrate APRM into the AU including the emerging African Governance Architecture without compromising its autonomy and inclusiveness
- Establish clear and concise governance procedures for each institutional level of the APRM
- Design a more appropriate framework for involving and engaging non-state actors at all levels of the APRM
- Make the APRM process more transparent and accountable by making all information, reports and decisions affecting the mechanism publicly accessible in a timely manner
- Universally implement the APRM Monitoring and Reporting template in all participating member states so that progress reports can be standardised
- Clearly define the APRM's unique role in the emerging African Governance Architecture as a bridging mechanism, which will aid in the coordination and complementarity between the APRM and the different governance actors/frameworks at the national, regional and continental levels

- Increase use of enabling technologies to disseminate information and increase participation in the APRM (specifically the APRM website)
- Establish guidelines for the process by which national progress reports to the APR Forum on the implementation of each NPoA are adopted (on a consultative basis with all stakeholders)
- Ensure that the independence of the NGCs is maintained, whereby the majority of the members are non-state actors, and are selected through a transparent process with clear expertise and capacity to engage with the process

Governments:
- Use the APRM reports as early warning instruments in addressing marginalisation, lack of political participation and election management, freedom of expression, access to information, land, water, food, education and health, conflict resolution, unemployment and natural resource management
- Embrace the principles of the APRM to create an opportunity to nurture the national dialogues on public policy and development issues that the mechanism provides
- Broaden the political/policy debate for non-state actors by being more accountable and transparent about the process and its implementation
- Use the APRM to strengthen the quality of statistics upon which the mechanism relies to better identify issues, challenges, opportunities and threats to the national characters of participating states
- Put in place the requisite national structures and mechanisms as a matter of urgency, to address the slow pace at which the APRM reviews are being executed
- Integrate the NPoAs into other national planning and budgeting processes , and identify areas where new resources are needed
- Allocate sufficient funds to enable the self-assessment processes to be effectively conducted together with the NPoAs' implementation

Parliaments:
- Get fully engaged with the APRM process and designate a committee to remain anchored with the process so as to ensure that the oversight roles are fully deployed
- Ensure parliamentarians are represented at NGCs
- Provide the Pan African Parliament (PAP) with an opportunity to nominate and comment on the nominations of panel members
- Cultivate and utilise the technical expertise of civil society organisations (CSOs) working on the APRM to create a stronger convening power around the tracking and monitoring of NPoAs and other commitments undertaken by participating states
- Get involved in country review missions (CRMs)
- The PAP should exercise its mandate to receive full periodic briefings on the progress of the APRM from the Secretariat and make recommendations for improvement of the process at all levels
- Analyse the NPoA budget before appropriating monies for it, and create a monitoring mechanism to ensure its implementation and follow-up

Civil Society:
- Create systems to ensure respect for the commitment to consult widely with all national stakeholders – including traditional and religious institutions, organised labour and community-based organisations (CBOs) and not only registered non-governmental organisations (NGOs) based in urban and semi-urban areas
- Bring the positive lessons of popular participation from the APRM into other national processes

- Recognise and appreciate the important and significant role played in strengthening the APRM and endeavour to continue to play a balanced, constructive and complementary role in the process
- Strengthen and broaden initiatives for awareness and dissemination of the APRM amongst African people, through advocacy, education, participation and monitoring and evaluation of the APRM
- Strengthen the sharing of lessons learned, good practices identified and knowledge generation in order to improve on the mechanism at national levels, and mainstream the process into other broader governance initiatives and national development agendas
- Don't just condone but contribute, by ensuring that self-assessment processes are successful and NPoAs are implemented
- Speak with one voice, create national coalitions and facilitate broader access to the APRM process for smaller CSOs to understand, appreciate and fully engage with

Media:
- Together with CSOs, parliament and even state actors at national, regional and continental levels, advocate for the inclusion of indicators, which relate to free and independent press in the APRM Questionnaire, where the issues of freedom of expression and media legislation are addressed, as a consequence, in country review reports (CRRs) and the NPoAs
- Ensure that there is consistent and coherent engagement with the APRM process through reporting
- Ensure that umbrella organisations like the Union of Journalists, are fully involved in the self-assessment process, as well as having access to the CRMs
- Increase the awareness of the APRM amongst media practitioners through advocacy, education and knowledge dissemination

Done on this 18th day of May, 2013, in Africa Hall, ECA, Addis Ababa Ethiopia