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**STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING EFFECTIVE STAKEHOLDER  
PARTICIPATION IN THE AFRICAN PEER REVIEW MECHANISM**

## **Strategies for Promoting Effective Stakeholder Participation in the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)**

### **1. Introduction**

#### **1.1 Context: NEPAD and the APRM**

1. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) has been heralded, since its adoption by African Heads of State Summit in Lusaka in July 2001, as Africa's vision and compact for development in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The five core principles of NEPAD are good governance; peace, stability and security; sound economic policy-making and management; effective partnerships; and domestic ownership and leadership. The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is an important component of the NEPAD process to achieve its objectives. Considered to be the most innovative aspect of NEPAD, the APRM aims "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."<sup>i</sup> It, thus, identifies the capacity gaps in African governance systems and recommends remedial policy actions by adopting best practices from within the continent.

2. The APRM has a comprehensive structure of peer review that aims to inspire under-performing African states to improve in four key areas – democracy and political governance, corporate governance, economic governance and management, and socio-economic development. The first of its kind in Africa, the APRM has the real potential of playing a decisive role in "collective self-governance" thereby unleashing the continent's economic and political energies. It serves as a double contract between African governments and their citizens, on the one hand, and between Africa and its development partners, on the other. Above all, it provides a forum that speaks with an African voice to Africans, thereby enhancing ownership of the debate about development and security issues.

3. The APRM Heads of State and Government Forum, its highest political authority, officially launched the APRM process in 2003. The review is open to all 53 member States of the African Union (AU), but currently only 24 African countries have signed up to be reviewed by their peers. These include Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. In February 2004, the Heads of State and Government Forum in Kigali, Rwanda announced that Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda and Mauritius would be the first four countries to be reviewed. Subsequently, all four countries have received supporting missions from the APR Secretariat and its strategic partners to assess their level of readiness in terms of what institutional structures and participatory mechanisms they have set up for overseeing the review process.

4. The APRM aims to change the context of African government's engagement with their citizens. The launching of NEPAD is an affirmation of Africa's political leadership, at the highest level, to forge a new partnership with all development stakeholders including the private sector and civil society organizations (CSOs). Indeed, AU recognizes civil society and the private sector as key partners in governance and development and emphasizes the strengthening of partnerships to improve citizens' participation in development, including governance.

Through an open and participatory process, the APRM is to engage key stakeholders to facilitate exchange of information and build a national dialogue platform on good governance and all socio-economic development programmes, thereby increasing transparency of the decision-making process and building trust in the pursuit of national development goals. Thus, the success of the APRM process relies on the need to promote full participation of relevant stakeholders in the development as well as in the implementation of programmes of action.

5. The APRM provides a platform for African governments, civil society, NGOs and their external partners to discuss and build consensus on the state of governance at the national level. It is a framework for systematic review of state performance by other states in order to help the reviewed state adopt optimal practices, with the overall objective being the need for global improvements in all aspects and levels of governance. Thus, the exercise is inherently a state-centric initiative, pitched at the level of African political leadership taking responsibility for the continent's development. The burden and responsibility lies first and foremost with the elected African leaders. The expectation is that internal self-assessment and peer review would necessarily lead to the entrenchment of the principles of accountability and transparency that constitute the bedrock of good governance.

6. While the process of implementing the APRM has been primarily spearheaded by a government-designated focal point, the process relies extensively on a participatory and partnership framework involving the private sector, civil society and all development stakeholders. Regrettably, national development planning and implementation issues are still mainly the exclusive responsibility of national or subnational governments, without effective mechanisms for more direct individual and collective engagement in the peer review process. All stakeholders should strive to better comprehend and effectively participate in the APRM process as a shared responsibility that requires certain strategies and mechanisms to be more effective.

7. The above challenges have resulted in a participation and partnership that are skewed, intermittent, ad-hoc and ill timed, resulting in largely low level and contradictory contributions from all the stakeholders in the APRM process. To be an effective process, however, the APRM must look to the participation of all stakeholders at all stages of the peer review mechanism. The emphasis is on ways to institutionalize inclusive participatory structures and processes that can go beyond the peer review and become national governance systems.

## **1.2 Purpose and Objectives**

8. The main objective of this paper, therefore, is to foster a consensus on appropriate and effective strategies for building, widening and deepening the support base for the APRM process. This includes dispelling the perception that peer review is only a dialogue among African governments or leaders; on the contrary, the peer review process is a comprehensive national self-assessment encompassing the entire body politic.

9. In order to achieve such a consensus, this paper provides a conceptual and empirical overview of how to make the role of the various stakeholders – policy think tanks, development NGOs, churches, private sector, trade unions, students and youth, parliamentarians – more effective in participating in the APRM process. The Development Policy Management Division

(DPMD) of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) believes that its legislative body, the Committee for Human Development and Civil Society (CHDCS), has a unique opportunity to step up its mandate and agenda to promote accountability, transparency and participation by the public, private and the civil society sectors in governance and development. Viewed from such a strategic perspective, the CHDCS meeting will take stock and examine national experiences in countries already undergoing the APRM, analyse the challenges to effective participation in the process and make concrete recommendations that will instructively guide and provide lessons for other countries who are about to embark on the process.

10. The key issues for consideration by the CHDCS meeting are as follows:

- What are the strategies and mechanisms for effective coordination of key stakeholders' and partners' participation in the APRM process – what have been the best practices from those countries that have embarked upon the process?
- What are the strategic entry points and opportunities for effective stakeholders' participation in the drawing up of the National Programme of Action, which is a major outcome of the APRM process?

## **2. A Review of Conceptual Issues and Principles Underlying the APRM**

### **2.1 APRM as a New Mechanism toward Participatory Democracy**

11. In many ways, the APRM can be conceived as a continental project to strengthen popular participation in development and promote the culture of democracy. As one keen observer of the process has noted “the value of the APRM lies in the fact that, far from being a chastising and imprisoning device, its relevance and strength lie in its potential to imparting and conveying new values that is so crucial a part of the emerging African governance architecture.”<sup>ii</sup> It is not intended to be a penalizing measure, ready to be used to discipline recalcitrant actors. Instead, it is designed as a socializing instrument, one that would encourage states to learn from, and emulate each others “good” conduct, best practices and thus cultivate democratic behavior.<sup>iii</sup> In a sense, therefore, the APRM is a major regional instrument for promoting democracy and a novel initiative in instilling participatory democracy in development. Participation involves all the stakeholders – governments, parliamentarians, private sector and civil society – in the self-assessment process that can become a means of democratizing development in the countries involved.<sup>iv</sup>

12. The idea that civil society should be mobilized and organized to participate in development has been around in Africa for some time. One of the first continent-wide discussions on the need for African governments to consider NGOs as their partners was the 1987 African NGO Meeting in Dakar, Senegal<sup>v</sup>. Similarly, the UN has argued for the popular participation in the development process to accelerate economic and social progress. The ECA has been at the forefront of these discussions. Working together with representatives of African governments, the ECA organized the landmark international conference on “Popular Participation in the Recovery and Development Process in Africa” in Arusha, Tanzania in 1990. The “African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation” adopted by member States affirmed in very strong terms the need for greater and more effective popular

participation in the development process<sup>vi</sup>. Although the charter provided consensus that development processes should be fundamentally reoriented towards broad-based participation by Africans, there was no systematic continental framework for such participation other than through specific ad-hoc projects. The APRM attempts to fill this gap.

13. Globalization and the changes in both the international and African situation, coupled with the emphasis on good governance and democratization, have renewed attention to new forms of engaging stakeholders in the development process. NEPAD is seen as Africa's grand strategy to prevent its marginalization by the dominant globalization processes. It is founded on the realistic recognition that if Africa is to make progress, it must adopt principles of democracy and political governance, sound macro-economic policy framework and good corporate governance. The APRM, therefore, is an institutional response and a process for channeling African stakeholder participation in confronting the new global political and economic challenges facing Africa.

14. Some observers have commented that the APRM is the first of its kind in Africa; however, there are comparable exercises of open spaces for democratic dialogues occasioned by the wave of political liberalization that swept most of Africa since 1989. An example would be the Sovereign National Conference used in several Francophone countries to launch democratic renewals in the early 1990s. Yet another significant example of political renewal in Africa is the annual public forum that enables citizens of the Republic of Mali to pose questions to the Executive branch, who reply on radio and television for an entire day. There is ample evidence to suggest that this contribution to democratic governance has unmistakably enhanced the protection of human rights and accountability.

## **2.2 APRM as Additional Accountability Structure to Representative Democracy**

15. The APRM offers opportunities to engender more robust public debate on policy issues. Peer review has the potential to extend and deepen the conversation at the national level, where the debates on reform are most important. While formal structures of accountability – parliaments, courts and investigation commissions, etc. – are important, they are often associated with the political regime in power and a negative perception of their effectiveness and impartiality usually undermines the credibility of policies. The assumption that only elected representatives have responsibility for policy-making is no longer tenable, as increasingly governments are to share information with all stakeholders before these policies are implemented. The APRM process provides new ways and a cultivation of new attitudes in engaging governments with stakeholders.

16. As an exercise in collective national self-assessment, the APRM process should help to remove the destructive political culture of “us” versus “them” and offer an opportunity for civil society to move from a position of negative opposition to one of positive engagement with African governments and institutions. The process should strive to overcome the confrontation and condemnation tactics in Africa that have been at times the tool of engagement by civil society. Instead, there is ample opportunity within the process to embrace collaboration and cooperation where possible and confrontation where necessary. These tactics and strategies need not be mutually exclusive; indeed, they are needed in building democratic societies and political communities.

### **2.3 Shadow Peer Review: Civil Society Providing Alternative Peer Reviews**

17. Non-governmental stakeholders – research think tanks and development NGOs and the private sector – have an important role to play in the APRM process not only as partners to government or as principal hostile interlocutors but as independent and responsible players. Some observers have noted that the success of the APRM depends on engendering a vibrant civil society dialogue within countries.<sup>vii</sup> This requires a civil society that is itself competent to understand and respond to the APRM assessments. In addition, observers stress that the independence of the APRM is paramount as any interference by the government or any outside influence would undermine its integrity. Consequently, the independence of the APRM relies on the extent to which civil society is able to conduct a “shadow review” of the entire process. This is the basis for the suggestion that NEPAD should set aside significant resources to allow civil society in the reviewed country to do assessments of its own and to critique the APRM assessment.<sup>viii</sup>

18. The concept of shadow review is important because it goes beyond the APRM process to sustain a long-term dialogue on governance issues within the participating country. Indeed, some models of shadow peer reviews are beginning to emerge on the African scene. Civil society groups from various countries are undertaking types of parallel reviews in the different areas under the APRM. Seven African research NGOs, under the umbrella of the African Human Security Initiative (AHSI), launched a “shadow review” report on 8 of the 24 countries that have acceded to the APRM monitoring system.<sup>ix</sup> The countries in the AHSI report are Ghana, Algeria, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Uganda. Similarly, civil society in Ghana has recently produced a comprehensive shadow report released almost at the same time the country’s formal APRM report was presented to the President.<sup>x</sup> This model will also be repeated in Nigeria.<sup>xi</sup> These reports complement as well as serve as alternative references to the APRM panel report by creating an enabling environment for constructive engagement of relevant institutions within those countries.

## **3. Continental Structures and Processes**

### **3.1 Adoption and Accession**

19. The core documents that paved the way for the implementation of the APRM were adopted at the 6<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee (HSGIC) of NEPAD, held in Abuja/Nigeria on 9 March 2003. These documents included a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the APRM, the Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance, as well as four other technical base documents<sup>xii</sup> outlining the organization and processes of the APRM, including indicative criteria and examples of indicators.

20. Member States of the AU that wish to participate in the APRM first need to adopt the Declaration and then formally notify the Chairman of the HSGIC. Accessing to the APRM entails the submission of technically competent, credible, independent and periodic reviews of the policies and practices pertaining to the values, codes and standards outlined in the Declaration.

### **3.2 Committee of Participating Heads of State and Governments (APR Forum)**

21. The supreme political authority and overall responsibility for the APRM rests with the Committee of Participating Heads of States and Governments (i.e. APR Forum). The APR Forum examines the Country Review Team's Final Report and recommendations by the APR Panel (discussed below), as well as the final Programme of Action drawn by the participating government under review, and supports the latter in its efforts to rectify any shortcomings. Should all efforts to conduct a constructive dialogue with the government under review fail, the Forum may put the government on notice of their collective intention to proceed with appropriate measures by a given date. The Forum is thus the key institution where the APRM core instrument of peer pressure is being exerted, and which even has the authority to administer sanctions if deemed necessary to induce corrective action on behalf of the participating governments, although the exact nature of these sanctions is unclear.

### **3.3 The Panel of Eminent Persons**

22. At the operational level, the APRM is being directed and managed by a panel of between five and seven eminent persons, who are distinguished and well-known African personalities of high integrity and technical competence in the areas of political, economic and corporate governance. The panel members are nominated by the participating countries and appointed by the APR Forum, and may serve for up to four years with the exception of the Panel's Chairperson who will serve for a maximum of five years. The Panel's core task is to ensure the credibility and integrity of the APR process and to guide the actions of the APR Secretariat.

23. The current members of the Panel are Mrs. Marie-Angélique Savané from Senegal (Chairperson), Professor Adebayo Adedeji from Nigeria, Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat from Kenya, Dr. Graça Machel from Mozambique, Mr. Mourad Medelci from Algeria, Dr. Dorothy Njeuma from Cameroon, and Dr. Chris Stals from South Africa.

24. One of the members of the APR Panel heads each Country Review Team, which is further comprised of at least one expert for each of the four core areas of the peer review. Through a series of interviews and investigations with key stakeholders from government, civil society, academia, private sector, the media or other special interest groups, the Country Review Team identifies the key issues and compiles them in a draft country report containing their analysis and recommendations for improving governance until the next review to be held (usually three to five years). The draft report is then shared with the government and its reactions or responses are attached as an appendix. The APR Panel reviews the report and submits it together with appropriate recommendations for taking action to the APR Forum.

### **3.4 The APR Secretariat**

25. The Panel is supported by a Secretariat that provides technical, secretarial, coordinating and administrative services to the APRM. Its functions include the maintenance of a database and tracking of all relevant information on political and economic developments in the APRM countries, the preparation of background documents for the Peer Review Teams, and proposing adequate indicators to track the performance of individual APRM countries.

26. More specifically, the APR Secretariat issues the questionnaires on the basis of which the country under review will conduct its self-assessment and draw its preliminary Programme of Action (PoA). The Secretariat also develops the background document, which together with the preliminary PoA, constitute the foundation of the Issues Paper that clears the way for the Country Review Visit. If significant discrepancies arise between the contents of the background paper and the PoA, or if any of the identified issues require further in-depth assessment, the Secretariat may make arrangements with competent partner institutions for the conduct of a Technical Assessment (TA). The report of the TA is then submitted to both the APR Secretariat and the country under review, and appropriate adjustments in either the Issues Paper or the PoA are made prior to the Country Review Visit.

### **3.5 Strategic Partner Institutions**

27. Four institutions have been designated as strategic partners for the APRM: the organs and units of the AU, including the AU Commission, Pan-African Parliament, Peace and Security Council and the Court for Human and People's Rights; the African Development Bank (AfDB); the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA); and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Bureau for Africa.

28. These institutions are to provide support to the APRM process, including technical assistance in the development of the APRM tools, human and institutional support to the APR Secretariat, information to assist in the development of countries, and support with regards to the implementation of the national level and continental APR processes. On request of the APR Panel, Secretariat or the participating country, the partners may be asked to join or assist a Country Support Mission or Country Review Team. For instance, representatives of the AfDB, ECA and UNDP have indeed participated in the support missions to Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, and Mauritius. They may also be asked to submit data or information to the APR Secretariat during the preparation of the background document, and they can be called upon for the preparation of a TA.

29. It is also envisaged, that two further categories of institutions will be designated as partners to the APRM, namely regional resource institutions, and international resource institutions. Finally, efforts are being made to establish a pool of experts in Africa, to provide technical assistance with the implementation of the APRM.

## **4. National Structures and Processes**

### **4.1 National Focal Point**

30. In a communiqué issued at the end of its First Summit held in Kigali on 13 February 2004, the APR Forum approved a recommendation that each APR country establish an APR Focal Point, preferably at ministerial level or higher. Acting as a liaison between national structures and APRM institutions, the role of the Focal Point is to facilitate communication and access to all relevant stakeholders in the country under APR study, including the Head of State. The exact position or structure of the APR Focal Point, however, will differ from country to country depending on the specific political and economic circumstances.

## **4.2 National Coordinating Mechanism**

31. At the same Summit, and on the recommendation of the APR Panel, the APR Forum also approved that each APR country establish a National Coordinating Mechanism, where such a structure does not already exist. Incorporating all the relevant key government, private sector and civil society stakeholders, the objective of the Coordinating Mechanism is to ensure that the review process is participatory in nature, as explicitly stated in the APR MOU. Undertaking broad-based consultations with all concerned parties, the Coordinating Mechanism will enhance the credibility of the APR and ensure that the leadership and ownership of the process remain with the participating country. Just as for the APR Focal Point, the exact nature and composition of the National Coordinating Mechanism is left to the discretion of the participating country with the proviso that it fulfils the dual mandate of being participatory and inclusive in character.

## **4.3 Institutional Technical Partners**

32. The country under review may call upon any national research or non-governmental institution to provide technical assistance with the self-assessment process. In the case of Ghana, for instance, the National APRM Governing Council engaged the services of four independent National Technical Review Teams to each lead the TAs in one of the four core thematic clusters (see Section 5.1 for more details).

## **4.4 Civil Society Panel/Committee**

33. In its efforts to enhance the national ownership of the process, the APRM puts strong emphasis on finding ways to involve all key stakeholders at country and continental level, including rural populations, religious groups, trade unions, the media, women and youth, and the private sector.

34. This is partially being addressed by the creation of the National Coordinating Mechanism; but in order to enhance the effectiveness of the non-state actors in the APR process, some experts have suggested that an independent civil society panel should be established, either as a formal structure of the National Coordinating Mechanism, or as an independent sub-structure of it. More details about the different possible models and approaches to involving civil society will be discussed after current experiences with stakeholder participation are described in the next section.

## **5. Experiences with Stakeholder Participation in the APRM**

35. Of the 24 African countries that have signed up to be reviewed by their peers, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda and Mauritius have all received supporting missions from the APR Secretariat and its strategic continental partners to assess their level of readiness.

## 5.1 Ghana

36. Ghana was the first country in Africa to accede to the APRM in October 2002 at the 35th Conference of African Ministers of Finance at Johannesburg, South Africa. Ghana signed the APRM MOU on 9th March 2003 at the Sixth Summit of the HSGIC of NEPAD held in Abuja, Nigeria.

37. In March 2003, the President created the Ministry of Regional Cooperation and NEPAD to oversee the implementation of NEPAD in Ghana. As the focal point of NEPAD, the Ministry has had interactions with various stakeholders in the country, including parliament, relevant ministries, departments and agencies such as the Electoral Commission, Serious Fraud Office, Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, the Council of State, Office of the President, traditional rulers, as well as civil society and the private sector in order to share ideas on NEPAD and the APRM. The Ministry then embarked on a nation-wide sensitization campaign by launching ownership-creation programmes on NEPAD in all the ten regions of Ghana.

38. Following these consultations, the President appointed an independent seven-member National APRM Governing Council on the 18th of March 2004, whose appointees were all non-state actors<sup>xiii</sup>.

39. The National APRM Governing Council has been tasked with the following functions:

- To exercise oversight with respect to the National APRM Programme, with a view to ensuring the independence, professionalism and credibility of the process;
- To recommend and engage appropriate Ghanaian institutions, think tanks or individuals to conduct technical assessments in the four areas to be reviewed;
- To review and make objective assessments of reports submitted to it by the engaged Ghanaian institutions, think tanks or individuals;
- To consider and approve recommendations in the form of a national APRM self-assessment report;
- To prepare, administer and coordinate the visit of the APR Panel and to facilitate their assessment of the governance of the country;
- To sensitize the Executive, Parliament, Judiciary, civil society, private sector and other stakeholders and to enlist their full participation in the national APRM process.

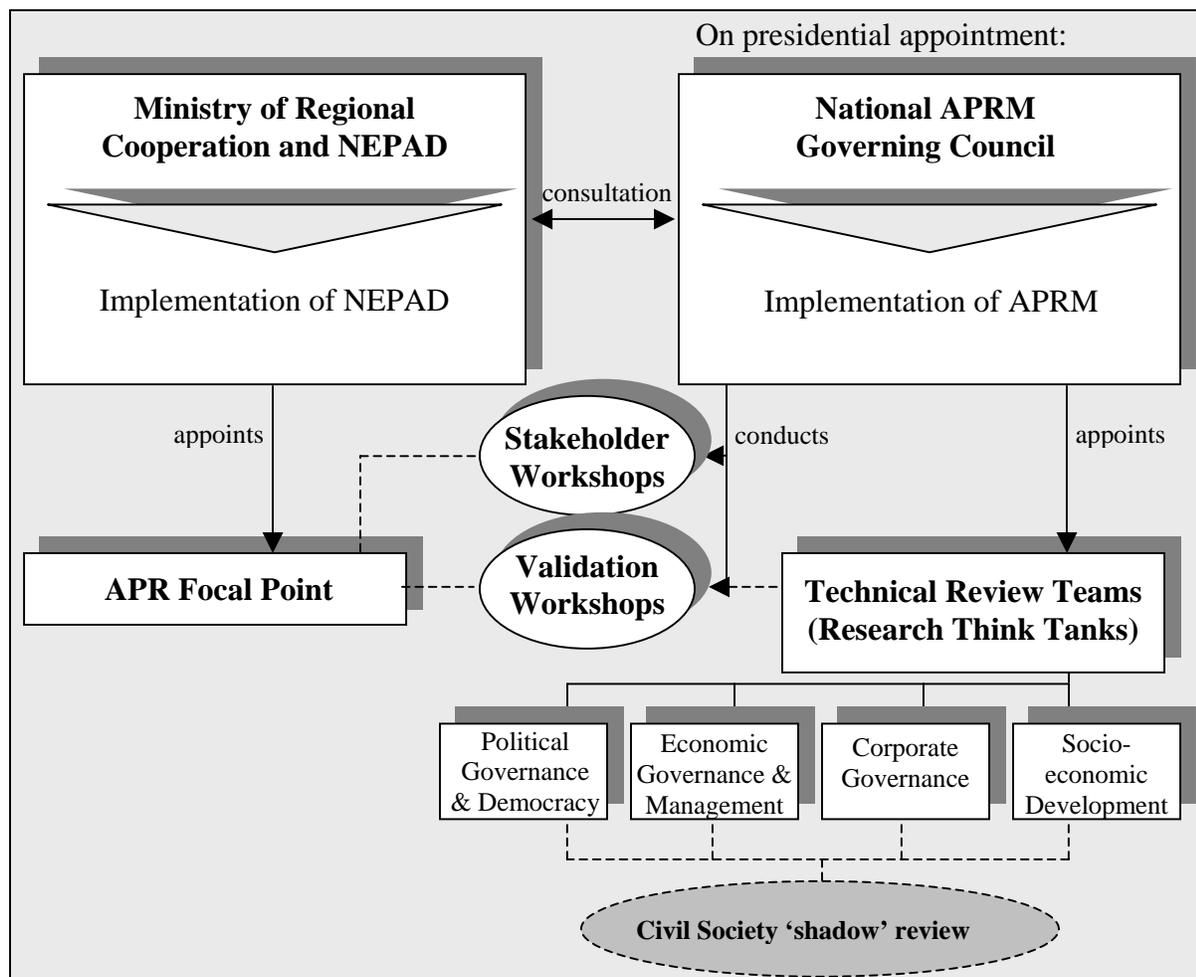
40. The APRM Governing Council also reviewed the work of independent institutions, such as the Electoral Commission and the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice. Interestingly, CSOs, including the media, trade unions, political parties and the private sector among others, were also involved in the APRM process, thereby providing an assessment of the state of governance in its entirety.

41. As mentioned, the Governing Council engaged the services of four independent National Technical Review Team, which will serve as the lead institutions to administer, collate and analyse the country self-assessment questionnaire that will be the basis for the report to the APR Panel.<sup>xiv</sup>

42. To ensure the active participation of stakeholders in the country self-assessment programme, a workshop was held in Akosombo from 27-30 May 2004 bringing together the members of the Support Mission, stakeholders and the National Technical Review Teams. Its main objective was to create national ownership and leadership of the APRM as an open, participatory and transparent process to foster dialogue on the pursuit of development goals. The forum provided a platform for national understanding, participation, knowledge sharing and a convergence of the appropriate methodology.

43. The Draft Report was presented to the President of Ghana on 28 February 2005. After its submission, the Governing Council will hold validation workshops in all ten regions of Ghana to ensure that the Report reflects the views of the population. Consulting issue-based stakeholder focus groups and the people of the respective regions to broaden opportunity for participation and ensure credibility of all findings is a key aspect of the APRM process in Ghana.

### Ghana APRM Structures at the National Level: the "Independent Governing Council Model"



## 5.2 Rwanda

44. Rwanda signed the MOU to accede to the APRM on 9th March 2003, and a first APR Summit took place in Kigali in February 2004. A national stakeholders' workshop as well as a number of retreats and validation workshops followed this from March to May 2004.

45. Following these consultations, the institutional arrangement initially put in place by the Government included the establishment of an APR focal point and a NEPAD secretariat, who were assisted by technical committees for the completion of the self-assessment. These technical committees were composed of the relevant government ministries and parastatal organizations.

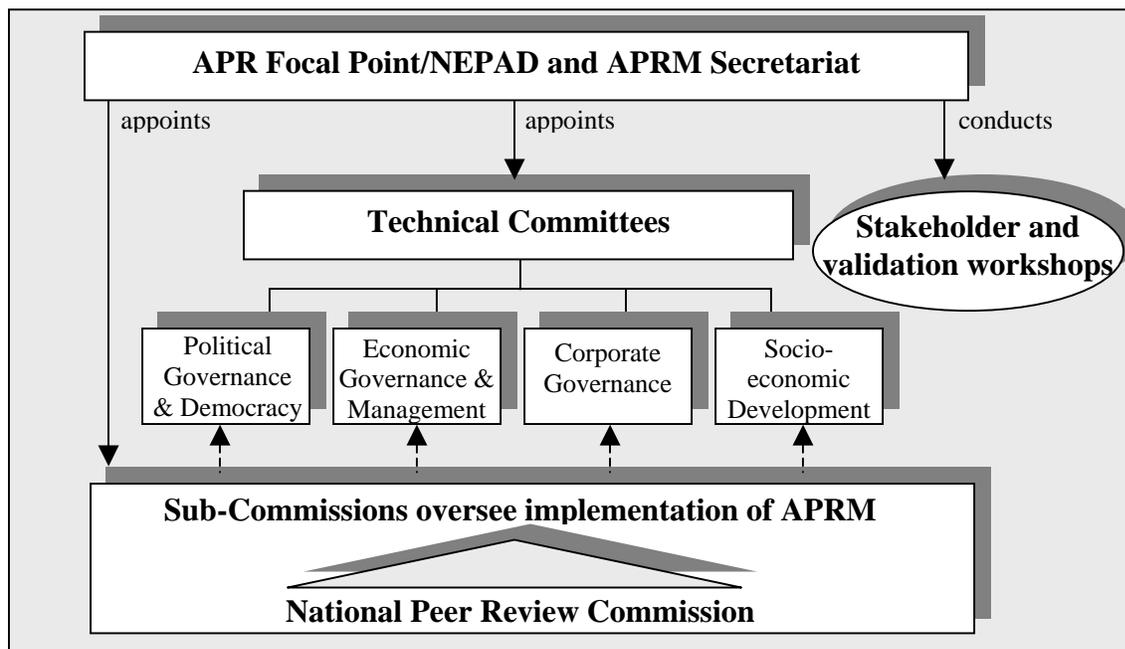
46. Following concerns that the process benefited from only limited inputs by CSOs and other non-governmental stakeholders, the Government subsequently appointed the National Peer Review Commission composed of some 50+ members from a cross-section of Rwandan society, including the public and private sectors and civil society. It is subdivided into four Sub-Commissions, each reviewing the work of the technical committees on one of the APRM themes.

47. The mandate of the APR National Commission includes the following:

- Representation of all stakeholders at the national level;
- Oversight function to ensure inclusiveness, integrity and coordination;
- Assistance to the APR focal point on the programme preparation and implementation;
- Identification of key areas of concern;
- Provision of technical inputs in carrying out the review process;
- Assistance in drawing up and implementing the National Programme of Action;
- Linking of national processes to local level processes;
- Provision of information, especially about local circumstances, and ensuring national ownership and commitment as well as local accountability.

48. The APR Focal Point is the President's special representative on NEPAD issues and is thus located within the Presidency. The Rwandan model of stakeholder participation differs fundamentally from the approach taken in Ghana, in as far as the implementation and supervision of the APRM process rests by and large with individuals and institutions representing and appointed by the Government.

### Rwanda APRM Structures at the National Level: the “National Commission Model”



### 5.3 Kenya

49. All NEPAD-related activities in Kenya are anchored in the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, which also hosts the (interim) APRM focal point. The Kenyan Government also set up an interim APRM taskforce expected to assist in developing the structures and operational modalities of the APRM, including the creation of an inter-ministerial Governing Council to supervise the implementation of the entire APRM process. Apart from including key members of the Government, such as the Ethics and Governance Permanent Secretary of the Office of the President, the Council also includes members from civil society, the media, private sector and academia.

50. In 2003, the Kenyan Government also established a semi-independent National NEPAD Secretariat that was subsequently mandated to serve as NEPAD Secretariat for the entire East African region.

51. Following a workshop held in May 2004, an APRM Consultative Forum was held in mid-July 2004, with thematic groups working on each of the four APRM focus areas.

### 5.4 Mauritius

52. In February 2004 an advance team from the APR Secretariat visited Mauritius to assess and discuss the national preparatory process for receiving the Support Mission. The main conclusions of the advance visit were that a coordinating structure for the APRM still had to be set up, that the specific elements of the APRM as well as its distinction from overall NEPAD programmes had to be clarified, and that the level of civil society awareness and participation had to be reinforced.

53. Subsequently, Mauritius made use of an existing coordinating mechanism and autonomous statutory entity, the National Economic and Social Council (NESC), which established both the APR Focal Point and the national coordinating structure for the APRM. This structure is independent from the NEPAD focal point represented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and under the guidance of the NESC, umbrella CSOs have been appointed as NGO representatives that have been mandated to revise the APRM questionnaire. The NESC was established as an independent consultative body by the Government in 2001 to foster a national consensus on economic and social issues through dialogue among social partners, including civil society. Hence, the Council consists of 23 Councillors representing worker's organizations, business organizations, civil society and government ministries.

54. A national stakeholder workshop was held in June 2004, with participants from government ministries and departments, as well as representatives of the private sector, trade unions, academia, political parties and CSOs. At the end of the workshop, an MOU for the Technical Assessment Mission and Country Review Visit was signed between representatives of the APR Forum and the Government of Mauritius.

## **6. Strategies and Best Practices to Enhance Stakeholders' Participation in the APRM**

### **6.1 Governments Should Recognize the APRM Process as a National Space for Policy Dialogue**

55. The most common criticism of the APRM concept and its operational mechanisms has been the lack of adequate consultation with domestic constituencies and the top-down approach of the initiative, both at the continental and national levels. This is because most CSOs and other stakeholders had hoped that the APRM would restore the long-neglected partnership between governments and citizens. They expected that participating governments would actively encourage involvement from business, non-governmental organizations, parliaments, the media and ordinary citizens in all stages of peer review. At the very best the APRM is supposed to open up space for the political reform and democratic accountability in Africa. It should create the space for an in-depth public conversation on policy directions in the countries. To be effective as a national forum for policy-making and good governance, the APRM should ensure that participation is enhanced. Without adequate mechanisms to enhance participation by all stakeholders, peer review will fail to achieve its ambitious aim of engendering participatory democracy. There are five main levels of such public participation in the APRM process, as required by the basic document:

- The inclusion of civil society in the national institutional structures that will oversee the APRM process;
- Broad public participation in drafting the Programme of Action;
- Broad consultations during the country review stage;
- Final review of the report when tabled by the Heads of State and Government Forum;
- Monitoring and Evaluation of the reforms recommended by the National Programme of Action.

56. Each of these stages require proactive strategies on the part of government in order to fully incorporate the voice of stakeholders. As a prerequisite, governments have to show the political will to make the entire process as inclusive and participatory as possible by not only formally inviting all stakeholders, but also creating an enabling environment for such participation. But the inclusion of non-governmental stakeholders itself must be done in a transparent, democratic and non-partisan manner to ensure the integrity and independence of the process. The independence of CSOs on the National Coordinating Mechanisms, for example, should not be compromised and there should be a full disclosure of information regarding their role and the opportunities for engagement with the process.<sup>xv</sup> In this regard, the media should have full access to the process as it unfolds. This is to ensure that the consultation process will be broad to include all segments of society including those in the remotest rural areas.

57. Another common criticism of the APRM process is that by participating, civil society's voice maybe co-opted or silenced by the government, which thus compromises the integrity of the entire process.<sup>xvi</sup> This is a fair criticism, as many civil society players may be suspicious of a largely government-controlled process. Therefore, government must assure citizens and the public that steps would be taken to ensure that bona fide participation takes place.

58. Aside from stakeholder representation in national mechanisms, there is an urgent need for massive awareness creation and sensitization of the general public. This entails allocating a time period just before the self-assessment stage to ensure ownership, facilitate stakeholders' dialogue, establish trust in pursuit of national development goals, and enhance the general understanding of citizens. In Ghana, for example, there was a series of activities, including regional radio talk shows and a television panel discussion on the APRM for youth, students, religious groups, and CSOs. In addition, there was widespread consultation with government officials, political parties, parliamentarians, and CSOs, including the media, academia, trade unions, business and professional association bodies.

## **6.2 Civil Society Should Plan and Strategize Its Responses to APRM**

59. The institutional structures prescribed in the APRM base document provide openings that create space for stakeholders, especially civil society, to bring added value and cooperation in the areas of analytical skills, advocacy, civic education and mobilization of public opinion into the process. Countries are expected to undertake a self-assessment through broad-based participatory processes led by governments and all stakeholders that would lead to the drafting of a National Programme of Action. But civil society can only get involved in these institutions and structures if it has capacity to plan and strategize its responses to the APRM. The best strategic approach for civil society to maximize its role is to constructively engage the government and the public through research, dissemination and sensitization, advocacy and lobbying, and monitoring and evaluation role.

60. The following are some of the recommendations under each activity area:

### **(a) Research, Dissemination and Sensitization**

- i. Conduct studies that can inform the background papers and the draft report by the Review Team at the start of the process and stage two.

- ii. Provide as much credible information to the Review Team as possible, while ensuring that inputs are well reflected in the draft report (this is best done if civil society has a leadership team to coordinate its inputs).
- iii. Undertake in-depth studies and analysis on the areas where there are information gaps in the APRM codes and standards.
- iv. Make NEPAD and APRM documents accessible to the wider public by developing leaflets, brochures, and posters and translating them into local languages.
- v. Use APRM as a learning process by ensuring that lessons are popularized and report outcomes widely disseminated.
- vi. Include local civil society experts on the NEPAD and APRM national structures, including those who can clearly articulate these processes for the benefit of the community at large and take a lead in the process of translating the concepts into tangible benefits that ordinary people can see and appreciate.

(b) **Advocacy and Lobbying**

- i. Influence the agenda of the review by identifying and selecting the areas of particular interest to civil society including governance, democracy, accountability (particularly corruption), and ensuring that they become areas of focus for the Country Review Team.
- ii. Use APRM findings to lobby the government for corrective actions in areas of governance deficits.
- iii. Participate effectively in drawing up the National Programme of Action and ensuring it is implemented.
- iv. Lobby key regional African institutions and structures such as the Pan-African Parliament, the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights, the Peace and Security Council and the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC) of AU to ensure that the review report gets appropriate attention.

(c) **Monitoring and Evaluation**

- i. Ensure the integrity of the process by monitoring that it is free from political manipulation.
- ii. Ensure regular interface among civil society and between civil society, government and other stakeholders to address the challenges and monitor progress.
- iii. Utilize the press and other media, through newspaper articles and columns, to raise and debate pertinent implementation issues on a regular basis.

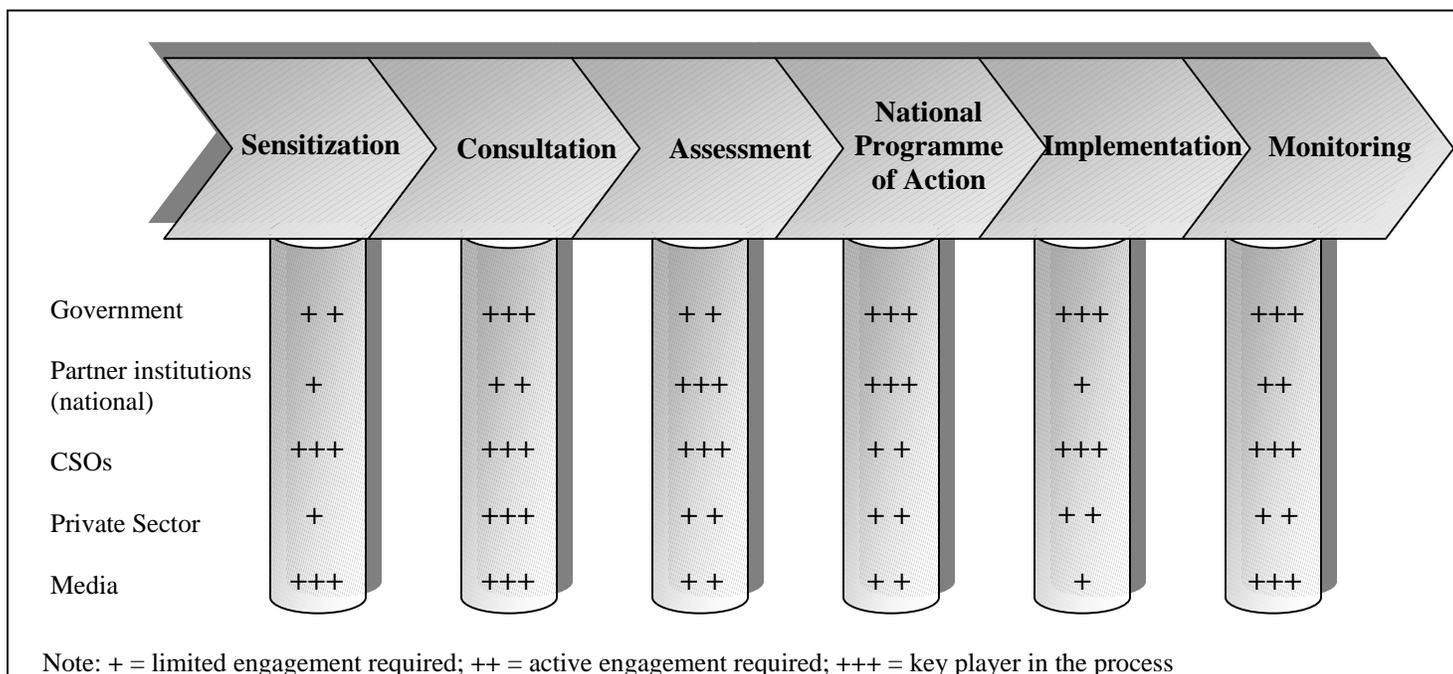
### **6.3 Lessons Learned or Best Practices for Effective Stakeholders Engagement with the APRM**

61. The following are the major lessons learned so far that can serve as best practice for countries that are about to embark on the APRM process:

- (i) **Political Commitment:** Governments should demonstrate a firm political commitment by creating a NEPAD Ministry and an APRM Secretariat or Focal Points. Governments should openly and publicly declare their commitment to the NEPAD/APRM process, affirming their belief in its vision and strategic import in fostering good governance. The APRM should be seen as a self-affirmation and not a self-imposed process.
- (ii) **Management and Leadership Structures:** In setting up national structures and mechanisms to manage the APRM process, a paramount concern for governments should be the need to guarantee their independence as well as promote a broad-based participation.
- (iii) **Education and Sensitization:** A massive public awareness campaign is key to successful implementation of the APRM process. In collaboration with key stakeholders, governments should widely publicize and provide information about the national coordinating structures, the stages, and roles and responsibilities of government, non-governmental, private sector and international partners in the process. Included in the sensitization strategy should be how to invite and deploy various segments of the media and other modalities of engagement, including publications of informed newspaper articles, newsletters, brochures, workshops, educational awareness and campaigns targeting disadvantaged groups including women, youth and the handicapped. Governments should strive to be inclusive by bringing on board “peoples’ institutions” like traditional rulers, trade unions and professional groups.
- (iv) **Strategic Sequencing:** Early engagement with the populace will help to demystify NEPAD and the APRM process. By clarifying the objectives and mechanisms for participation, an environment for frank and open dialogue can be created to ensure transparency and legitimacy and minimize misconceptions about the politics surrounding the process.

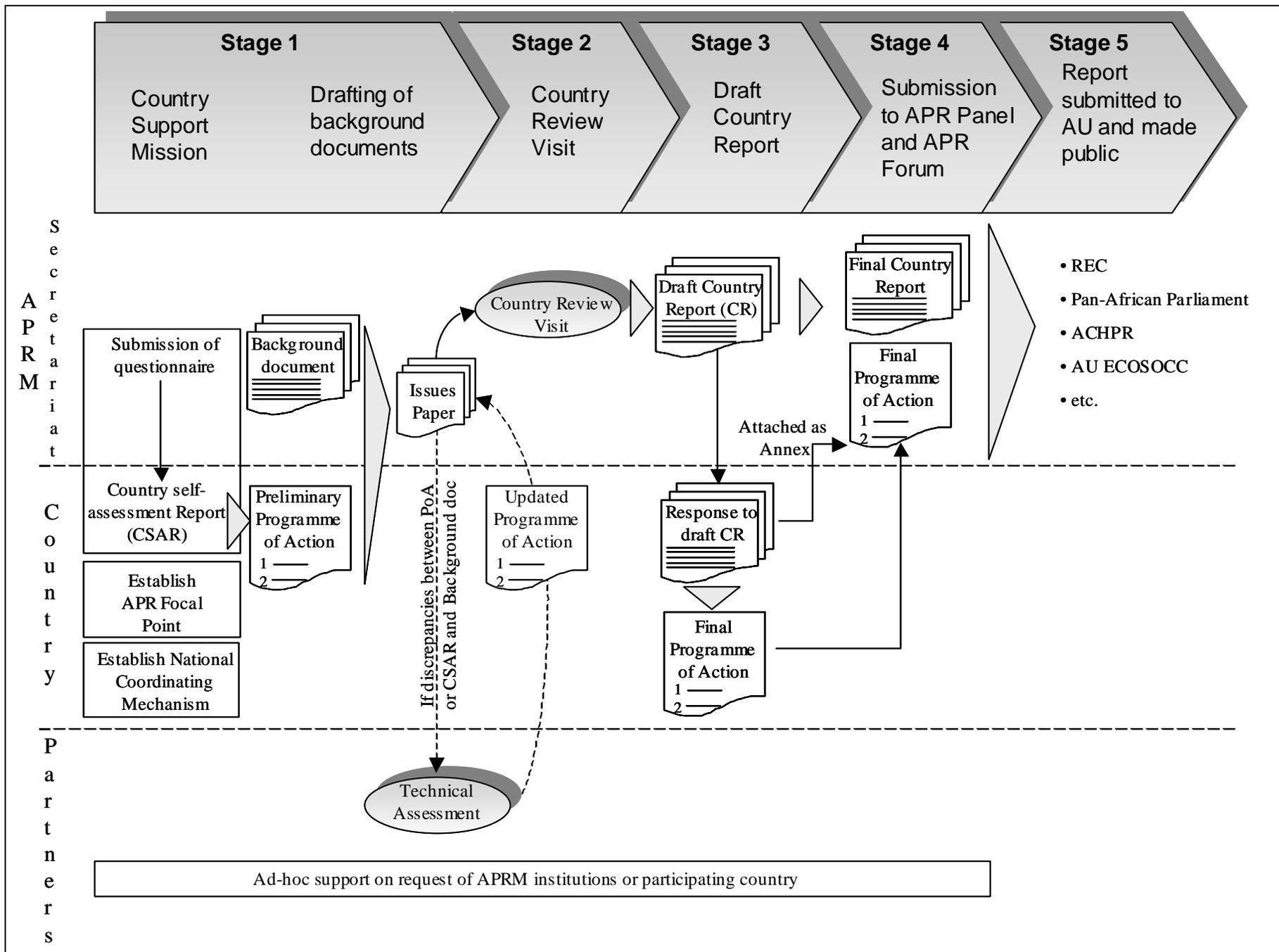
62. The following diagram illustrates a model of relative levels of participation required of all stakeholders at each stage of the APRM process.

### The Stages of the APRM Process and Levels of Engagement Needed from Different National Actors



Please note that the level of engagement of the different national actors may actually differ from country to country depending on individual circumstances. Rather than representing *absolute* levels of engagement, this diagram is only meant to be indicative of the *relative* levels of engagement needed from each actor in comparison to each other.

**Annex I: The APRM National and International Structures and Processes**



### End Notes

<sup>i</sup> The APRM Base Document. “African Union, Assembly of Heads of State and Government,” 2003. AHG/235. NEPAD Website.

<sup>ii</sup> Chris Landsberg, “Looking for Peers to Pressure? The African Peer Review Mechanism as Democracy Promotion.” An unpublished paper, SAIIA APRM Toolkit, 2004.

<sup>iii</sup> Chris Landsberg, Op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>iv</sup> ECA, “Popular Participation in the Recovery and Development Process in Africa,” adopted in Arusha, Tanzania in 1990.

<sup>v</sup> ECA, “CSO Capacity Building: An Action Framework,” 1999, ECA/DMD/CSPG/98/4, p. 3.

<sup>vi</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>vii</sup> Ravir Kanbur, “The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM): Assessment of Concept and Design,” Cornell University, [www.people.Cornell.edu](http://www.people.Cornell.edu), Jan. 2004, pp. 11.

<sup>viii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>ix</sup> Jakkie Cilliers, “African Human Security Initiative: A Conceptual Framework for Shadow Review,” [Hwww.iss.org](http://www.iss.org), 2003.

<sup>x</sup> *This Day*, Nigerian Daily Newspaper, “Beyond Civil Society Shadow Report,” March 7, 2005.

<sup>xi</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xii</sup> Namely the “APRM base document” [AHG/235 (XXXVIII) Annex II]; “APRM Organisation and Processes” [NEPAD/HSGIC/03.2003/APRM/Guideline/OSCI/O&P]; “Objectives, Standards, Criteria and Indicators for the APRM” [NEPAD/HSGIC/03.2003/APRM/Guideline/OSCI]; and “Outline of the Memorandum of Understanding on Technical Assessments and the Country Review Visit” [NEPAD/HSGIC/03.2003/APRM/Guideline/Outline].

<sup>xiii</sup> They include: Rev. Prof. S.K. Adjepong (Chairman) – former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Coast and currently the Principal of Methodist University College in Accra Ghana; Amb. Alex N. Abankwa – retired career diplomat and Ambassador to Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg and Canada; Prof. S.K.B. Asante – Professor in International Relations and former Principal Regional Advisor to the United Nations; The Most Rev. Bishop Paul Bimile – Catholic Bishop of Wa; Prof. Miranda Greenstreet – former Director of the Institute of African Studies and currently Executive Director of African Association for Health, Environment and Development; Mr. Nutifafa Kuenhyia – lawyer and past President of the Ghana Bar Association; Ms. Gloria Ofori-Boadu – former Executive Secretary of FIDA and founder and President of Women Assistance and Business Association.

<sup>xiv</sup> These are the Center for Democracy and Development (CDD) for Democracy and Political Governance, the Center for Economic Policy Analysis (CEPA) for Economic Governance and Management, the Private Enterprise Foundation (PEF) for Corporate Governance and the Institute of Statistical Social and Economic Research (ISSER) for socioeconomic development.

<sup>xv</sup> Ayesha Kajee, “Nepad’s APRM: A Progress Report, Practical Limitations and Challenges,” SA Yearbook, 2003/2004, p. 254.

<sup>xvi</sup> Ibid., p. 254.