



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

ESPD/NRP/01/05

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Implementation of the African Peer Review Mechanism in Ghana

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October 2005

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I. Introduction

Nearly two years have passed since the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) was launched. The objective of the APRM is to improve the quality of governance in Africa through the adoption of policies, standards and practices that will lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated economic integration. More than twenty-three countries¹ have acceded to the APRM. The accession commits participating countries to subject their policies and practices to periodic peer reviews. Out of the twenty-three countries that have acceded, 7 countries have launched the process nationally.² In two of these countries, notably Ghana and Rwanda the process is advanced, as the peer review of the two countries by the Forum of Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee (HSIC) will take place in Abuja, Nigeria in December 2005.

While the concept of the peer review has been used extensively in the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), its application to Africa has no precedents. African countries are, therefore, sailing in uncharted water in terms of designing institutional setting such as establishing national structures for managing the implementation of the APRM. Given the incipency of the process, coupled with the capacity constraints in Ghana, the implementation of the APRM has obviously posed considerable challenges, and provided unique experiences and opportunities for the APRM-participating countries. By focusing on the case of Ghana, this paper seeks to distil lessons and experiences, both positive and negative on the implementation of the APRM in Ghana. This would provide valuable information to other countries that are yet to embark on the process. This paper is timely given the geometric expansion in the number of countries that have acceded to APRM. Whereas Ghana and Rwanda to some extent had to sail uncharted waters in launching and implementing the APRM, other countries are in a relatively better position as they could learn from the experiences of Ghana and Rwanda.

Like any lessons learned exercise, the purpose of this paper is to pause for a while and reflect on the experiences of Ghana in the implementation of the APRM: assess the achievements recorded and the challenges and constraints encountered in the process. An attempt will also be made to identify successful best practices with a view to encouraging their replication in other countries that are yet to embark on the peer review process. Out of this analysis, it is hoped that a set of policy recommendations will be delineated for improving the implementation of the process nationally and regionally.

¹ These are: Ghana, Rwanda, Mauritius, Kenya, Mali, Uganda, Mozambique, Nigeria, Algeria, South Africa, Senegal, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Lesotho, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Zambia.

² The countries that have launched the process nationally are: Ghana, Rwanda, Kenya, Mauritius, Uganda, Nigeria, and Algeria.

The paper is organised as follows: Following a brief Introduction, section Two provides a general background on the APRM process, focusing particularly on the organization and structure of the APRM. Section Three discusses the structure of the APRM in Ghana, paying special attention to institutional mechanisms introduced to oversee the implementation of the APRM in Ghana. Section four examines Ghana's experience and distils lessons learned from the implementation of the APRM. The final section attempts, on the basis of the preceding discussion, to delineate policy recommendations for improving the implementation of the process at the national and regional levels.

II. Background and general structure of APRM

2.1 Background

The problem of institutional inadequacy in African countries is well known and so is the central role institutions play in sustainable development. One can then argue that the problem of underdevelopment in Africa is fundamentally a problem of institutional inadequacy and institutional failure. That is, for African countries to achieve such internationally agreed goals as the MDGs and embark on a veritable path of sustainable development, they must establish good institutions—the norms governing human interactions, including organizational entities, procedural devices, and regulatory frameworks—and improve the quality of existing ones. For one thing, building good quality institutions will ensure the adoption of appropriate technologies and relevant policies and enable African countries to make better use of a massive scaling up of resources.

Because of the central role that institutions play in poverty alleviation, elimination of inequality and overall economic development, African countries need national, regional and global institutions and institutional reforms that will enable them to benefit from increased aid and maximize its benefits, provide improved access to global trade, and reinforce the production of regional and global public goods. They need institutions that will enable them to design appropriate national strategies to achieve their development goals. Hence, creating an environment that is conducive for institutional development requires a sound political and economic environment as well as adequate capacity.

It is to address this institutional inadequacy, especially its governance dimension that the African Heads of State through the Durban Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance in 2002 established the regional institution called the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).³ Subsequently,

³ Declaration on the Implementation of the *New Partnership for Africa's Development* [Assembly/AU/Decl. 1(I)] (NEPAD Secretariat, 2002a), at the inaugural Summit of the African Union in July 2002 in Durban, South Africa, endorsing the Progress Report and Initial Action Plan [AHG/235 (XXXVIII)] (NEPAD Secretariat, 2002b) and encouraging Member States to

the 6th summit of the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee on 9 March 2003 Abuja, Nigeria, established a base document in which the purpose and operational dimensions of the APRM were spelled out.⁴

“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 sub-regional and continental economic integration through sharing of experiences and reinforcement of successful and best practice, including identifying deficiencies and assessing the needs for capacity building.”⁵

The process includes periodic reviews of the policies and practices of participating states to ascertain progress being made towards achieving the mutually agreed goals and improvements in political, economic and corporate governance and in socio-economic development.

Recognizing the capacity constraints in many African countries, the Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee (HSGIC) designated ECA as one of the substantive strategic partner institutions (together with ADB and UNDP) to provide technical support to the APRM process. This was in recognition of the pioneering and instrumental role that ECA has played in the genesis of the peer review idea in Africa. To enhance its contribution to APRM, ECA established an APR Unit in its Economic and Social Policy Division (ESPD) in a bid to institutionalize APRM in its programmes. The Unit coordinates all ECA’s APRM-related activities including providing vital support to the APR Secretariat in various phases of the APR process and providing technical assistance to individual APR-participating countries as necessary. ECA provides support at each of the five stages of the peer review process ranging from Country Support Mission to drafting of Background Documents to Country Review Visits and drafting country report, final country report for the APR Panel and APR Forum. Since 2004, experts from ECA’s substantive divisions have been involved in mission support, technical support in key areas of the review process, the establishment of APR database and country profiles, and research on key aspects of APRM.

2.2 The structure and operation of APRM

APRM is directed by a seven-member Panel of Eminent Persons (APR Panel) appointed by the Committee of Heads of State and Government which is the ultimate overseer of the whole process (Figure 1). In addition, to being persons

adopt the *New Partnership for Africa’s Development* Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance [AHG/235 (XXXVIII) Annex I] (NEPAD Secretariat, 2002c) and accede to the *African Peer Review Mechanism* [AHG/235 (XXXVIII) Annex II] (NEPAD Secretariat, 2002d).

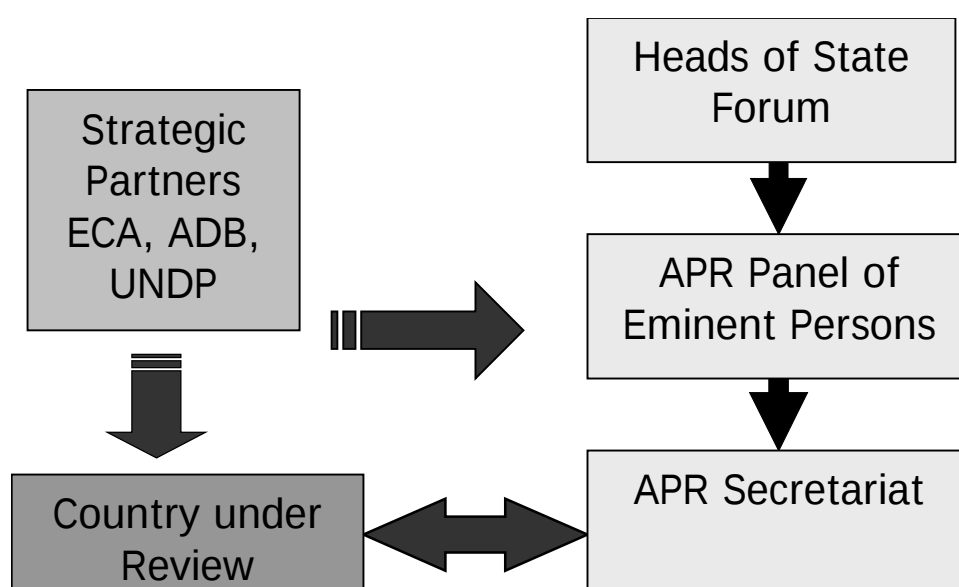
⁴ APRM base document [AHG/235 (XXXVIII) Annex II] (NEPAD Secretariat, 2002d).

⁵ APRM base document [AHG/235 (XXXVIII) Annex II] (NEPAD Secretariat, 2002d).

of high moral stature and demonstrated commitment to the ideals of Pan Africanism, the members of the Panel must be Africans who have distinguished themselves in careers that are considered relevant to the work of the APRM.

Candidates for appointment to the Panel are nominated by participating countries, shortlisted by a Committee of Ministers and appointed by Heads of State and Government of the participating countries⁶ who also ensures that the Panel has expertise in the areas of political governance, macro-economic management, public financial management and corporate governance. The composition of the Panel is expected to reflect broad regional balance, gender equity and cultural diversity.

Figure 1
Organizational structure of APRM



Members of the Panel are expected to serve for up to four years and retire by rotation. One of the members of the Panel is appointed Chairperson by the Heads of State and Government of participating countries. The Chairperson serves for a maximum period of five years. The criteria for appointment to the position of Chairperson are the same as for other members of the Panel, except that the candidate is expected to be a person with a proven leadership record in one of the areas of government, public administration, development and private sector.

The Panel oversees the review process, in particular to ensure its integrity. The Panel also oversees and is supported by a competent secretariat that is expected

⁶ This refers to all the countries that have acceded to the APRM.

to have the technical capacity to undertake the analytical work that underpins the peer review process and also conforms to the principles of the APRM (APR Secretariat). The functions of the APR Secretariat include; maintaining extensive database information on political and economic developments in all participating countries, preparing background documents for the Peer Review Teams, proposing performance indicators and tracking performance of individual countries. The APR Secretariat engages, with the approval of the Panel, the services of African experts and institutions that it considers competent and appropriate to act as its agents in the peer review process.

There are four types of reviews:

- ◆ The base review carried out within eighteen months of a country becoming a member of the APRM process;
- ◆ The periodic review that takes place every two to four years;
- ◆ Review on demand, whereby a member country can, for its own reasons, ask for a review that is not part of the periodically mandated reviews; and
- ◆ Early signs of impending political or economic crisis in a member country would also be sufficient cause for instituting a review. Participating Heads of State and Government can call for such a review in a spirit of helpfulness to the Government concerned.

The duration of the review process per country is expected to be no longer than six months, commencing on the date of the inception of Stage One up to the date the report is submitted for the consideration of the Heads of State and Government.

2.3 The five stages of APRM

The APRM is both an internal and external review process involving five stages, including preparatory, consultation, assessment, and peer review phases.

1. **The Preparatory and Country Self-assessment Stage.** In the preparatory phase information is gathered from existing sources and from questionnaire sent to the reviewed country.
 - a. Background studies on the state of governance in the country to be reviewed are conducted by the APR Secretariat;
 - b. Data collection and writing a base document by the Secretariat;
 - c. Signature of the Memorandum of Understanding between the APR Forum and the government;
 - d. Evaluation of procedures and mechanisms put in place by the country to undertake its self-evaluation and to produce its Programme of Action;

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- e. Meeting the national commission and the technical review institutions of APRM to explain the process and discuss the APR questionnaire;
 - f. Establish a road map to accelerate the different self-evaluation activities and conduct self-assessment; and
 - g. Submission of the Self-assessment Report and Programme of Action by the country, which marks the end of step 1.
2. **Country Review Stage.** The consultation phase involves site visits, discussions with governments and civil society, and the preparation of the draft report discussed with the government. During the visit to the country by the APR Team, the country facilitates:
- a. Large consultations;
 - b. Opportunity to meet the key actors;
 - c. Opportunity for the APR Team to examine the draft Programme of Action that the country produced to improve its governance and its socio-economic development; and
 - d. Consultations also provide the opportunity to arrive at a consensus with the stakeholders on existing points of disagreement.
3. **The Review Report Stage.** Preparation of the report of the APR Team
- a. Based on the conclusions of the Country Review Visit;
 - b. Based on the conclusions of the APR Secretariat's pre-visit study;
 - c. Recommendations focus on the improvement of the country's Programme of Action to achieve best practices, norms and more effectively address identified weaknesses; and
 - d. The draft report is discussed with the national authorities to ensure the accuracy of information and conclusions of the APR Team. The responses of the Government and that of the Country Review Team are appended in annex to the Review Team's report.
4. **Peer Review Stage.** The assessment phase is the crucial phase of the peer review exercise involving presentation of the draft report to the APR Forum responsible for the review. It involves a discussion of the report in the plenary of the APR Forum with the extensive participation of members of the APR Forum. Hence, the submission of the report to a meeting of the APR Panel is followed by a review and recommendation of report to the APR Forum
- a. The APR Forum meets to examine the report and to decide on the actions to take; and

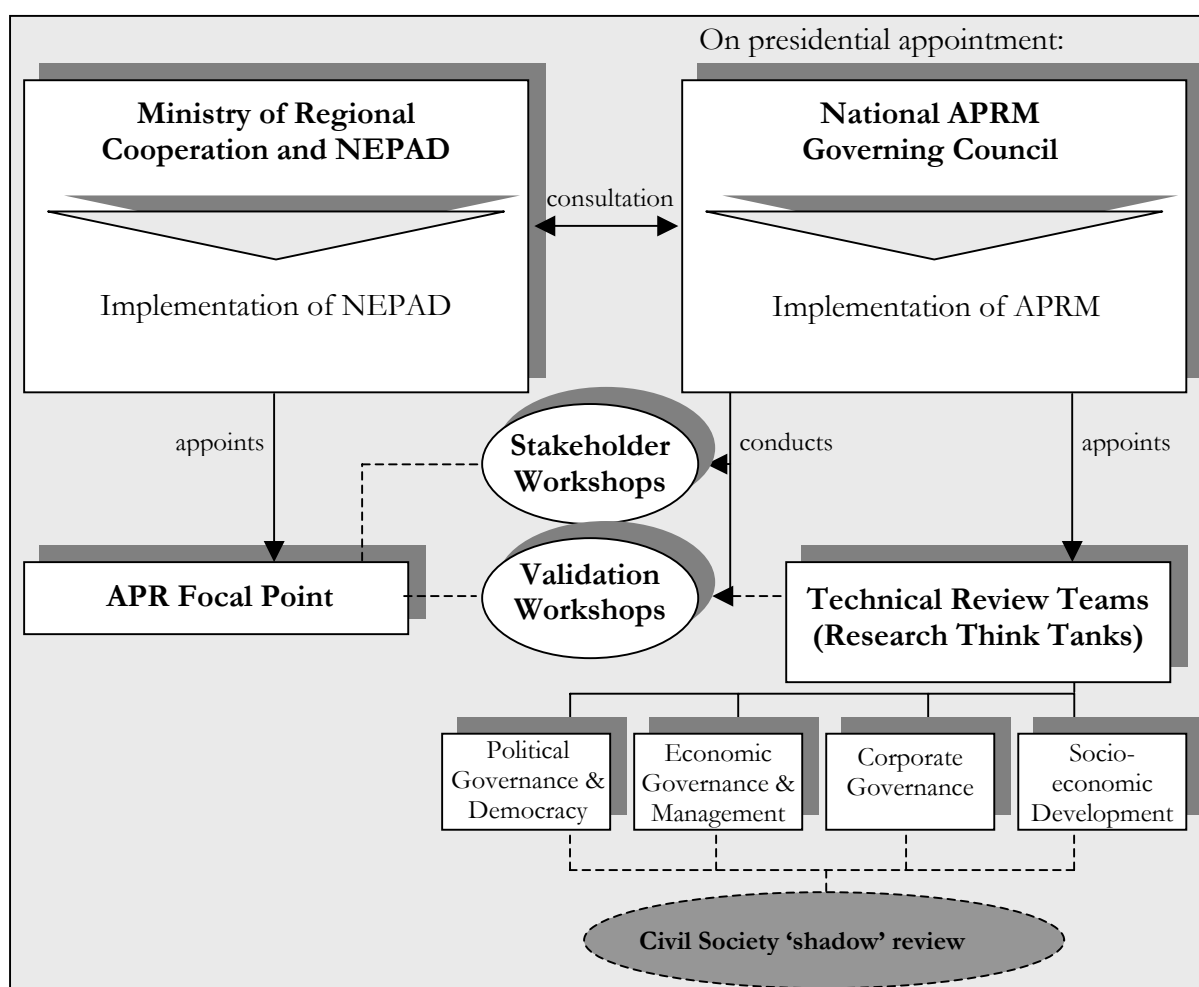
- b. The decisions of the APR Forum are then communicated to the Head of State or Government of the reviewed country
- 5. **Publication of APRM reports** and of actions taken in a country's review
 - a. Officially and publicly presented to the key regional and sub-regional structures; and
 - b. Step 5 completes the first cycle of the APR process for a given country.

III. Structure and process of APRM in Ghana

Ghana was the first country to sign on to the APRM and the first to complete it. The country acceded to the APRM in October 2002 at the 35th Conference of Ministers of Finance in Johannesburg, South Africa. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 9th March 2003 at the Sixth Summit of the HSGIC of NEPAD in Abuja, Nigeria. Three missions led by the APR Secretariat were undertaken to support the process: A Country Advance Mission was undertaken in February 2004 while a Country Support Mission took place in May 2004. Thereafter, Background and Issues Papers were developed in January 2005 followed by the Country Review Mission on 4-16 April 2005.

Subsequent to signing the MoU, the government of Ghana created a Ministry of Regional Cooperation and NEPAD in May 2003 and designated the Minister as APRM Focal Point. Figure 2 gives an overview of the national APRM structures in Ghana.⁷

⁷ This section is based on UNECA (2005a).

Figure 2: Ghana APRM structures at the national level

Source: UNECA (2005a)

The President of Ghana also appointed an independent National APRM Governing Council on 18 March 2003, with seven members, all of which are non-state actors.⁸ The Ministry and the Governing Council were tasked to steer the national APRM process together. The National APRM Governing Council had the following specific functions [Assan (2004)]:

⁸ These seven member of the National APRM Governing Council are: 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.

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- ◆ Overseeing the National APRM Programme to ensure its independence, professionalism, and credibility;
- ◆ Engaging the services of competent Ghanaian institutions or individuals for conducting Self-assessment in the four focal areas;
- ◆ Reviewing and assessing the reports prepared by the engaged Ghanaian institutions or individuals;
- ◆ Considering and approving recommendations in the form of the national Self-assessment Report;
- ◆ To arrange and facilitate the visit of the APR Panel to the country to conduct in-country consultations ; and
- ◆ To sensitize all stakeholders on the APRM process and enlist their full participation in it.

The general methodological framework for the work of the National APRM Governing Council is essentially twofold: Disseminate information and organize consultations on the four focal areas of the APRM. The framework follows an approach with five sections [National APR Secretariat (2004:4f.):

- ◆ Awareness creation on NEPAD/APRM:

Activities employed in pursuit of this tasks were: regional sensitization fora, sensitization for specialized groups like security services, trade unions, trade associations, professional bodies, youth and children, physically challenged, the National Commission on Civic Education, and the Media.

Furthermore, to create national ownership and leadership of the national APRM process as a participatory and transparent process to foster dialogue on the pursuit of development goals; a workshop was held in Akosombo from 27-30 May 2004, bringing together the members of the Support Mission to Ghana, stakeholders, and the National Technical Review Teams. The workshop provided a forum for improving the understanding of APRM, fostering participation, knowledge sharing, and convergence of the appropriate methodology. This stakeholder workshop was held, as part of the Support Mission to Ghana, which assessed Ghana's preparedness for the country review. In addition the aim of the Support Mission was to achieve a common understanding of the APRM process and expectations, and provide technical support to the National Technical Review Teams.

- ◆ Assessment of the country under the four focal areas of APRM:

This is mainly the responsibility of the citizenry of a country. Therefore, the government engaged the services of four independent national

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research institutions to serve as lead institutions for the task of conducting the Self-assessment for Ghana on the basis of the Self-assessment questionnaire. Their task was to assist the work of the Governing Council to administer, collate and analyze the Self-assessment questionnaire that would be the basis for the APRM report. The methods employed were the administration of APRM questionnaires and organization of focused group discussions on related issues. The four institutions were 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 Socio-economic Development.

- ◆ Review of the assessment reports prepared by the Technical Review Teams:

Once the Technical Review Teams had submitted their reports, consultants were engaged to review the reports, comment on them and where appropriate make recommendations. On 28 February 2005 a draft of the Self-assessment report was presented to the President.

- ◆ Validation of the outcome of the assessment reports by stakeholders:
At the same time the stakeholders, to make sure their views are reflected adequately, also validated the reports. To facilitate this regional or zonal stakeholder meetings on the reports of the Technical Review Teams were organized.

- ◆ Preparation and submission of the Country Programme of Action:

Following the report validation, the proposals from all four focal areas were combined in one Draft National Programme of Action. Afterwards the Self-assessment Report and the Draft National Programme of Action were submitted to the APR Secretariat in Johannesburg, South Africa. The Technical Review Teams conducted these activities in collaboration with consultants for the four focal areas of the APRM.

While Ghana prepared the Self-assessment Report the APR Secretariat prepared a background document on the same issues. When Ghana submitted the final Self-assessment report and a Draft National Programme of Action to the APR Secretariat in the first week of March 2005, these three documents were used to draft a 43 page Issues Paper listing issues for further investigation during the Country Review Mission [Savane (2005); Stals and Adjepong (2005)].

The Country Review Mission, conducted by a team of 16 experts led by Dr. Chris Stals, former Governor of the South African Reserve Bank and currently a member of the APR Panel, took place on 4-16 April 2005 to interact with stakeholders on the identified issues. At the end of the mission the country review team drafted a report, which was sent to the APR Panel for its recommendations and subsequently shared with the Government of Ghana. The Government of Ghana finalized its National Programme of Action in light of these recommendations [Savane (2005)].

The Country Review Report for Ghana, prepared by the APR Secretariat with the support of experts from strategic partner institutions, was presented to the APR Forum on 19th June 2005 in Abuja, Nigeria, along with the Country Review Report for Rwanda. The Country Review Report includes the final National Programme of Action as an annex.

The two reports on Ghana and Rwanda were scheduled for further discussion by the heads of state in their next meeting in December 2005 in Abuja, Nigeria, where these two countries are expected to present details on the steps they intend to take to address the shortcomings and capacity gaps identified.

IV. Lessons learned from the implementation of the APRM in Ghana

This section summarizes the main lessons learned from Ghana's experience with the implementation of the APRM.

One of the important lessons learned from Ghana's implementation of the APRM is the importance of political commitment at the highest level of government for successful implementation of the APRM. This factor proved critical for the implementation of the APRM in Ghana. The Government of Ghana demonstrated genuine commitment to the process early on. This was no surprise since the ruling party has since assuming power sought to promote liberal, competitive, multi-party politics and the entrenchment of democratic values. More importantly, the government has held NEPAD ideals dear. Ghana was one of the first 6 countries to accede to the APRM process. Prior to acceding to the APRM, Ghana had as early as 2002 established an Office on NEPAD to coordinate all issues relating to NEPAD. The Office was later converted to a full fledged Ministry of Regional Cooperation and NEPAD. This was also confirmed by the Support Mission to Ghana. They note:

“that the Government of Ghana is very serious about the review and has put in place good mechanisms to ensure its success. ... It was recommended that the APRM Secretariat should inform other participating countries of the institutional framework put in place in

Ghana and advice them on the need to adopt similar structures” (UNECA, 2005c).

Another important lesson learned from Ghana’s implementation of the APRM is that the sensitisation and education of the populace was indispensable, not only to the success of the APRM but also, and more importantly to the sustainability of the programme. Since inclusiveness and broad-based participation are the guiding principles of the APRM, there is an absolute necessity to sensitise and educate the stakeholders on the process so as to ensure their full participation and contribution to the process. The APR Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) states that there must be broad-based and inclusive participation of key stakeholders, including trade unions, private sector, women and children, and pressure groups such as political parties. Ghana has conducted educational and awareness creation campaigns, which targeted the broad spectrum of the stakeholders, including traditional rulers and people in the rural areas (Assan 2004). This was critical in not only enlisting stakeholder participation but also giving them a sense of ownership in the process. This is an important lesson that other countries, who are about to embark on the process may wish to consider early on, and if necessary budget for.

Beyond fulfilling the normal roles such as participating in multi-stakeholder forum, the question remains if civil society organizations (CSOs) should also be encouraged to undertake shadow reviews? On the one hand this might complement a government driven review and could thus provide an important counterweight to it. However the idea of the APRM is to have a participatory approach that is inclusive of all groups of society. It is not supposed to be a government driven process. Therefore, an explicit shadow review diminishes chances of having the inclusive, participatory approach envisaged when embarking on a national APRM process. Overall there is no clear-cut recommendation on this issue; it depends on the political situation in each country if such a shadow review will add value to the process or if it might actually reduce it. If the political situation in a particular country justifies a shadow review, funds should be provided to CSO to enable them to conduct shadow review. Due to lack of financial resources, most civil society organizations rely on donor funding for conducting shadow reviews. This heavy reliance on external donors may compromise the credibility of shadow reviews. Although the government of Ghana did not provide any resources to civil society organizations for the purpose of conducting the shadow review, its friendly attitudes towards CSO throughout the whole process, encouraged them to assume a larger role in the process, beyond participating in the multi-stakeholder forum and the Governing Council.

With respect to institutional structures, due consideration should be given to the choice of the national structures for overseeing the implementation of the APRM. Although country specificities will influence the type of national structure best suited for a particular country, countries may wish to consider a structure

that gives the process credibility, representativeness, autonomy and ownership. Furthermore, the choice of the national structure should, to the extent possible, insulate the process from political manipulation and interference. To ensure autonomy of the national structure (national coordinating mechanism), Ghana made a conscious decision to establish the National APRM Governing Council outside government and select all the members of the Governing Council from civil society organizations. This helped in reducing the scope for political interference while strengthening stakeholder ownership and leadership of the process. Due regard should also be paid to ethnic, regional, gender and religious balance in the selection or appointment of members to national structures and substructures that have responsibility for coordinating the implementation of the APRM.

With respect to Support Missions, the experience of Ghana has also shown that such missions are important in guiding countries in implementing the APRM as well as clarifying issues to ensure that there is a common understanding of the process, rules, instruments as well as the philosophy underpinning the APRM. However, to optimise the utility of Support Missions to APRM participating countries, such missions should be meticulously planned. Furthermore, countries implementing the APRM should prepare themselves adequately for the Support Mission and the national preparatory processes should be at an advanced stage. According to Appiah⁹ (2004), for a successful Support Mission three elements must be in place prior to the arrival of the mission in the country. These are:

- (i) Establishment of the National Focal Point to provide leadership and ownership of the process;
- (ii) Appointment of the Technical Teams to conduct the Self-assessment, especially the administration of the Self-assessment questionnaire; and
- (iii) Awareness creation campaign to sensitise a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including parliamentarians, media, political parties, civil society etc;

Another interesting experience to be learned from Ghana, regarding the multi-stakeholder forum is that regular interaction and consultation among the Focal Point and the Technical Review Team on the questionnaire should be held prior to the arrival of the Support Mission and before the convening of the multi-stakeholder forum. In the case of Ghana, experience shows that stakeholders were not adequately informed on the conceptualisation and operationalization of the APR questionnaire. Therefore, a mass education and sensitisation programme should be provided so as to prepare them fully for their participation in the multi-stakeholder forum. In the selection of stakeholders for the multi-stakeholder forum, careful attention should also be paid to regional, ethnic,

⁹ Dr. Francis Appiah is the Executive Secretary of the National APRM Governing Council Secretariat in Ghana.

religious and gender dimensions so as to ensure balanced representation of stakeholders. Ghana had to develop some criteria to help them in selecting stakeholders. These selection criteria¹⁰ grouped and identified stakeholders into three broad categories of people viz; stakeholders from the public sector; civil society organizations with knowledge and capacity to participate meaningfully in the process; and stakeholders comprising ordinary people from communities at the grass roots level.

Regarding the Country Review Missions, two observations warrant mention.

Firstly, the APR consultants were inadequately prepared to conduct the country review missions (UNECA, 2005b). Quite disconcertingly, most consultants were not familiar with the methodology and modalities for executing the Country Review Visit as well as drafting the Country Review Reports. This hasty preparation resulted in the delay of the Country Review Mission consultation process.¹¹

Secondly, the quality of the draft Review Reports for Ghana and Rwanda by the consultants left a lot to be desired. Moreover, many of the reports prepared by consultants did not fully correspond to the APRM Self-assessment questionnaire. As a result, the APR Secretariat had to invite strategic partners to South Africa for a working session to help in reviewing the draft reports for Ghana and Rwanda before their finalisation. Due to the unsatisfactory quality of the reports, the strategic partners had to do a lot of work to bring the reports to a stage where they could be presented to the APR Panel.

Another important lesson learned from the APRM implementation in general, is that the process is too comprehensive and broad. The cases of Ghana, Rwanda and Kenya illustrate this. Because of the onerous nature of the process, there may be need to minimize the agenda either through reduction of the broad areas or reduction in coverage within each area (Kanbur 2004). The success of the process depends on the technical competence of the APR Secretariat and examiners “Not just technically competent staff, but that the review mechanism not take on too much, and not be stretched too thinly across a very wide range of issues” (Kanbur 2004). The basic facts must be right in phases one and two while the independence of the APR Secretariat and examiners must be maintained.

¹⁰ The selection criteria were modeled on the methodology adopted by the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and the National Economic Dialogue.

¹¹ This problem was particularly more pronounced in Rwanda and to a lesser extent in Ghana.

V. Conclusion

NEPAD's APRM is one of the most innovative ideas to come out of Africa in recent times. If implemented properly and seriously, it has the potential for transforming governance and improving social and economic development across the continent. Ghana's experience with APRM has been a good one by and large. The process has enabled the country to self-assess and to determine key challenges it faces in the area of political, economic, and corporate governance and socio-economic development. The process has also help strengthen national dialogue and consultation in national governance. Ghana has been able to come out with a time-bound Programme of Action to address the overarching issues that emerged from the review. If this Programme of Action is implemented it should enable Ghana to address some of its greatest governance challenges and improve economic development.

Yet, Ghana's peer review experience is not without some challenges from which lessons can be drawn. This paper outlines these challenges and their implication for the success of the review process in Ghana and elsewhere in Africa. Two key lessons emerge from the case study of Ghana. First, APRM is resource intensive and costly in terms of human and financial resources both at the process level and in implementing the Programme of Action, which means that countries planning to undergo the review must mobilize the required resources and build the human capacity needed to carry the process through. Second, conducting a self-assessment exercise and being reviewed by the APR Forum of the Heads of State and Government is but one major step in the process. The implication is that unless action is taken to implement recommendations and the consultative process and accountability institutionalised, the whole thing will have been useless. Visionary leadership and strong political will are required to make this possible.

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