

Botswana and Nepad and the APRM: two official perspectives

Item 1:

Response by the Permanent Secretary for Development, Mr. Modise Modise, to questions from the press about the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD); 1-03-04

Q1: How do you justify Botswana's decision not to subscribe to NEPAD's Peer Review Mechanism?

Answer: Many considerations are taken into account in Botswana joining any new initiative, including the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). These include strategic considerations, added value of membership, feasibility of attaining the set objectives, long term sustainability, capacity to service the institution, relationship with existing institutions, to which Botswana belongs, cost considerations, etc. As the APRM is fairly new, some of its aspects are still being formulated. It should also be borne in mind that even where the ideals may be good, it is sometimes necessary to test them against practical implementation and long term sustainability.

Botswana fully subscribes to transparency and is open to review by any organisation and many reviews have been conducted on many of the country's policies. Botswana has absolutely no fear of being reviewed on any aspects of her governance.

Q2: Is there any possibility that the government can reconsider its position?

Answer: There is always a possibility that any position can be reconsidered.

Q3: By taking this stand doesn't Botswana risk being alienated and blacklisted by other African nations?

Answer: The question of alienation or blacklisting of Botswana by other states should not arise as the APRM provides for voluntary accession and thereby anticipating that some states will join and others will not. In time, more states are expected to join.

Q4: Botswana has one foot in and the other out – being in the presidential committee overseeing NEPAD while turning down the review part. Is this not a case of double standards? Why not be out of everything or be in it altogether?

Answer: This is related to the preceding question. There are no double standards. Important as the APRM may be, it is not the totality of NEPAD. In consequence of this,

the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee (HSGIC) is separate from the APRM Forum in which participation is restricted to Heads of State and Government participating in the APRM. Membership of the APRM is open to all members of the African Union (AU) on a voluntary basis whereas membership of the HSGIC was decided by the AU Summit with four countries representing each of the five regions of the continent.

Q5: There are those who feel the discomfort could be arising out of deeper feelings (fears) than admitted. For example Botswana has not openly criticised Robert Mugabe and will be compelled to do so in terms of the Peer Review Mechanism. What do you say to this?

Answer: In our understanding, the APRM process is not intended to target particular African leaders or "compel" leaders in APRM to take certain "public" positions vis-à-vis others. The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) which is predicated on persuasion and "peer" influence, will deal with those countries that accede to it. The APRM is not expected to be an instrument of coercion of participating states.

Q6: By saying that international, Western-based oversight institutions can do what the Peer Review Mechanism attempts to do, doesn't Botswana risk being labelled Eurocentric?

Answer: As far as we are aware, there has never been any preference for Western-based Institutions to do what the APRM seeks to do. What has been said is that on some issues that the APRM is concerned with, such as economic matters, there may already be institutions that African countries belong to, such as the African Development Bank, Economic Commission for Africa, World Bank, IMF, UN whose reports could be utilised to avoid unnecessary duplication. Eurocentricity therefore does not arise.

Q7: What essential development value does NEPAD add to Africa as opposed to the African Union or African Development Bank (ADB)?

Answer: NEPAD is a programme of the African Union and therefore its contribution to African development should not be distinguished from that of the AU. The African Development Bank (ADB) is also actively involved in the NEPAD Agenda, especially infrastructure development.

Q8: Couldn't this (NEPAD) be taken as another 'talking shop' by African leaders at the expense of tax payers money.

Answer: NEPAD is not a "talking shop" – it has set a clear agenda and targets. The final judgement should therefore be based on the delivery of the set targets. NEPAD should not be judged prematurely.

Q9: NEPAD came into being at a time when AU was being restructured from the previous Organisation of African Unity (OAU) which was deemed inefficient and ineffective. Is there not a sense in which NEPAD merely duplicates the AU objectives?

Answer: See response to question 7

Q10: Don't you believe that international sponsors' could be worried by receiving conflicting messages from the continent as a result of the demands by NEPAD and AU for support?

Answer: We are not aware of any conflicting messages from NEPAD and the AU.

Q11: Is NEPAD not a Philosophy by some African leaders who are simply trying to create a legacy for themselves at the expense of others?

Answer: NEPAD was adopted by the OAU summit in Lusaka in July 2001 and is therefore not for "some leaders". In any case, there is nothing wrong with any African leader creating a legacy so long as that legacy is a positive one for the good of the people of the African continent. Secondly, the creation of a positive legacy need not be at the expense of other leaders. Pioneers of Pan Africanism, such as the late President Kwame Nkrumah, have left a legacy, which many Africans cherish to this day.

Item 2:

To Mmegi (A Newspaper in Botswana): Reply to your reporter's question about Botswana's position with regard to NEPAD's African Peer Review Mechanism (2/3/04).

In a rather contentious questionnaire, which has just today been brought to my attention, your reporter among other things enquired from this Office as to what are the reasons why Botswana has not, as yet, chosen to take part in NEPAD's African Peer Review Mechanism?

In response, we would first of all wish to point out that African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) has been and remains a voluntary initiative. Accession, or non-accession, is thus a matter of sovereign choice for each member state of the African Union. Thus, Botswana's current position of non-accession in no way detracts or contradicts from our broader commitment to NEPAD, as well as other African Union initiatives.

Further to the above, prior to joining any new international initiative, such as the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) it is the serious responsibility of this Government to carefully weigh a variety of factors from the specificities of our own national perspective. These would include such considerations as whether accession to the initiative will add value to that which already exists in our own context, with further reference to, among other things, such factors as our existing capacity to service the institution on a sustainable and cost effective basis.

As it is the APRM is still fairly new. In this respect some of its aspects are, in fact, still being formulated. This obviously has some bearing on our ability at this point in time to judge whether accession to APRM is in our own long term interest.

We would further emphasize that our own doors have always been, and shall remain, open to review by outside organisations. Our most recent recognition as being one of the world's "most globalised" nations, ranking 17 among the surveyed countries in both the political and economic categories, is a clear testament to the fundamentally open nature of our society. As a result of this openness our society continues to be the subject of many additional external, as well as internal, reviews on an ongoing basis. On balance such reviews have helped to establish our country's now widely recognised status as a global leader in the areas of transparency, good governance, and sound economic management.

Finally, there is always a possibility that our position with regard to APRM, or any other matter, may be reconsidered in the context of changing circumstances.

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