

ADDRESS BY

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AT THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE  
NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS FORUM OF THE AFRICAN PEER  
REVIEW MECHANISM (APRM) IN GHANA

International Conference Centre, Accra, Ghana

27 May 2004

## **Introduction**

H.E. Mr. Alhaji A. Mahama, Vice-President of the Republic of Ghana,

Hon. Ministers and Members of Parliament,

Members of the National APRM Governing Council of Ghana,

Ambassadors, High Commissioners and Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Leaders of Government Oversight Institutions, Civil Society, Business and Labour,

Distinguished Representatives of the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is a great honour and a great pleasure for me and my colleagues on the APRM Support Mission to be here in Accra with you today and to participate in the Opening Ceremony of this National Stakeholders Forum. Thank you, Prof. Samuel Adjepong, Chairperson of the National APRM Governing Council of Ghana, for your kind words and for the warm welcome extended to me and the members of the Support Mission since we arrived here in your country earlier this week.

I have been asked to bring to you the greetings and the encouragement of my Colleagues, Members of the APR Panel of Eminent Persons, in particular, that of our Chairperson, Ms Marie-Angelique Savané.

Mr. Vice-President, this is an historic occasion, not only for the Panel of Eminent Persons and for Ghana, but also for the whole African continent and all the member countries of the African Union. This is indeed the first time for an official APRM Support Mission to participate in the formal Opening Ceremony of a Peer Review programme for a member of the African Union. Ghana is indeed the first country on the African continent to move into this brave new world of testing and trying our determination to implement a programme for a new Africa with a new vision for its own future.

A lot of hard work has been put into the preparation for the implementation of the African Peer Review Mechanism. Most of the work so far has been “paper” work devoted to the design of a practical operational programme for the implementation of the vision, the ideals and the objectives of many an African leader. We applaud them for

their vision and their dreams. We thank all the people who worked so hard over the past two years to bring us to this memorable moment.

We have now reached the stage where we are moving into the next phase of this ambitious mission. This occasion is indeed the beginning for the APRM, represented by its Panel of Eminent Persons and this Support Mission, to commence working at ground level. We are now moving away from the boardroom, the conference centre, or private studies and patient computers to the real harsh world of the politics, the economics, the social needs and the corporate activity of our beloved continent. I am honoured to be part of this event.

The question may be asked:- Why is Ghana the first country to venture into this untested and unexplored new operation? The answer is clear and easy. Mr. Vice-President I accept that your President H.E. Mr John Kufuor, you yourself and your colleagues in Government believe as we on the Panel do, that we are doing it in the interest of all the people living on the African continent. Good governance, sound macroeconomic policies, responsible socio-economic development programmes and good corporate governance provide the only route to our common objective of reducing poverty in our countries. Ghana has led the way by:-

- creating a Ministry of Regional Cooperation and NEPAD to confirm the commitment of Government to the APRM process;
- appointing an APRM Governing Council outside of Government with representatives from all stakeholders to guide and to lead the self-assessment process within the country;
- opening an APRM Secretariat within the new Ministry to serve as a focal point for communication with the Panel and assisting the Governing Council;
- commissioning four technical advisory bodies to assist with the assessment process in the respective four identified basic disciplines of political, socio-economic, macro-economic and corporate governance; and
- embarking on a promotion campaign within the country to reach and involve all the stakeholders in the review process.

We on the Panel of Eminent Persons had no reservations to bring our support to you at this stage in the self-assessment process that you have embarked upon with so much vigour, efficiency and enthusiasm. We thank you, Mr. Vice-President together with your colleagues for

having taken the lead in the process of implementing the African Peer Review Mechanism.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Members of the National APRM Governing Council of Ghana on their appointment to this, for us on the Panel, very important body. I am convinced that the Governing Council will carry forward the commitment, vision and enthusiasm of Ghana for the APRM. We look forward to working with you and your Secretariat very closely in the Review process over the next eight months.

We all face the immense challenge to ensure that the APRM makes genuine impact in improving the governance and development environment of our countries, and places and keeps our continent on a path to sustainable development.

### ***The African Peer Review Mechanism [APRM]***

The APRM is a voluntary mechanism initiated by the Heads of State and Government of African countries with the intention to assist all participating countries to accelerate their progress towards adopting and implementing the priorities and programmes of NEPAD. The APRM is meant to encourage and to enable participating Member States to adopt policies and practices that conform to the agreed political, economic and corporate governance, and socio-economic development objectives, values, codes and standards contained in the Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance of the African Union.

### ***Role of participating countries***

The APRM has raised a lot of expectations on the continent and beyond, as a critical instrument for advancing reforms in governance and socio-economic development and in building capacity of our countries. This can only be achieved through concerted efforts at the country-level to engage all national stakeholders to identify and implement national priorities. This is the reason why the key principle of the APRM is first and foremost:-

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND NATIONAL LEADERSHIP.

In this respect, it is worth emphasizing that the APRM is not supposed to be a process imposed from outside, it is a self-assessment and self-monitoring system that must in the first instance be initiated and conducted by the country itself. The process is meant to promote

national dialogue and consensus building over the fundamental development issues amongst national stakeholders.

The APRM also requires that each country carefully develops a Programme of Action with time-bound objectives to guide all stakeholders in the actions required by all – government, private sector, civil society – to achieve the common development vision. In this regard, the role of the Ghana Governing Council will be crucial, as it is responsible for ensuring that the process is technically sound and transparent and is based on genuine participation of all key national stakeholders.

### ***The Role of the APR Panel***

The principal role of the Panel of Eminent Persons in the APRM is to oversee the conduct of the process, and ensure its integrity. The Panel's role is thus mainly to support the activities carried out by the country, including proffering advice, and providing appropriate technical tools. The Panel is also keen to learn from the experience of countries, and to facilitate the sharing of best practice for the sake of peer learning. In this regard, Ghana is again a pioneer – we as a Panel cannot at this stage bring to you much of the experience of other countries, simply because we have not done similar surveys for any other country before this one. Seen from the other side, from what I have learned so far, you are setting a good example for the many other African countries that are bound to follow in your footsteps.

Lastly, the Panel provides leadership to the review missions, and makes recommendations to the participating Heads of State and Government through a final report. It will then be the responsibility of the Heads of State and Government of participating countries (the Forum) to engage in the Peer Review discussion with the Head of State of the reviewed country. I must make it clear, however, that the recommendations of the Panel are not meant to punish or exclude countries; the main objective is to help each country to identify its own weaknesses, and to find ways and means for addressing the shortcomings.

### ***Concluding remarks***

Being the first country to start the APRM process, I would like to take this opportunity, Mr. Vice-President, to wish H.E. The President of Ghana, you and your Government and all Ghanaians with you everything of the best in this challenging undertaking.

Thank you for having made it possible for me and my colleagues on the Panel of Eminent Persons today to take the important step of starting with our task on ground level here in Ghana. We hope that we as a Panel shall be able to make a constructive contribution towards leading Africa on a path of sustainable development, and greater prosperity for all of its people.