

# Nepad's APRM: A Progress Report, Practical Limitations and Challenges

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## Introduction

Africa's political and business leaders face a litmus test of their willingness and commitment to implement fair and socially equitable governance and business practices. Hailed by the North and many in Africa as a panacea for the continent's governance woes, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), a groundbreaking initiative of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad), is finally getting underway.

The APRM is unique in its scope and breadth. While the concept of peer review has precedents in the academic world, its use by states has been limited to financial audits such as those instituted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the sector-specific peer reviews of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The APRM process is designed as a mechanism whereby countries voluntarily 'open their books' to be examined within a formal structure according to Nepad guidelines. Teams of African experts in various spheres will assess and critique the countries' governance performance based on a number of key indicators viz. political governance, economic governance, corporate governance and socio-economic development.

Currently, 23 countries<sup>2</sup> have signed the APRM Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), thereby acceding to being reviewed by their peers. The peer review process aims to scrutinise all levels of government, parliament and the judiciary as well as the private sector. In the past, large private corporations have exploited the greed of political leaders to advance their business interests.

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<sup>2</sup> These countries include: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mali, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda.

Africa's stagnation, and indeed retrogression, in the socio-economic development sphere can be attributed largely to the levels of chronic poor governance experienced by many African states. Historically, African states have regarded each other's sovereignty as sacrosanct, a position that has allowed corrupt regimes to flourish at the expense of their citizens' well-being. The introduction of the APRM, despite its many limitations, presents a refreshing counterpoint to this. If followed through with sincerity, peer review could help translate Nepad rhetoric into concrete and measurable results at national level.

### **Recent developments**

During February 2004, a meeting of African heads of state in Kigali, Rwanda, announced that Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda and Mauritius would be the first four countries to be reviewed. South Africa opted to defer the APRM until after the national elections in April 2004 and will form part of the second group of six countries to be reviewed (also including Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Algeria and Mali). Various countries that have not yet agreed to review have formally indicated that they are considering doing so, while others are commissioning analyses to assess their levels of governance prior to signing up.

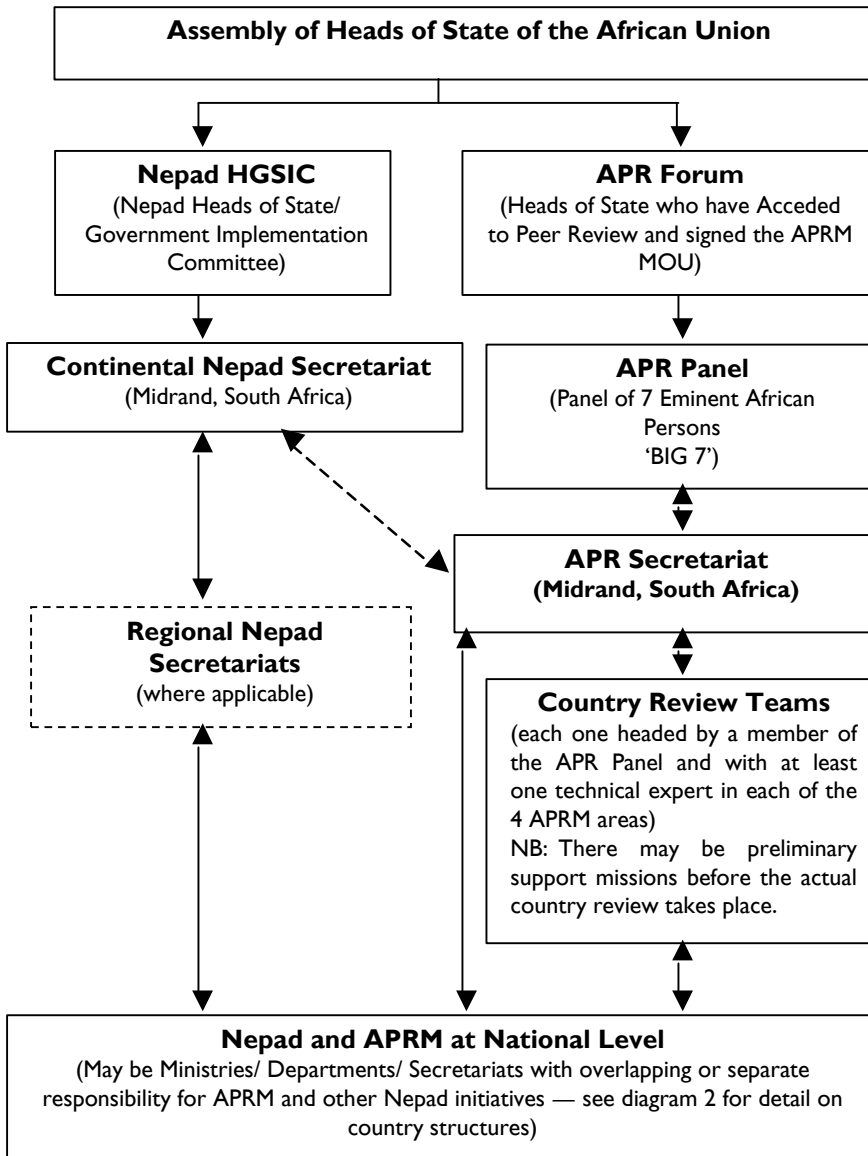
The structures for overseeing the APRM at continental level have been established, and the first countries are preparing for the review, with Ghana having formally launched its peer review process with the opening of the National Stakeholders' Forum in Accra on 27 May 2004.

### **African peer review: Organisation and processes**

#### ***The continental APRM structures***

Collectively, the heads of state or government of the countries that have acceded to the APRM are referred to as the *APR Forum*. This is presumably the level where 'peer pressure' will ultimately be exerted once the country review report is concluded.

**Diagram I: The continental NEPAD and APRM structures\***



\* After Cilliers J, 2003

The *Panel of Eminent Persons (APR Panel)*<sup>3</sup> is already working behind the scenes and has met several times. It consists of seven eminent Africans who command great respect on the continent and whose task is primarily to ensure the credibility and integrity of the APR process.

The *APR Continental Secretariat*, appointed by the APR Forum in consultation with the APR Panel and the Nepad Secretariat, was initially envisaged as a node within the Nepad Secretariat in South Africa, but has now been established in separate premises. It will ultimately have its own independent communications strategy, including a website. The APR Secretariat is headed by Dr Kerfalla Yansane, former governor of the Reserve Bank in Guinea. The Secretariat will eventually have researchers and consultants in each of the four focus areas of the APRM — political governance and democracy; economic governance; corporate governance; and socio-economic development. Since the human resource component of the APRM Secretariat is a crucial indicator of its capacity and competence, the current level of staffing appears woefully inadequate. A successful APRM process is partially contingent on having the experts on board before the process begins, so that they are *au fait* with the APRM objectives and indicators. Consequently, these logistical shortcomings may affect the quality of the final report.

Each *Country Review Team* will be headed by a member of the APR Panel, supported by experts in each of the four focus areas of the APRM. These experts may be drawn from the in-house resources of the APR and Nepad Secretariats; or they may come from supporting organisations such as the African Development Bank (ADB) and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), as well as from other African Union (AU) organs such as the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. South Africa's Dr Chris Stals will head the Ghana team, Dr Dorothy Njeuma from Cameroon the Rwanda team, Algeria's Mourad Medelci the Mauritius team and Dr Graça Machel from Mozambique the Kenya team.

### ***Establishing APRM structures at national level: An update***

In February 2004, the APR Forum approved recommendations that each APR country establish an *APR Focal Point* at ministerial level or higher, as well as a *National Co-ordinating Mechanism*, where such a structure does not already exist.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The panel consists of Professor Adebayo Adedeji of Nigeria, Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat of Kenya, Dr Graça Machel of Mozambique, Mourad Medelci of Algeria, Dr Dorothy Njeuma of Cameroon, Marie-Angelique Savané of Senegal (chairperson), and Dr Chris Stals of South Africa.

<sup>4</sup> APR Forum, 'Communiqué issued at the end of the First Summit of the Committee of Participating Heads of State and Government in the African Peer Review Mechanism (APR Forum)', Kigali, 13 February 2004, p.6.

The APR Focal Point is intended to play a pivotal communication and co-ordination role, serving as the liaison mechanism between national structures and continental ones such as the APR Secretariat and the APR Panel. The Focal Point, in conjunction with the Co-ordinating Mechanism should also develop, co-ordinate and implement the in-country mechanisms of preparing for peer review and hosting the country review team during the review visit. It is recommended that the APR Focal Point be a high-level office in order to facilitate direct access to the head of state and to relevant directors and ministers in key departments and ministries, as and when this is required by the APR Panel and the country review team.

The exact form and nature of the APR Focal Point is left to the discretion of the individual state and will vary according to each country's needs, the resources it can summon for this purpose and its geopolitical and economic make-up.

The *National Co-ordinating Mechanism* is a structure recommended by the APR Panel to the APR Forum. To ensure that the peer review process is inclusive and credible, the APR MOU explicitly states that there must be broad-based and inclusive participation of key stakeholders in the public and private sectors, including trade unions, and special interest groups such as women and children. The National Co-ordinating Mechanism must undertake broad-based consultation with all the relevant stakeholder groups, a crucial factor for ensuring that the peer review process becomes 'owned' at national level, by both government and civil society.

To date the principal criticisms directed at Nepad and the peer review concept have been the lack of ownership by African citizens and the top-down approach, both at continental level and within individual countries. While there is some defence for this approach in the establishment of these structures at continental level, for Nepad and peer review to really become established at the heart of good governance at country level, improved information dissemination and enhanced participation are necessary. Without explicit mechanisms to get ownership and buy-in at all levels of government, parliament and the private sector, peer review will fail to achieve its aims of greater accountability and good governance within each country.

As with the APR Focal Point, the National Co-ordinating Mechanism may be structured in various forms most suited to the country's needs and resources, provided that it fulfils its mandate of inclusive and broad-based participation.

Ghana, which has a dedicated Ministry of Regional Co-operation and Nepad, has already established an APR Focal Point headed by Dr Francis Appiah, previously a senior technical adviser to Ghana's minister for Nepad, Dr Kofi Konadu Apraku. In addition, Professor Samuel Adjepong,

a leading Ghanaian academic, chairs the National APRM Governing Council, which was established outside government to represent civil society stakeholders. The lead NGOs in the four thematic areas of the APRM are the Centre for Democratic Development (political governance and democracy), the Centre for Economic Policy Analysis (economic management and governance), the Private Enterprise Foundation (corporate governance) and the Institute for Statistical, Social and Economic Research (socio-economic development). The formal opening ceremony of Ghana's APRM in May 2004 was accompanied by a support mission headed by Dr Stals, who indicated that work is commencing at 'ground level ... moving away from the boardroom ... to the real harsh world of the politics, the economics, the social needs and the corporate activity.'<sup>5</sup> Ghana has commissioned four independent, non-government technical advisory bodies to assist with the assessment process in the focus areas of the APRM.<sup>6</sup>

Rwanda has taken a slightly different approach, establishing its Nepal structure as a special implant within the presidency, with Claver Gatete designated as President Kagame's personal representative on Nepal issues, including the APRM. Rwanda has also established an APR Focal Point and has begun preparatory work on the country self-assessment phase of the APRM. During March 2004, the Rwandan government hosted a two-day seminar and stakeholder workshop for the APRM. This was aimed primarily at discussing the self-assessment questionnaire. Most participants were from government or parastatal organisations, with limited civil society input. This concern was raised with the organizers,<sup>7</sup> who acknowledged the importance of civil society interaction with the APRM process. Though Rwandese civil society is in its infancy, the National Peer Review Commission, which was inaugurated during the visit of the 10-person Country Support Mission between 21 and 24 June 2004, currently includes 50 representatives from all sectors of civil society and government. Five more members will be added on the recommendation of the support mission. The mission was led by Madame Savane, chair of the APR Panel, and also included personnel from the UNECA, the ADB and the APR Secretariat.

Kenya, where responsibility for Nepal issues rests within the Ministry of Planning, took an early lead in the region by establishing a semi-independent National Nepal Secretariat in 2003, headed by Peter Ondeng. This Secretariat was subsequently also mandated at a meeting

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<sup>5</sup> Stals C, 'Address at the occasion of the opening ceremony of the National Stakeholders Forum of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) in Ghana, 27 May 2004', International Conference Centre, Accra.

<sup>6</sup> NEPAD Dialogue, 'Mission Visits Ghana as Peer Review Process gets Under Way', *NEPAD Dialogue* # 51, 21 June 2004.

<sup>7</sup> Ms Kajee was invited to participate in the stakeholders' workshop during March 2004.

of East African member states during 2003, to serve as the Nepad Secretariat for the entire East African region. Kenya has initiated a series of stakeholder-sensitisation processes, with briefings and information sessions for media, business, government and civil society representatives. One of these was a public information and discussion forum co-hosted with SAIIA<sup>8</sup> on 30 March 2004. Although media reports during March 2004 suggested that Kenya might delay its peer review until after the country's constitutional review crisis had been resolved,<sup>9</sup> Professor Anyang Nyong'o,<sup>10</sup> Kenya's minister of planning, indicated that the APR process would begin by May 2004.

Professor Mike Chege, an adviser in the planning ministry, was designated as the interim APR Focal Point, and he is expected to work closely with the permanent secretary for governance and ethics, who is based in the presidency. In May 2004, an intensive workshop was held in Mombasa, and the country's inaugural APRM Consultative Forum was held in mid-July 2004, with thematic working groups in each of the four areas of the APRM. Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat of the APR Panel was present at the forum. Respected organisations such as the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, the African Centre for Economic Growth, the Kenya Association of Manufacturers and the Capital Markets Authority were represented, as well as members of the academic establishment, and youth and student groups.

Commenting on the establishment of the National Co-ordinating Mechanism, Ondeng has declared that 'the commission would be free from government influence ... would work with experts from member states ... [and] will include the Ethics and Governance Permanent Secretary, human rights bodies, [the] business community and governance watchdog Transparency International.'<sup>11</sup> At the time of writing the country support mission for Kenya was scheduled for the end of July 2004.

In Mauritius, an existing mechanism, the National Economic and Social Council (NESC), is the APR Focal Point and the national coordinating structure has also been established under the secretary-general of the NESC. Umbrella civil society organisations, such as the Mauritius Council of Social Service (MACOSS), have been designated as NGO

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<sup>8</sup> During 2003 and 2004 SAIIA's Nepad and Governance project held a series of seminars and conferences in various African countries, aimed at enhancing civil society interaction with governments on Nepad and the APRM process.

<sup>9</sup> Kenya has been undergoing a process of constitutional review, with a new draft constitution presented during March 2004. Due to political dissension within and outside government, the draft has not been ratified and there is much controversy surrounding the process.

<sup>10</sup> Nyong'o A, during the public debate following the minister's address at the SAIIA Public Conference on the APRM, Nairobi, 30 March 2004.

<sup>11</sup> Kimani W, 'Nepad commission to be set up soon', *The Nation* (Nairobi), 21 May 2004.

representatives and are currently working through the draft questionnaire in preparation for the APRM. At the end of June 2004, Medelci of the APR Forum led a support mission to Mauritius, which also included Dr Yansane of the APR Secretariat, and members of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNECA and the ADB. On 29 June 2004, the support mission provided guidance during a national workshop that brought together members of government as well as representatives of business, media, trade unions and civil society organisations.

In South Africa, where the national *Nepad* mechanism is located within the Department of Foreign Affairs, the director-general, Dr Ayanda Ntsaluba, indicated that the Reverend Frank Chikane, director-general in the office of the presidency, would head the APR Focal Point.<sup>12</sup> Dr Ntsaluba also noted that the actual implementation of the APR process would occur under the auspices of the Department of Public Service Administration, which is presumably where the National Co-ordinating Mechanism will be established.

### ***The stages of the review process***

There are five stages in the peer review process.

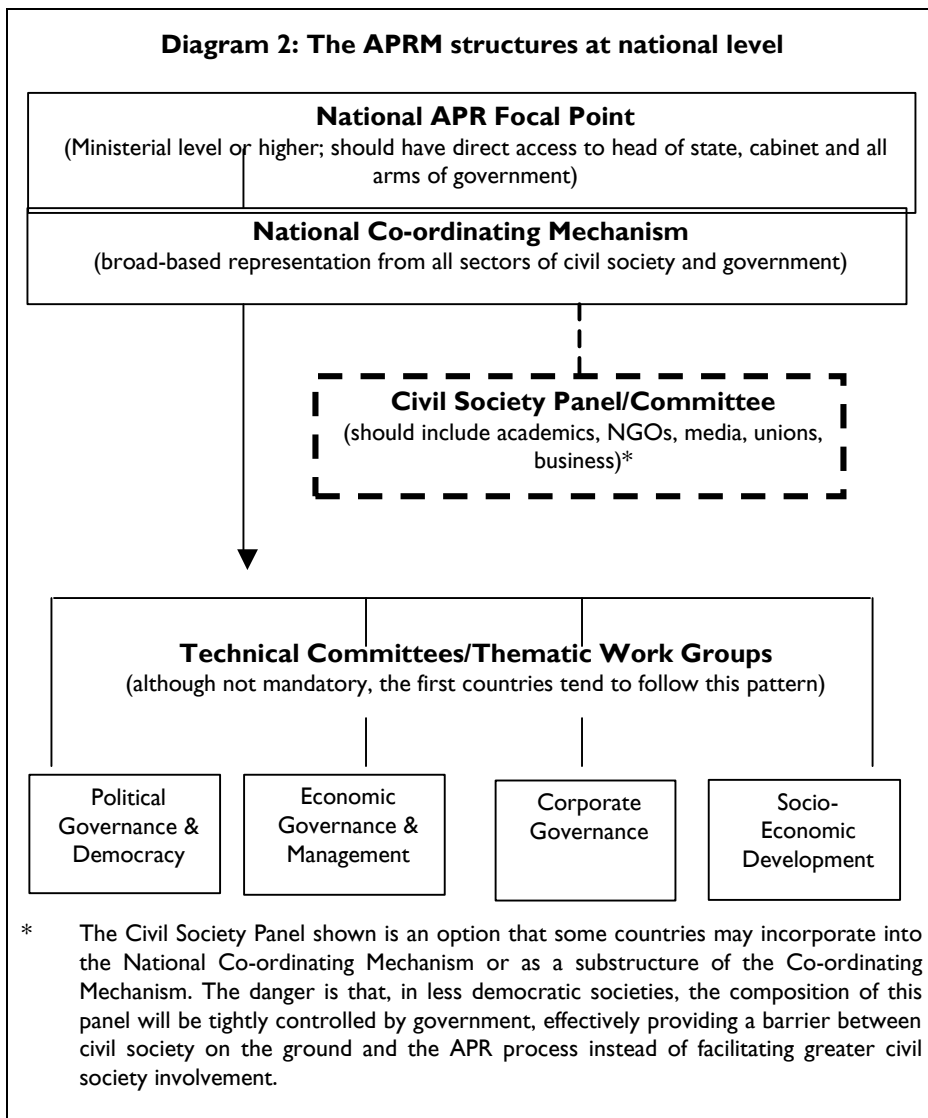
Firstly, the country undergoing review establishes a national APR Focal Point and National Co-ordinating Commission. After consultation with key stakeholders, it completes a *self-assessment questionnaire* and prepares a *draft national action plan*. Concomitantly, the continental APRM Secretariat collates available data for the country into a *background document*, which is then used to identify the major governance challenges facing that country — the so-called '*big issues*' paper. Partner organisations such as the ADB and UNECA may be called upon to assist the APR Secretariat in this process. Support missions to the review country may also occur during this phase.

The second step consists of the actual *country review visit*. A review team, headed by one of the members of the APR Panel, and comprising at least one expert in each of the four focal areas of the peer review, conducts a series of interviews and investigations within the review country. The review team will interview key stakeholders from various sectors and interest groups including government, business, media, academia and NGOs during this process.

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<sup>12</sup> Personal interview with Dr A Ntsaluba following the director-general's annual address at the SAIIA, Johannesburg, 20 May 2004.





Next, the review team compiles a *draft country report* containing their analysis and recommendations for improving governance in the period until the next review (usually 3–5 years). This draft report is shared with the government of the review country. The government cannot change the actual report, but its responses may be attached as an appendix to the report.

In the fourth stage, the draft report is reviewed by the APR Panel, which makes recommendations to the APR Forum. At this stage, actual peer pressure is brought to bear on the head of the review country. The

Forum will discuss among fellow heads of state the action plan recommended for the inter-review period and will provide support to each other's governments, where feasible, to assist in implementing the country national action plan. This support may include sharing technical expertise and other resources.

While there are various potential rewards for submitting to a peer review and improving governance, the mechanism makes no explicit mention of punitive measures or sanctions against countries that fail to implement the recommendations of the review report.

Finally, the country report is made public and tabled in AU structures such as the Pan African Parliament. While the official APRM documents clearly state that the country report is to be publicly tabled in AU organs, there is no timeframe given and it is unclear whether the entire unedited report will be available to the media and citizens at large. This is particularly significant for civil society with regard to monitoring the implementation of the country action plan in the inter-review period.

### **Limitations and challenges: An analysis of APRM progress to date**

Peer review undoubtedly presents a unique opportunity to involve all sectors of government and civil society in reforming the governance climate. However, as it stands, the design of the process and the manner of its rollout in the first countries to submit to it pose serious challenges to the depth and integrity of the final review report and its real impacts on improving governance.

According to Kanbur, the three essential criteria for successful, fully functioning peer review mechanisms are competence, independence and competition.<sup>13</sup> In addition, ownership and communication are significant factors for success.

### **Competence**

The APRM covers a vast range of objectives, standards and criteria,<sup>14</sup> but the APR Secretariat is presently understaffed and lacks research capacity in several key areas. The successes of the OECD's reviews are attributed largely to sufficient human, financial and technical resources.<sup>15</sup> An

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<sup>13</sup> Kanbur R, 'The African Peer Review Mechanism: An assessment of concept and design', at <http://www.arts.cornell.edu/poverty/kanbur/aprm.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> Nepad Secretariat, *The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)*. Johannesburg: Nepad. Also available online at <http://www.dfa.gov.za/au.nepad/nepad49.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> Kajee A, 'Peer review in practice', *eAfrica: The Electronic Journal of Governance and Innovation*, 1, October 2003. Johannesburg: SAIIA, p.11.

independent estimate by SAIIA<sup>16</sup> indicated that it would take 20 investigators five weeks to reasonably examine all of the areas under review. In view of the review team size (six to ten) proposed by the APR Secretariat and the timing of two weeks for the country visit, this calls into question the technical capacity of the process.

While the APR Panel has recommended the involvement of three categories of partner institutions (strategic partners, regional-resource institutions and international-resource institutions) to strengthen the technical capacity of the review,<sup>17</sup> such 'outsourcing' presents its own challenges. The African ownership of the APRM may be called into question and the Secretariat may encounter practical difficulties in synthesising the outputs from a variety of subcontracted analyses.

The technical and human resources available depend on the funding of the APRM, which is essentially via a contribution of at least \$100,000 from each country that has signed up for review. However, the past record of Organisation of African Unity (OAU) states in submitting dues is not encouraging in this regard. Furthermore, Herbert estimated that a comprehensive peer review would cost at least four times as much for each country.<sup>18</sup> Some APRM countries have already paid their contributions. South Africa, for example, has already contributed more than this amount to the process. Other states have been urged to make payment as soon as possible in order to ensure the smooth operation of the APRM process. In addition, the UNDP's Regional Bureau for Africa has been tasked with establishing the APRM Trust Fund to ensure ongoing and sustainable funding for the process.

### **Independence**

Perceived lack of independence by the body conducting the peer review can undermine the integrity and credibility of the APRM. Hence, the establishment of the APR Panel is aimed at ensuring that the process is not unduly influenced by the review country's government. Non-interference in the technical aspects of review, transparency and inclusiveness are hallmarks of the OECD process, an example it is hoped the APRM will follow.<sup>19</sup>

The OECD reviews are conducted by permanent staff instead of short-term temporary consultants as proposed for the APRM. In the OECD countries, the involvement of civil society in peer review varies according

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<sup>16</sup> Herbert R, 'Becoming my brother's keeper', *eAfrica: The Electronic Journal of Governance and Innovation*, 1, October 2003. Johannesburg: SAIIA, p.10.

<sup>17</sup> APR Forum, *op. cit.*, p.5.

<sup>18</sup> Herbert, *op. cit.*, p.10.

<sup>19</sup> Kajee, *op. cit.*, p.11.

to the sector under review. With development assistance, for example, there is less civil society involvement than in the environmental review. Also, in some countries there is greater and more active civil society input into the process than in others.

The rollout of the APRM in the first countries undergoing the process has raised questions about the independence of civil society representatives on the National Co-ordinating Mechanisms. SAIIA conducted seminars on civil society and the APRM in various countries. In all cases there was a lack of information regarding civil society's role and the opportunities for engagement with the process. There were concerns raised about the manner in which civil society representation would occur and whether the media would have full access to the process as it unfolds.

At a seminar in Ghana during November 2003, community-based organisations in that country, for example, were concerned that their rural membership would not be heard. Ghanaian civil society players in general were outraged at the lack of consultation and what they perceived as a non-democratic process of representation. The government has since engaged in a broader process of consultation.

Similar criticisms have been raised in Kenya and South Africa. In both these countries there is a perception that the governments have the 'high moral ground' and should therefore be exempt from criticism. Civil society players also expressed concerns that participation of civil society in the official APRM could lead to co-option and a silencing of critical voices within the process. In Rwanda, the virtual absence of a civil society voice is cause for concern regarding the independence of the review.

Government players in all these countries have given assurances that the criticisms will be considered and steps taken to ensure the APRM's integrity. These countries may indeed be sincere in their assurances, but concern remains that a largely government-controlled process in the first countries to be assessed will culminate in a review that is neither credible nor independent. This would be a disaster not only for the development and growth prospects of the countries concerned, but would set a dangerous precedent for reviews in countries where corrupt governments could attempt to manipulate the APRM to 'whitewash' their governance problems by controlling non-government participation in the review.

## **Competition**

Kanbur suggests that reviews need to be part of a range of assessments so as to avoid the pressures of being perceived as 'the only game in town'.<sup>20</sup> He says that while the APRM may provide a counterweight to IMF and

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<sup>20</sup> Kanbur, *op. cit.*, p.10.

donor assessments, there is a need for independent civil society reviews,<sup>21</sup> and suggests that Nepad should allocate resources for this purpose.

At present, civil society groups in various APRM countries are undertaking types of parallel reviews in the different areas that fall under the APRM. The African Human Security Initiative<sup>22</sup> is one such example, which uses expert analyses to assess the human security climate of the countries in the study. To date, however, there has been no single attempt at a comprehensive 'shadow review' by civil society in any country undergoing review. This is primarily due to the lack of funding for such a mammoth undertaking and a lack of consensus as to the best way of going about it. While broad-based participation from civil society groups and citizens in general is desirable, practical considerations such as time and money may necessitate more limited approaches. The use of membership-based umbrella organisations has been mooted as a mechanism for ensuring broad participation in countries where such structures exist. However, even here there are problems, because not all civil society bodies may be members of such umbrella organisations. Furthermore, umbrella structures may be viewed as being too closely aligned with a particular ideology or political party.

### **Ownership and communication**

A major criticism frequently expressed by civil society players from business, labour, academia, media and NGOs has been the lack of ownership of the APRM by African citizens. This has been echoed even within governments; parliamentarians complain that the process has been housed within the executive level of government with no defined role for the legislature.<sup>23</sup>

Communication with, and information flow from, the continental Nepad and APR Secretariats is problematic at best, a concern raised by players from across the government and civil society sectors in different countries. At SAIIA, repeated recent requests for information from these

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.

<sup>22</sup> The African Human Security Initiative is a network of seven African non-governmental research organizations that have come together to measure the performance of African governments who have acceded to peer review, in promoting human security. AHSI engages only on issues of political governance insofar as these relate to human security. The AHSI partners are the South African Institute of International Affairs, the Institute of Human Rights and Development in Africa, the Southern Africa Human Rights Trust, the West African Network for Peace, the African Security Dialogue and Research, the African Peace Forum and the Institute for Security Studies.

<sup>23</sup> World Bank Institute, 'APRM and parliaments', videoconference for Southern African Development Community (SADC) parliamentarians, Cape Town, Dar-es-Salaam and Washington DC, 6-7 May 2004.

bodies have been met with silence or a tendency to pass responsibility on to others.

Ownership of the APRM process is dependent on timely and factually correct information flows between the official structures and all stakeholders in the process, at continental and national levels. Currently, stakeholders across the civil society, government and parliamentary spheres lack information and are therefore unaware of the potential opportunities for involvement at various stages of the peer review process. The communication problems point directly to the ownership and competence issues discussed above.

It thus behoves the leaders of the process at all levels to address these challenges in the early stages of APRM rollout. The problem of course is that this is a mind-set shift for governments — from seeing civil society as a threat to seeing them as partners in the same enterprise. Such ownership becomes even more important when considering the role that business will invariably have to play in actualising the vision of APRM.

### **Conclusion: Seizing opportunities for reform**

During the World Economic Forum's Africa summit in June 2004, the media reported that African leaders had refused to consider stricter punitive measures against errant governments. This has led to renewed debate on whether the APRM is a 'toothless watchdog' or not.<sup>24</sup> Given the sensitivities of some African leaders about APRM and the controversy over whether so-called retrograde states can be 'whipped into line' via peer review, the APRM, in its current incarnation, is to some extent a compromise that encourages more AU countries to join the process, even those that may be wary of 'outside interference'. For example, the latest version of the country self-assessment questionnaire places more emphasis on legal frameworks and the establishment of oversight mechanisms than on whether the laws are actually implemented or whether offices such as the ombudsman, the attorney-general and the electoral commission are independent and sufficiently empowered to carry out their mandate without interference. Consequently, African citizens may not, at this stage, be able to influence outcomes to the extent that they may desire. However, the wording of the APRM documents and subsequent communications presents citizens (in and outside of government) with windows of opportunity to make meaningful contributions to the process.

Reports, surveys, analyses and studies by various civil society groups in areas related to the APRM can be submitted as background documentation to the APR Secretariat, the APR Panel and the national

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<sup>24</sup> Rose R & N Seria, 'African "No" to stronger peer review', *Business Day*, 3 June 2004.

commission in phase one of the process. The same is true of the reports and analyses of relevant parliamentary committees, parastatal bodies and government-established agencies such as the auditor-general or the human rights commissions in countries where they exist. Election observer reports, human rights analyses, corporate governance audits and trade competitiveness studies are some examples of potentially valuable documents in this regard.

Civil society and government actors can offer their technical expertise, where relevant, for the country's self-assessment process and during the drafting of the National Action Plan. This is especially important for areas where there may be a tendency to focus on the country's legislative framework, which in many cases may be perfectly aligned with the Nepal objectives of good governance. The contribution of practitioners from civil society and government can ensure that emphasis is placed on the implementation (or lack thereof) of the law as experienced by citizens.

Civil society groups and political parties could gather existing material and commission new studies where applicable, in order to make formal written submissions to the APR Secretariat and APR Panel on issues that they regard as being crucial governance challenges for the country concerned. Such submissions become a matter of record and are thus difficult to ignore if the Panel is to maintain the integrity of the process.

Groups and individuals can also lobby for a hearing during the country-visit phase of the process. This includes parliamentarians, who may need to lobby for their submissions to be heard, a reversal of their usual roles when they are on the receiving end of lobbyists.

The media has a crucial role throughout the process in ensuring factual reporting and informed analysis, to keep public attention focused on the important governance issues that may otherwise be swept under the carpet.

Lastly, civil society and government practitioners have a responsibility to remain involved in the process in the inter-review period of 3–5 years. It is only through active monitoring and oversight mechanisms that citizens can ensure the peer review recommendations are implemented in order to bring about lasting governance reforms.

Whether APRM will change things for participants remains to be seen. While the envisaged benefits of a 'good score-card' in the APRM include increased domestic and foreign investment and an increase in development assistance, many countries that are regarded as stable and investment-friendly (e.g. Namibia) are adopting a wait-and-see attitude before signing up. In particular, the non-participation of Botswana has signalled that some countries may perceive no 'value-add' to acceding to review if they are already seen to be practising good governance and have high levels of foreign direct investment. On the other hand, several of Africa's poorest and most corrupt nations have recently experienced

declines in donor funding, with much foreign aid being redirected to countries that are perceived as being more accountable and therefore more 'worthy' of such aid. African states that are willing to expose themselves to scrutiny with sincere intentions to improve governance, could find that peer review becomes the catalyst for their socio-economic renaissance and that assistance becomes available.

The utopian ideal of good governance with no evident extrinsic motivation is a long way off from the reality of many African countries. The APRM has both advantages and limitations, more of which will become apparent as it progresses. The success of peer review will be predicated on the involvement of African citizens, who must be motivated to seize the opportunities that it offers for improving the socio-economic development landscape in their countries.