



SOUTH AFRICA AND ALGERIA COUNTRY REPORTS PRESENTED AT ACCRA APRM FORUM

The 7th Forum of Heads of State and Government of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) was held in Accra, Ghana, along with the 17th Session of the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee, during the first week of July 2007. The African Peer Review Panel presented two Country Review Reports on **South Africa** and **Algeria**. South Africa and Algeria were among the first countries which acceded to the APRM in 2003. Both Presidents **Mbeki** of South Africa and **Bouteflika** of Algeria welcomed the respective Review Reports and commended members of the Panel for their hard work and dedication to the process.

The South Africa Review Report identified eighteen best practices among which were co-operative governance, popular participatory governance practices, the highly consultative budget formulation process, self reliance in development funding, provision of basic needs and socio-economic rights and the successful promotion of gender equality in the public sphere. Some of the innovative approaches that were highlighted in the Review Report included shortening of the questionnaire and its translation into all languages, inviting research institutions to participate as partners, involvement of civil society through the **South African Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOC)** chapter, the establishment of Provincial Governing Councils, and the role of community development workers in enhancing popular participation in the APRM process. President Mbeki stated that there have been lessons learned both for South Africa and the APRM process itself, and that South Africa is ready to share its experience and expertise to strengthen and deepen the peer review process.

President Bouteflika stated that Algeria has been engaged in an important transformation process and that the Review Report is appreciative of the progress accomplished. The Review Report also exposes the challenges and problems encountered in the modernization of the state and society. The principal challenge is the consolidation of peace that has been obtained after a long and difficult period of instability and insecurity. Peace is essential for the reconstruction of a modern, prosperous and united Algeria. Algeria is committed to bring about a radical change in its socio-political system; democracy, respect for human rights, holding of regular, free and transparent elections, and the emergence of civil society. The Country Review Report took note of the progress accomplished in the emancipation of women and the importance attached to the place and role of women in the national development. The Algerian President expressed his appreciation of the findings of the National Assessment, which he stated has been enriched by the Country Review Report. This would contribute to ameliorating governance to meet the needs and aspirations of the Algerian people.

The South Africa and Algeria country reports have not yet been made public. Information for this article was taken from news items posted on the web sites of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of both countries.

Engudai Bekele, Partnership Africa Canada

BIG TABLE SUPPORTS APRM

The 2007 *Big Table*, organized jointly by the **Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)** and the **African Development Bank (AfDB)**, took place at the United Nations Conference Centre in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on February 1-2, 2007. Among the various conclusions of the meeting, participants agreed that a concerted approach to address issues of transparency in the natural resources sector needed to be implemented under the African Peer Review Mechanism. It was recommended that “*the APRM should be strengthened and expanded to incorporate natural resources governance (including revenue transparency) as a key governance performance indicator.*” It was also proposed to develop African codes of conduct and guidelines on natural resources exploitation, particularly on safety, health and environmental practices.

It was underscored that tools such as the **Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS)**, the **OECD Guidelines**, and **Extractive Industries Transparency**

Initiative (EITI) are important safeguards to ensure good practice by hosting governments and investors. It was therefore important to endorse and expand the EITI by addressing upstream and downstream issues (such as licensing, procurement, ownership, corporate social responsibility, sustainable development, etc.). Participants called for more countries to adhere to the EITI, and for the G-8 countries to endorse it. It was also noted that the KPCS should be extended to other minerals such as gold and columbite-tantalite (coltan) in order to break the link between conflict/criminality and natural resources. It was further agreed that the existence of an oversight mechanism was crucial. To that effect, it was noted that non-state actors such as parliaments and civil society organizations should be empowered.

See *Summary Report* at:

<http://www.uneca.org/thebigtable/summary-report.htm>

AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE APRM

In order for the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) to meet its objectives, it is vital for African civil society to fully assume its role in terms of disseminating information on the APRM and ensuring its implementation and monitoring. In light of this, various civil society organizations (CSOs) in the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mali and Guinea recently organized APRM-related activities in their respective countries. In addition, the UNECA organised a pan-African APRM workshop in Cameroon.

In **Brazzaville (Republic of Congo)**, an information and training seminar on the APRM and civil society was organised on May 18-19, 2007 by the **Comité de liaison des ONG du Congo (CLONG)** in collaboration with **Partnership Africa Canada (PAC)** and the **South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA)**. The seminar, which brought together a number of national CSOs, the media and representatives of the Congolese government, followed other APRM-related activities organized by CLONG. After reviewing the achievements of civil society in this regard, seminar participants took a closer look at the experiences of APRM pioneer countries in order to anticipate and address the challenges that will be faced during the implementation of the mechanism.

With the support of PAC, the **Centre national d'appui au développement et à la participation populaire (CENADEP)** and the **Centre du commerce international pour le développement (CECIDE)** respectively organized APRM information and training workshops in **Kinshasa (DRC)**, on May 21-22, 2007, and in **Conakry (Guinea)**, on July 31, 2007. By so doing, the organizations attempted to mobilize a wide range of CSOs and underscore the powerful potential that the mechanism can represent in the historic reconstruction of these two countries, which have not yet joined the APRM. Consequently, participants adopted a lobbying and advocacy plan to enable the DRC and Guinea to become members of the APRM as quickly as possible.

In **Mali**, the **Association du Sahel d'aide à la femme et à l'enfance (ASSAFE)**, in conjunction with the **Ministère des Maliens de l'extérieur et de l'intégration africaine (MMEIA)**, the **Canadian Embassy** in Bamako, the **Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)** and PAC, organized a national campaign, which ran from May 25 to June 4, 2007 to promote a sense of ownership among civil society stakeholders with respect to NEPAD

and APRM issues. This campaign, which extended to the cities of **Koulikoro, Ségou, Mopti** and **Bamako**, proved to be a resounding success thanks to the efforts and leadership of local CSOs and local authorities. Given that the adoption of the APRM by the local population is a sign of participatory democracy and an essential ingredient in good governance, the mechanism was given popular appeal through these activities.

In **Douala, Cameroon**, the **United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)**, in collaboration with PAC, held a training workshop for civil society organizations from June 25-27, 2007, on the involvement of CSOs in the APRM. The event was attended by representatives of CSOs from French-speaking African countries that have either joined the APRM or are preparing to do so. During this workshop, participants reviewed the APRM, with an emphasis on its potential to strengthen governance practices in Africa. The experiences of some of the first countries to join, including **Ghana, Rwanda, Kenya, Mauritius** and **South Africa**, were presented and discussed. With several of the countries represented in Douala about to undergo their own review, it was important to ensure that the CSOs present were suitably prepared to commit fully to the process. As a result, participants encouraged African CSOs involved in the APRM to create national frameworks for dialogue and cooperation to identify common goals and plan strategies designed to elicit better participation during the process. Furthermore, it was recognized that civil society must share and capitalize on past experience in advocacy and the independent monitoring of national development policies in order to support APRM reviews.

In addition, the CSOs at Douala committed to strengthening the APRM civil society network formed during the workshop in Addis Ababa in January 2006 and asked UNECA and PAC to facilitate the coordination. Participants adopted a final declaration containing precise recommendations on the role of African states and governments, civil society, the private sector and the UNECA.

The full versions of the final declarations issued in Brazzaville, Kinshasa, Bamako, Douala and Conakry are available on the PAC web site at: www.pacweb.org

Ousmane Déme, Partnership Africa Canada

IS PRESS FREEDOM IN AFRICA UNDER SIEGE AGAIN?

In **Tanzania**, politically connected tycoons are on a buying spree. They are acquiring every media company that shows some semblance of resentment to malpractices in the new political administration. The new political elite are slowly resorting to the methods of remote control to silence the voices of conscience still remaining in the media. They no longer see the need to break into media houses in the dead of the night to destroy computers and burn newspapers Kenyan style. They don't have to fabricate criminal charges against stubborn journalists or detain them for "plotting to overthrow popularly elected governments", as in years gone by. Their style is the buy-out weapon.

In **Ethiopia**, the weapon of intimidation has been perfected. Even journalists editing government newspapers are not spared. National security operatives are on the prowl watching "anti-government moles" that may be working from within to topple the new administration. A senior editor faces instant sack if not imprisonment if he dares to attend a media workshop outside the country without express permission from the government.

In May 2007, two important media meetings took place in Nairobi. The first was the East African Media Summit that was organized by the **East African Business Council** jointly with the **East African Community Secretariat**. A few weeks later, top African journalists under the auspices of a **NEPAD Kenya/CIDA-Canada** programme on the APRM gathered in Nairobi to brainstorm on how African media should report African issues.

As one person who attended both meetings, a few identical issues kept popping up. In the earlier meeting, **Reginald Mengi** of **IPP Tanzania** decried the dearth of African journalism. He could not understand why African journalists were not interested in news next door unless it was negative. He decried the tendency to rely on feeds from foreign news sources to cover the African condition. In the follow up meeting, **Badra Masoud**, the editor at **Habari Corporation** in Dar Es Salaam confirmed that 90% of news in the Tanzania press was foreign sourced.

The APRM media meeting in Nairobi, more than illustrated how African journalists themselves have contributed to the problems of the continent. They have failed to probe issues and ideas. They have failed to take interest in African affairs and have left the field wide open to foreign journalists. Instead of telling the African story and giving feeds to the foreign media, they have decided to do exactly the opposite.

Many reasons were cited as contributing to this state of affairs, some plausible while others were mere excuses for ineptitude. Yes, Africa is a vast and tough terrain to cover; what with lack of friendly infrastructure like good roads, railway lines, telephone systems and power connectivity. The African journalist is very casual. Even having a sensible conversation with a high profile person becomes a problem.

Take the case President **Benjamin Mkapa**, himself a former journalist. When asked why he preferred to be interviewed by foreign journalists and not Tanzanian journalists; he was quick to retort that Tanzanian journalists don't know how to ask questions!

Yes, the African journalist is in most cases ill-equipped, ill-trained and generally unprepared for the rigors of the profession. This status quo is perpetuated by both the journalist and the employer. Whereas the average journalist refuses to read and travel to expand his horizon and world view, the employer gives him the worst conditions to operate from. This scenario has encouraged apathy, lack of interest and alternative survival tactics on the part of the mediocre journalist. In **Nigeria** as well as among the alternative press in Kenya, it is called the brown envelop syndrome. If you want to appear in the local press then you have to produce *kitu kidogo*.

Shabanji Opukah, formerly of **BAT London**, informed the forum that initiatives like NEPAD, APRM and even the AU meetings get more attention in the foreign press than they do at home. The reason is simple. Western politics are driven by economic priorities. The media in the West is as obsessed with exploiting Africa as their business counterparts. It is their calling to inform their home country business investors about investment climate and opportunities in the Third World as much as possible. They know that when their economies thrive, their media businesses will equally grow.

However, the general indifference to African institutions is partly the problem of their top managers. I never thought about it until **Nick Koch** of **Reuters Foundation** alerted the forum that the tragedy of lack of media interest in African institutions like the AU, NEPAD or APRM is due to non-existent media specialists that can be called spokesmen capable of engaging the media. The bureaucrats heading these institutions have a general phobia for the media. They would rather avoid journalists than face them with facts and figures.

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New Chairperson of the APR Panel

At its July Accra Summit, the participating Heads of State and Government appointed Professor Adebayo Adedeji as the new Chairperson of the APR Panel of Eminent Persons. This decision was taken in conformity with the principle of rotation of the APR Panel Chairperson's position. Prof. Adedeji is taking over from Prof. Dorothy Njeuma, who chaired the Panel in 2006-2007. Prof. Adedeji will be serving for a period of one year with effect from 1st July 2007.

APRM web site

MEDIA WATCH

The **Daily Mail** (Accra) reported on July 04, 2007 that journalists from across the continent joined together to call on African Union leaders to release imprisoned media professionals and end the persecution of the press. "We believe it is unacceptable that journalists will be jailed simply for exercising their profession," **Saidou Arji**, coordinator of the **Network of African Freedom of Expression Organisations**, said at a press conference sponsored by seven media and human rights organizations. The African Director of the **International Federation of Journalists**, **Gabriel Baglo**, called on journalists to report more aggressively on the persecution of their colleagues. Ghana has been a leader in the realm of press freedom, Baglo said. The repeal of the Criminal Libel Law by **President Kufuor** in August 2001 ushered in a new era of freedom for Ghana's journalists. In their most recent Worldwide Press Freedom Index, **Reporters without Borders** placed Ghana among the top ten African countries. **Ghana** is ranked sixth, after South Africa, Benin, Mauritius, Madagascar and Cape Verde. Quoting Nkrumah, Baglo urged Ghanaian journalists to use their freedom to advance the cause of journalists across the continent.

Business Day (Johannesburg) reported on July 5, 2007 that despite President **Thabo Mbeki** warmly welcoming the African Peer Review Mechanism panel's country report for **South Africa**, the process has been criticised as exclusionary. Mbeki said yesterday South Africa was "ready to share its experience and expertise when called on in strengthening and deepening peer review across the continent". He presented South Africa's peer-review report to the African Union summit in Ghana on July 2. He said it was a "positive" report that acknowledged "huge strides made by South Africa in transforming the country into a vibrant democracy with one of the most progressive constitutions in the world". But the **South African NGO Coalition (SANGOCO)** spokesperson **Hassen Lorgat** said the review had missed out on an opportunity to develop a national programme of action in which everyone could participate. He said the government was obsessed with looking good. Public Service Minister **Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi**, chairman of the National Governing Council leading the APRM in South Africa, refused last month to show civil society partners the final version of South Africa's APRM programme of action before it was presented to heads of state in Ghana. This week, she said South Africa might see the report within six months of its review.

The **APRM Secretariat** recently opened the APRM website at: <http://www.nepad.org/aprm>, where all official APRM documents can be found. The **Economic Commission for Africa APRM Support Unit** has developed a useful web site on the APRM at: <http://www.uneca.org/aprm>. Among its many features is a map indicating the status of different countries within the APRM process. Other sites with useful material include **The South African Institute of International Affairs**, which has published a guide to the APRM for National APRM Focal Points: <http://www.saiia.org.za>, and the **Africa Governance, Monitoring and Advocacy Project (AfriMAP)**, which has published several analytical reports on the APRM process: <http://www.afriomap.org>.

New Publications about the APRM

The Africa Governance, Monitoring and Advocacy Project (AfriMAP) has published over recent months a series of reports that analyse in detail the APRM process in countries that have undergone the APRM reviews. The reports on the APRM process in Kenya, Rwanda, Ghana and Mauritius offer useful insights from a civil society perspective into the relative strengths of the different experiences. The reports are available at: <http://www.afriomap.org>

The South African Institute of International Affairs has published a concise guide to the APRM, *Planning an Effective Peer Review: A Guidebook for National Focal Points*. Based on SAIIA's extensive work on the APRM and originally produced for a training seminar run jointly with the Economic Commission for Africa, this guidebook takes the reader through the institutions and processes of peer review, and gives advice on how best to approach and run the process. It is available in English and French at: <http://www.saiia.org.za>

HALF OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES HAVE NOW JOINED THE APRM

Twenty-seven countries have formally acceded to the African Peer Review Mechanism:

Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

Countries that have yet to join the APRM are:

Botswana, Burundi, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Gambia, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia, Niger, Seychelles, Somalia, Swaziland, Togo, Tunisia, Zimbabwe and Western Sahara.

The APRM MONITOR is a periodic newsletter on the implementation of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). It seeks to promote the active involvement of African civil society in the APRM process in order to strengthen the APRM and ensure that it promotes better governance and leads to lasting benefits for Africa.

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