

African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM): A Building Block for Pan-Africanism

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Abstract

The crave for solidarity and cooperation among African states is dated back to the pre-independent era when some African nationalists, ravished with the quest of freedom from the clutches of colonialism, enliven pan-Africanism interest especially after the end of the Second World War. Following the political independence of some African states in early 1960s, the philosophy of Pan-Africanism inspired the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) as the major driver of continental integration and unity among the newly independent African countries. Over the years, several institutions have been established and/or transformed in a bid to realise the vision of pan Africanism. The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is one of such institutions. The APRM is a voluntary arrangements among African nations to evaluate and review the performance of a state by other states with the aim of promoting best practices, generating economic growth, encouraging good governance and ensuring political stability which would eventually culminate in sub-regional and continental integration. This study, which set out to access the performance of APRM over the years found that the institutions has been experiencing a serious slow-down in its performance since its establishment, due to lack of commitment to it by the leaders of African states and the primordial values and culture of African states. The research however observed that if well implemented, APRM could be a veritable avenue to improve governance, guarantee standards and best practices, generate high economic growth and accelerate sub-regional and continental economic and political integration which is also the dream of pan-Africanists.

Keywords: *Development, Integration, Pan-Africanism, Peer-Review, Renaissance.*

INTRODUCTION

Pan- Africanism as a philosophy, represents the aggregation of the historical, cultural, spiritual, artistic, scientific, and philosophical legacies of Africans from past times to the present. As an ethical philosophical concept, Pan-Africanism promotes values that are the product of the African civilisations and reject any mindset that views Africa and Africans through the lens of slavery, racism and colonialism. The concept has been applied in various contexts and in diverse ways. While some harp on the socio-cultural and economic doctrine of the movement, others focus on its political context. The various perspectives of thinkers about the concept notwithstanding, it could be described as a global movement which seeks to encourage and strengthen bonds of solidarity between all indigenous Africans and the ethnic groups of sub-Saharan African descent in the diaspora (Ayoade, 2016).

At the early stage of the movement, pan-Africanism, was premised on the fact that sub-Saharan African people, both on the continent and in the diaspora, shared common history and destiny, and thus, they had fused and intertwined fate. The historical links, it was believed,

could be explored for the purpose of cooperating and forming a common front to resist imperialism and colonialism. Unity was considered a fundamental issue to socio-economic and political progress of the continent. Pan-Africanists, either in the past or now, believe that the realization of the Pan-African objective would lead to power consolidation in Africa. Power consolidation, on the other hand, would induce a restructuring of global resources, as well as release an aggressive psychological energy and political assertion that would disconcert the prevailing asymmetric social and political power structures in the global arena. In a nut shell, the crux of Pan-Africanism is a quest for African unity, call for economic cooperation, the pursuit of political and socio-economic freedom as well as the search for progress among the African nations (Yarik, 2019).

In pursuance of Pan-Africanism vision, several international regimes, institutions and organisations have been established and or changed over the years to suit the new demands or the spirit of the times. One of such international institutions is the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) which was established in 2003. APRM is a voluntary arrangement among African nations to systematically evaluate and review the performance of a state by other states for the purpose of promoting good governance, political stability, accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration, growth and sustainable development. The main essence of a peer review is to help the state in question improve its policy formulation, adopt best practices and comply with established standards and principles in accordance with the laid down protocols and regulations. Some experts opine that the indices of underdevelopment which beleaguer the continent are closely linked to bad governance. But APRM, if well implemented, could be a veritable avenue to improve governance, guarantee standards and best practices, generate high economic growth and accelerate sub-regional and continental economic integration which is also the dream of pan-Africanists. Sadly however, APRM has not recorded much progress since its establishment almost two decades ago. This research engaged in the interrogation of the serious slow-down in the momentum of the institution. In other words, the research set out to investigate into the reasons why APRM is far away from achieving the dream of its founders let alone serving as a vehicle of integration in Africa. The challenges identified were critically discussed in the study and some recommendations were also made which could help in putting APRM on the track of fulfilling the vision of its pioneers.

A Brief Historical Antecedent of Pan-Africanism

The origin of Pan-Africanism can be traced to the struggles of some Africans against slavery and colonialism. At the middle of the 19th century, some people of African descent living in the United States of America such as Martin Delany, and Alexander Crummel were spurred by the existing discrimination against the blacks in the United States to start laying emphasis on the common descent and heritage between Africans and the black people in the United States. PADEAP, (2011) posits that These Africans propagated the idea that black people could only prosper in Africa and not in the United States. Hence, they encouraged the blacks living in the new world to return to Africa and convert and civilize the people there. The real fathers of modern Pan-Africanism were people like George Padmore, W.E.B. Du Bois, Henry Sylvester Williams, Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X, among others. They began the crusade in their various countries of sojourn in the Caribbean, Latin America, the United States, Canada and even in Africa.

The wave of nationalism which swept across the colonies of Africa in the decades that followed the end of World War II encouraged the return of Pan-African interest to the African continent. A new set of Pan-Africanists arose among the nationalists and they decided to use

the ideology of Pan-Africanism to set the continent free from the shackles of colonialism, racism and apartheid. These included Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana) Sékou Ahmed Touré (Guinea), Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya), Julius Nyerere (Tanzania), Ahmed Ben Bella (Algeria), Amilcar Cabral (Guinea Bissau), and Patrice Lumumba (DR Congo) (Pappoe (2010), Even though these African leaders were consumed with the fervour for cooperation and solidarity of the African nations and African people, they had different ideas about how it could be achieved. Bongmba (2004) states that this polarised the leaders into forming two antagonistic blocs- the Casablanca and Brazzaville groups. The Casablanca bloc appeared more radical as it pushed for a political federation to be called the United States of Africa, while the Brazzaville group moved for more gradual integration through economic cooperation. A third grouping, the Monrovia bloc, remained neutral and uncommitted (Iroulor, 2017). After much debates and political manoeuvring, the economic integration through economic cooperation was favoured and that led to the emergence of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) on 25 May 1963.

From Pan-Africanism to African Renaissance

The later part of 1990s saw the transformation of Pan-Africanism to a new concept referred to as the African Renaissance. The new concept that was popularized by and associated with Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, first gained currency in 1996 through the speech titled ‘I am an African (Boddy-Evans, 2019) African Renaissance reflects Africa’s conscious need for political independence, regional integration and the improvement of living standards. It also stresses the need for liberation from the economic dependence and democratic stagnation that has reversed the short-lived prosperity of the independence era. The transformation of Pan-Africanism orchestrated the establishment and reformation of a new form of pan African institutions aimed at stabilizing, reconstructing and redeveloping Africa which is known to be the poorest continent in the world. In other words, the philosophy of African Renaissance was driven by the need to unite the people and collectively tackle challenges facing the continent. This made Lopes (2013) to echo the words of Wiseman Nkuhlu, that the African Renaissance was based on the need to find African solutions to African problems.

Suffice it to say at this juncture, that African Renaissance emerged from the merger of two ideas of transforming Africa, conceived by two African leaders. The first was the initiative of President Thabo Mbeki which was called “Millennium African Recovery Program (MAP)” with the objectives of harnessing African potentials, removing sources of conflict in Africa, restoring Africa’s self-esteem and turning the continent into a zone of economic prosperity, peace and stability. The second idea was that of President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal with the name ‘Omega Plan’. The two initiatives were merged into a single document and renamed ‘New African Initiative’ which was presented at the OAU summit in Lusaka in July 2001. The new initiative culminated in the transformation of OAU to AU in 2002. It also led to the emergence of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) in 2001 and 2003 respectively.

The General Concept of Peer Review Mechanism

Peer review can be defined as a systematic examination and assessment of the performance of a state by other states for the purpose of helping the reviewed state improve its performance and policy making, adopt best practices and comply with established standards and principles. Ernst & Young (2021) describes it as an evaluation among equals which relies on mutual trust and shared confidence and not by superior or higher bodies that might pronounce verdicts or impose punishments in case of non-compliance. Hence, it is considered

as a non-adversarial basis which is hinged on shared confidence, reciprocal evaluation, and mutual accountability process. Peer review is characterised by dialogue and interactive investigation by which countries systematically exchange information and views in the process of peer review. Peer review dialogue can promote further cooperation as new policy guidelines, recommendations or even negotiation of legal undertakings are adopted. It can also guarantee transparency and capacity building through value sharing. The main essence of a peer review is to help the state in question improve its policy formulation and encourage it to conform to the laid down protocols and regulations (Ashoff, 2013).

Although peer review is in most cases associated with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), but other intergovernmental organisations also engage in it. For instance, it is used within the World Trade Organisation under the Trade Policy Review Mechanism through which the WTO system monitors trade policy and practice among member nations. The IMF Country Surveillance Mechanism too practices some aspects of peer review. In addition, the European Union framework adopts peer review in several areas of its operation. The European Commission developed peer review for national labour market policies so as to identify good practices. All peer review have some basic structural elements. These are;

- (a) The basis for proceeding on, or the reason for peer review,
- (b) An agreed set of principles, standards and criteria against which member nations performance is to be reviewed
- (c) Designated actors to carry out the peer review
- (d) A set of procedure which would lead to the final result of the peer review.

Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)

The issues of peace, security and economic integration have occupied the attention of the African leaders for decades to the neglect of democracy and good governance. As a matter of fact, many African states placed premium on state formation and state-building over and above the issue of democracy in the early years of independence. Multi-party democracy was viewed as divisive and deemed incongruent to the communalist social solidarity which nation formation and state-building required. Little wonder Bing and Pappoe (2010) opine that many African leaders institutionalized and promoted de jure one-party system immediately after political independence. In a world that is becoming increasingly globalised, this relegation of good governance to the back seat in Africa was not without its adverse consequences. It provided conducive environment for primordial culture which in turn has its impact on African integration. This made the birth of APRM in 2003 a timely development.

African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is a mutually agreed instrument, voluntarily acceded to by the member states of the African Union as a self-monitoring mechanism. It is a socio-political and economic procedure in which consenting AU member states are evaluated by other states on some key issues which constitute the objectives of the institution. The objectives are to ensure:-

- (a) Good governance democracy and politics,
- (b) Economic governance and management,
- (c) Corporate governance administration, and
- (d) Socio-economic governance.

Other adjoining objectives are; to fight against corruption, to guarantee human rights-particularly, women's and children's rights, to promote conflict resolution and judicial independence.

Good governance has been an important issue in international development discourse since the Cold War ended. Observers of political development in Africa have identified weak governance as one of the obstacles to development in Africa. They noted that African development and integration vision, as espoused by several treaties and summit, may not be fully realised if democracy and good governance continue to take the back seat. A former Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegan, did not mince words about this as he evinced that "We can't hide the fact that there is a big problem in good governance in Africa, and where bad governance is prevalent, development would always be the casualty" (Grimm, 2008)

APRM was established to place democratic and good governance on the front burner of the contemporary Pan-African agenda. It was instituted as an instrument for "sharing experiences, reinforcing best practices, identifying deficiencies, and assessing capacity-building needs to foster policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development as well as accelerated sub-regional and continental economic integration. It is a self-assessment instrument designed as an innovative for alternative course of action by Africans for Africa.

From the foregoing, one could say that APRM was conceived by African leaders as a veritable opportunity to tackle the issue of bad governance and by extension to solve some socio-economic problems that have confronted the continent since the early years of her political independence. The African countries that have subscribed to the membership of APRM so far are 42 in number. These are; Algeria, Angola, Benin Republic, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Republic of Niger, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome & Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

In 2016, the APRM was given additional obligation (known as Expanded Mandate) by the African Union which serves as its parent body. The new assignment empowers APRM to monitor governance, not only in its 42 member nations, but also in non-member states, focusing particularly on the implementation of the governance aspects of the AU's 50-year blueprint, tagged Agenda 2063.

How APRM Works

APRM has four basic institutional structures that manage the peer review process. They are the committee of the participating heads of state and government which is referred to as APR Forum; the Panel of Eminent Persons which is known as APR Panel; the APRM Secretariat; and the ad-hoc Country Review Team otherwise called APR Team. In addition to these structures, the first summit of participating heads of state and government held in Kigali in 2004 endorsed the creation of APRM national structures in each member country. The structure in member countries are composed of the APR focal point and the National Coordinating Mechanism.

APRM works as a voluntary partnership between government, civil society and the private sector in the country. States that are party to the Peer Review Mechanism develop self-

assessment reports which are combined with reviews produced by experts from other African countries. Civil society and the private sector are also involved in putting together the national self-assessment. More so, the reviews are conducted on the entire country, including the private sector. The objective of this is to collectively and collaboratively address socio-economic problems, prove governance practices and strengthen laws and policies.

When a country joins APRM, it signifies its intention to commence APRM process. The first step the country takes is to appoint an APRM National Focal Point (NFP) who may be a serving minister in the country. Babricius (2016) states that it is the responsibility of the NFP to liaise with the APRM continental secretariat so as to receive a Country Support Mission (CSM). This would be followed by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) which will give the details of the country's participation in APRM. From this stage onward, the National Focal Point would be the link between the country and APRM Panel of Eminent Persons. When this is done, the country can embark on APRM institution building which mainly involves the appointment of APRM National Governing Council. The day-to-day management of the APR process within the country is carried out by the National Governing Council members who are appointed either by the President or the NFP.

A country that accedes to the APRM is showing its readiness to meet its standards and requirements with respect to governance on issues such as, democracy and political governance, corporate governance, economic management and governance, and socio-economic development. The process is a rolling circle of activities which comprises self-assessments, National Programme of Action (NPoA) to address any identified governance shortcomings over a number of years, the presentation of the findings to the heads of state and government of other participating countries who would do the peer review of the country concerned. This would be followed by further self-assessment and NPoA. Periodic review is expected to follow once every three or five years to monitor the progress of each state and to ensure compliance with best practices.

How APRM Could Promote Regional Integration

The general consensus among scholars is that states establish and develop international organisations, institutions or regimes, so as to engage in cooperation or solidarity that would enable them to achieve objectives that they cannot achieve as individual states. Gruzd (2016) states that the major motive of the founding fathers of Pan-Africanism and its corollary institutions or regimes such as APRM is not different from this. The review mechanism is potentially a decisive tool of regional cooperation between and among AU Members in the following ways.

The APRM Forum comprises of Heads of States and governments of the countries involved. The participating countries in peer assessment exchange ideas and share their experiences and international best practices in matters relating to governance and policy issues and admonish one another on their immoderation and even other vital issues which are not included in the peer review process. This presents the opportunity of peer learning and regional as well as continental cooperation through which the challenges facing African countries, both individually and collectively, can be addressed.

A corollary to the above point is the fact that peer review can inspire capacity building. Peer review is a mutual learning process which encourages the exchange of best practices. This informed the view of Mapuva (2011) that the process can serve as a veritable instrument of capacity building for the countries being reviewed, the countries participating in the review

process as examiners and the countries that are simply members of the APRM. The strategies and methods learnt during the exercise such as the methodologies used in measuring performance and compliance may represent an important learning process for all the parties involved (Kebonang and Fombad, 2015). The cross fertilization of ideas may actually help to bind countries together.

African leaders view APRM as a cooperative, non-adversarial and non-punitive process, in which trust among participating countries is ensured. This is reinforced by the fact that APRM appreciates the uniqueness in terms of socio-political, economic and cultural environment of each state. Thus, individual characteristic is taken into consideration in making recommendations for improvements on governance. This spirit of mutual understanding and respect could make the participating African leaders to accept APRM as an instrument which represents codes of good governance and an essential ingredient that would usher the continent into economic prosperity and solidarity.

The political governance review of the APRM seeks to foster the adoption of policies and mechanisms that would reduce and prevent all types of intra and inter-country conflicts. Hence, it is appropriate for one to expect that, through its recommendations and monitoring, peer review will reduce both civil and inter-states conflicts to the barest minimum. Ultimately, the setbacks in regional cooperation and integration resulting from wars and social strife will be significantly minimized and this would pave the way for fruitful regional cooperation and effective economic integration.

In the area of economic governance, the economic and corporate policy reforms suggested by APRM are not only important for attracting foreign investments, they are also capable of improving the macro-economic environment and boosting economic growth, intra-regional trade and economic integration. Tillman, (2015) evinced the view that the objective of seeking the acceleration of regional integration through the harmonization of monetary, trade and investment policies can also go a long way to encourage integration of the participating states. President Paul Kagame of Rwanda in his address to the ninth Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Summit held in Kampala on June 7, 2004 underscored the role of the APRM to expedite the process of regional integration as he opined that, “The APRM process will hasten the process of harmonisation of standards and practices, which will in turn accelerate continental economic integration that we see as the key to our own emancipation and development” (Stultz, 2007).

Furthermore, the fact that the NEPAD and APRM are internationally recognised as the formal frameworks of engagement with African states implies the development of a new intellectual framework in understanding and resolving African problems. Through the NEPAD/APRM, donors and development agencies can assist in accelerating the process of regional integration by using some of their aid packages to promote alternatives and projects that really advance African countries as integrated regions instead of single units.

The Challenges of APRM

Under a normal circumstance, whenever countries go through review, they need to implement their National Programme of Action (NPA) for the purpose of addressing the issues identified during the review. This is what is supposed to generate improvement in all the areas which the review covers. It is expected that the progress achieved in this direction is what would guarantee integration and foster the unity of Africa. The main question however, is whether this has really worked. There is no gain-saying the fact that APRM has achieved some

varying degree of success. However, one can deduce that if the figures from the Ibrahim Mo index of African governance is anything to go by, Africa is still far aware from realising the objectives of APRM. Some of the reasons for this drawbacks are discussed below;

The slow nature of the implementation process is a major challenge hindering the success of APRM. Going through the review circle takes a very long period. For instance, while it took Ghana and Rwanda ten months each to move from the country support mission to the country review mission, the same process took Kenya 14 months, Burkina Faso 21 months and Nigeria 24 months. Some countries even stayed several years at the stage of country support mission without reaching the phase of country review mission. A corollary to this is the view of Tillman (2015) who posits that, 'in most cases, the review report of the countries that have gone through review are not released on time despite the fact that the law says that the reports are to be published six months after they are tabled at the forum'.

The slow process of implementation is compounded by legacies from the colonial era. For instance, the French tradition of embedding all national procedures in a legal structure has made the requirement of presidential edict a necessity to kick-start the process (Zezeza, 2009). This draw back slows down the process because the presidential edicts can be a tedious and meandering procedure. Even, the Anglophone practice which sanctions the APRM through the cabinet still has some bottlenecks which make the process to record impediments

Inadequate commitment of African Heads of state and government to APRM objectives is another big hindrance to the realisation of its goals. The attendance of Heads of State at the Peer Review Mechanism Annual Forums dwindles by the year. The work of Gruzd and Clifford (2022) shows that only 10 out of 37 heads of states as at 2018 attended the forum meeting. Other available record shows that this has been the attendance rate for some years now. Several heads of state prefer to delegate authority to their minister whose decisions and actions do not carry the same political weight like those of the presidents. Added to this is the fact that the few attending presidents were not engaging in frank discussions about governance problems. Rather, they engaged in words of praise and not criticism (Yarik, 2019). Lack of political commitment to APRM at the head of state level would no doubt, make it difficult for the mechanism to function effectively. Honest and thorough review as well as the subsequent implementation of recommendations may be impossible.

Still talking about lack of commitment, only 42 countries out of 53 sovereign states in Africa have joined APRM. Even, the 42 countries are foot-dragging and at the various stages of the review process. Some of the states that have gone through review process have failed to implement their recommendations or National Programme of Action. Peer Review is supposed to occur every three or five years, but for almost two decades now, only a very few number of states have gone through the second round of review in Africa. The first decade of the existence of the institution witnessed 17 reviews and their reports were published. Unfortunately, even the most zealous member nation did not implement the recommendation made to them. For example, the second review of countries like Kenya, Mozambique, and Uganda revealed that although some improvements were noted, yet some governance weaknesses were still imminent in the second report more than what was noted in the first report.

According to Iroulor (2017), some observers are of the view that the foot-dragging being witnessed is informed by the belief in some quarters that APRM was born out of hegemonic coercion or western imposition rather than being an internal determination for change. A professor at the Wits School of Governance –Patrick Bond, described the APRM as a neo-

colonial strategy by the North to control the South (Lindberg, 2006). Salim Latib, former political advisor to the Commissioner of Political Affairs at the AU Commission also opined that “APRM only claimed to be African, it is least African” (Odoi, 2008). But some staunch believers in the dream of APRM have consistently hammered the message, particularly at the United Nations that APRM is a full-fledged African approach designed and implemented to deal with African problems. Regardless of this counter view, the fact remains that the perception evinced by Patrick Bond and Salim Latib, has to some extent, whittled down the commitment of many African nations to the process and has created ownership challenge. Another issue that borders on commitment is that countries are not bound to implement APRM recommendations. Since there is no any strict system of ensuring compliance, a country might even decide to reject some of the recommendations as being inappropriate.

Similarly, there are questions about whether African leaders have the will to make the peer review mechanism a strong initiative that could change governance land scape in the continent. For instance, a launched African Governance Report merely provided trends and data on governance on the continent rather than mentioning any country by name. This could serve as an evidence that the forum is not willing to name and shame those that lag behind in implementing progressive policies and ratifying treaties or commend countries that are making progress in good governance, transparency and accountability. More so, the recommendations mostly come with financial implications which may not be in the country’s budget.

The interregnum which attended the activities of the initiative between 2013 and 2016 also have an impact on its effectiveness. No country was reviewed during this period of break. Because the Chief Executive at APRM continental Secretariat had a corruption allegation against him. The allegation of financial impropriety gave a negative image to the initiative. Donors’ funds were depleted and many states were not committed to the payment of their dues. Consequently, APRM activities were grounded for some years.

Furthermore, the APRM Secretariat has been accused of some laxity in devising effective assessment and follow-up instruments to evaluate the performance of the reviewed countries as regards the implementation of the NPoA. The APRM Secretariat, based in South Africa does not undertake the self-assessments and country reviews. It simply co-ordinates and provides administrative and technical support for the reviews. This reduce APRM to a central coordinating agency, which does not have power and authority beyond coordination, monitoring and evaluation. That inform the belief in some quarters that the Secretariat can only bark, but cannot bite.

In addition, primordial values and culture still constitute a very strong factor in governance in Africa. States and their rulers cherish the individualistic idea and this always make them to protect their sovereignty rather than surrender their states to open review or examination by other states or any international institution. This practice does not work in tandem with the modern dictate of civic culture which encourage openness and transparency.

Peer Review with the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

This section is included to show how peer review works somewhere else. The essence is to convince the leaders of African states that they could actually achieve the objective of establishing APRM if only they give the initiative the attention and commitment which it deserves. Peer review is extensively developed within the OECD. Over the years peer review has characterised the work of the organisation in several policy areas. The aim of peer review in OECD system is to improve the quality and effectiveness through individual and collective

learning. OECD, through its traditional tried and tested method has been helping member countries and institutions to improve their policy making, embrace good practices and adopt established standards and principles. Whenever recommendations are made, the implementation of the recommendations is checked 18 to 24 months later at mid-term review.

Over 90 percent of the OECD's Development Assistant Committee (DAC) members rate the policy impact of the review as medium to very high. The DAC secretariat hinted that about 88 percent of their peer review recommendations have been partly or fully implemented. The high degree of trust shared among members have facilitated the success of the mechanism and generated a method of international cooperation among member states so much so that non DAC OECD member countries and institutions have either requested for their reviews or observer status. Although, Ashoff (2013) opines that the OECD peer review mechanism has its own hicough which made experts to suggest some adjustments to the peer reviews, yet it has been said that there are no equivalent alternatives to DAC reviews which have proven their worth as a very strong quality assurance and mutual learning instrument that have encouraged cooperation among members. African nations can learn a lot of lesson from this experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO MAKE APRM MORE EFFECTIVE

First and foremost, concerted efforts and energy should be galvanized into ensuring that all the 53 African Union member states ratify the mechanism, domesticate it and undergo governance reviews. This calls for an enormous amount of promotion of the APRM by the AU, APRM Secretariat, Pan-African Parliament and civil society organisations.

Second, adequate commitment is needed by the member countries. The commitment needed is in terms of both human and financial resources. An organisation with that kind of huge responsibility cannot function effectively without a robust financial support. So the participating states need to put sufficient financial resources at the disposal of the secretariat. In addition, provision of adequate domestic resources will enhance the implementation of NPoA rather than keep depending on eternal donor contribution for the initiative. Dependence on external donor for such a serious issue may be insidious to the national sovereignty of states. The main source of funds to NPoA should be through national budget while external funds should be like supplementary resources.

Commitment also means that members must be fully involved in the process of the review at various levels either as active members of the institution, as examiner or as subject of examination. The involvement as well as the commitment of the reviewed state is part of what will drive the ownership of the outcome of the review. It is also a guarantee that the state would endorse the final report and be committed to the implementation of its recommendations.

Further to the above, some scholars have opined that a legal provision is needed to enforce compliance of the states' party to its decisions or recommendations. Mere assenting to the charter of APRM by African states does not translate to democratic advancement until the provisions of the charter are domesticated and applied by the states which sometimes requires some strict measures. A cue can be taken from ACDEG whose decisions are compulsory for and binding on all AU member states that subscribe to it. This kind of legal power to enforce state compliance is needed for APRM. Any international institution/organization without a legal framework on how to implement its decision would be reduced to a mere toothless bulldog.

For proper implementation of APRM, a balanced role should be given to both state and non-state actors. This would guard against state centrism and give more room for citizens' participation in the continental governance initiatives. Although, many regional and continental Civil Society Organisations, such as the Africa Governance, Monitoring and Advocacy Project and the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISDA) are already playing some advocacy roles about APRM. It is equally imperative for CSOs at national level to play their required role before, during and after the APRM reviews.

The credibility of the peer review process is also germane to its success. The credibility of the process and the examiners will no doubt impact its ability to influence the reviewed state. The method being used by the examiners in carrying out the review process must be objective, fair and consistent. No unqualified examiners should be allowed to participate in the process and states should not be allowed to influence any aspect of the process in any way. The corruption allegation against the APRM secretariat which stalled the activities of the institution for some years should not be allowed to re-occur again. Such allegation can make states to reject or undermine the review report.

African leaders need to own and embrace the APRM as a home-grown governance formula which is needed to improve governance and promote integration which they all seek. Rather than seeing the framework as a replication of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and undermining it, what should be their concern is how the initiative could be used to address the serious governance deficit and the concomitant socio-economic backwardness in Africa.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Despite the series of challenges that beleaguer APRM, one can still say that the institution is making some progress. In playing its role as an early warning system, APRM has been an eye opener for the political leaders in Africa. For instance, in its 2007 report, the institution warned the leaders of Africa about the brewing violence from xenophobia in South Africa and post-election debacle in Kenya. It warned that if nothing urgent was done, something serious may happen in both countries and these actually played out because the governments of both countries did not take the recommendations seriously. Otherwise, the wanton destruction of lives and property which both states witnessed would have been averted.

APRM has the potentiality of recoding huge success, restructuring governance in Africa, forging integration in Africa and making Africa great. Two basic issues are crucial to this. These are; ownership of the initiative and commitment to its objectives which would drive the implementation of its recommendations by member nations. African leaders need to claim the ownership of APRM in principle and execution. Taking ownership of the process will make the leaders work for its success by committing funds to it.

Rather than downplay APRM as a foreign initiative which may not work for the continent, African leaders need to harp on how it can be domesticated and made to work to improve governance in Africa. Nkuhlu opines that "idea is the wisdom of mankind. We are in the generation of ideas...So let us take what we believe is relevant and would work for us" (Iruolor, 2017) MacBride Nkhalamba- the head of the Thematic Research and Coordination Division of the APRM also posits that "for any part of the world to claim that they have fashioned the entire spectrum of ideas on governance which everyone else is mimicking is absurdity of the most repulsive form. It is a claim that all other societies except themselves had

no form of polity or political community” (Lindberg, 2006). It is important to know that there are no African, Asian, European or American norms. Norms and Models have become universal through constant evolution. However, they differ when they are localized. Thus, adopting APRM and its ideals fully as an African norm by African leaders would not only make them to subscribe to it, they would also have the desire to ensure its workability by implementing any recommendation made by the process without any unnecessary delay.

Finally, it is a truism that the APRM is a laudable course. It is also a true statement that all the lofty goals and objectives which African countries desire to achieve are attainable. Peer review is working for OECD so it can work for Africa too. However, Africa would fare better and record more achievements if the political leaders of the continent would concern themselves with facing one demon at a time. Africa hopes to achieve the peaceful settlement of conflicts and ultimate eradication of conflicts, uphold and promote democracy and good governance, thrash poverty from the African continent, usher in sustained development and attract foreign investment, and the list continues. The question that begs for answer is how much of all of these can be achieved at a time. In the light of wide spread poverty and democratic deficit that confront the governments of the countries in the continent, the leadership of the continent need to cultivate the practice of not putting too many irons in the fire at a time.

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