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PERMANENT MISSION OF THE FEDERAL
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Remarks

By

H.E. Ambassador Tekeda Alemu

**Permanent Representative of the Federal Democratic
Republic of Ethiopia to the United Nations**

At

**The High-Level Panel Discussion on
“Africa’s Innovation in Governance through 10
years of the APRM”**

21 October 2013

New York

Your Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon,

Your Excellency Mr. Amara M. Konneh, Minister of Finance of the Republic of Liberia and Representative of the Chairperson of the APR Forum,

Your Excellency Dr. Ibrahim Mayaki, Chief Executive Officer of the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency,

Your Excellency Ambassador Maged Abdelaziz, UN Under-Secretary General and Special Adviser on Africa,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by expressing my profound appreciation to the organizers of this important and timely panel. I wish, in particular, to commend, on behalf of the Chairperson of the African Union, Ambassador Maged Abdelaziz, UN Under-Secretary General and Special Adviser on Africa, for this initiative and for all that he has been doing to ensure that the special situation of Africa is put front and center at all the relevant fora at the United Nations. I should thank him also for the excellent concept note for the panel discussion to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). I wish to thank Ambassador Tete Antonio as well, for his valuable contribution.

Allow me also to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for being with us, once again demonstrating his friendship.

I wish to thank Finance Minister Konneh for gracing the occasion by his presence, and Dr. Mayaki for the very excellent work he is doing with NEPAD.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is indeed an important year for Africa, as it marks the Golden Jubilee of our continental organization. The ten year anniversary of the APRM has coincided with the celebration of the great historic event in the history of the struggle of the people of Africa and of African descent. Again, by coincidence, the United Nations General Assembly has on its agenda today a matter relating to the commemoration of the Two Hundredth Anniversary of the Abolition of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. All these are meaningful and interrelated.

The people of Africa have come a long way. This is partly encapsulated in the history of the OAU/AU—an organization which like no other is essentially a product and continuation of a people's movement, the Pan-Africanist movement. This has an impact on the organization. To be true to its genesis, and not to lose its soul, the OAU/AU has always had the obligation to reflect the sentiments of the people of Africa which can be expressed only by way of good governance, unflinching commitment to democratic values and through scrupulous respect of the human rights of the people. Though the charter of the OAU might be found wanting in this regard, the Constitutive Act of the African Union has laid the foundation for the AU to maintain the highest standard in terms of commitment to these values.

The African Peer Review Mechanism is part and parcel of this rejuvenation of Africa, a promising change in Africa, despite the very many challenges Africans still face, making the period we are in, a time of African Renaissance.

APRM came into being ten years ago pursuant to a decision of the AU in Durban in July 2002 as a political initiative to

supplement the very historic step that was taken by the OAU in launching NEPAD in July 2001, a year earlier. Since its inception, APRM has indeed been instrumental in helping us, in Africa, draw valuable lessons from each other's experiences on issues of governance, both economic and political, with a view to creating a favourable environment for peace and stability as well as socio-economic development and regional integration. Over the last decade, the APRM has made significant achievements in advancing this transformational objective.

The two guiding ideals of the APRM—as enshrined in the founding document—are African ownership of the process and readiness to learn from each-other's best practices. This is indeed a paradigmatic shift as aptly reflected in the concept paper, “a shift from traditional accountability mechanisms to external donors”. Frankly speaking, notwithstanding the appearance and what is normally taken for granted to the contrary, Africa's commitment to good governance and democracy has grown by leaps and bounds over recent years. Of course, the narrative about Africa still dwells on the same old, trite and hackneyed old story.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since the panel discussion is going to focus on innovation in governance, it is perhaps appropriate to mention what the contribution of the APRM has been in this regard. This takes us to the genesis of the APRM and to the NEPAD Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance which frames the challenges Africa faces as follows:

“Africa faces grave challenges and the most urgent of these are the eradication of poverty and the fostering of socio-economic development, in particular, through democracy and good governance.”

Obviously, this commitment is in sharp contrast to the history of the democratization of the rest of the world where, with little exception democracy was introduced gradually with a step-by-step widening of the political space, always that widening following economic development, or, as normally understood, the

strengthening of the liberal state. The two were never handled simultaneously. That, on the other hand, was what the African commitment has amounted to when the referred to NEPAD document said we strive to eradicate poverty “through democracy and good governance.” In other words, poverty does not justify autocracy. Indeed, an innovation in governance when it took others centuries to ensure political participation to their entire people.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Africa crafts its “Vision 2063”, no doubt, APRM will continue to be an important component of Africa’s resurgence. It will also continue to be a forum for drawing lessons and correcting errors.

It is indeed most appropriate before I conclude to refer to one issue over which there is still doubt on the part of some friends. This concerns the role of the state in societal affairs, and in political and economic governance. Africa does not suffer from the

abundance of state power, but rather from brittleness of state institutions. The subtle argument and indeed, a paradox in light of what I said earlier, that the state is a bane for democracy in Africa has just no validity in the African continent. No doubt, individual and group rights should never be trampled upon under any pretext and it is imperative for mechanisms to exist to rein in the state. Africa is mindful of this and the proof is the Constitutive Act of the African Union. In short, Africa has changed and continues to change in expanding democratic space for its peoples. The APRM has helped this process. Of course we need to do more.

Finally, I would like to conclude my remarks by expressing my confidence that the outcome of our deliberation would contribute to the further strengthening of the cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union in the realization of the vision of "An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in global arena."

I thank you