

STATEMENT

BY

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At the

High-Level Panel Discussion:

**'Africa's Innovation in Governance through 10 Years of
the African Peer Review Mechanism'**

Monday, 21 October 2013

UNHQ, New York

Mr. Chairman

Your Excellency Secretary General Ban Ki-moon;

Your Excellency Ambassador Mr. Tekeda Alemu, Chair of the African Group for the month;

Distinguished Eminent Persons of the African Peer Review Mechanism;

Distinguished Guests;

Excellencies;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am pleased and honored to address you this morning, as we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), which coincides with the fiftieth (50th) anniversary of its parent institution, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), now known as the African Union (AU).

On behalf of my President, H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Chairperson of the APRM Forum of Heads of State and Government, allow me to express our profound gratitude to you, Mr. Secretary General, for having graced this special occasion in spite of your very busy schedule. Our appreciation is also extended to you Mr. Chairman, and the staff of your office for the vital role they played in organizing various events for this Africa-NEPAD Week 2013. We are confident that these events will succeed in highlighting the important role of NEPAD for the development of Africa.

Today's event gives us an opportunity to celebrate our collective achievement as a peer review mechanism over the last decade as well as to reflect on the challenges and to draw lessons from both, and chart new ways to strengthen the APRM. Through this exercise, we can consolidate the gains made thus far and recommit ourselves to continued reform and improvement.

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

The APRM is a unique African instrument that is trail-blazing and setting standards for good governance across our continent. It is African in origin, ownership and leadership; and it seeks to infuse into our national political processes the values of democratic rule and good governance. APRM member countries are those that have made the courageous political decision to be bounded by the principles that underpin the APRM and, as such, to submit to self-scrutiny and peer-review. This is an important demonstration of commitment to uphold the principles of good governance and to strive to strengthen our respective systems of democratic governance and socio-economic development.

Allow me to commend African Leaders, in particular the NEPAD and APRM founders, for the remarkable visionary initiatives that have mobilized African resolve and resources to bring our organization to where it is today. Particularly, I

would like to pay tribute to the deceased Prime Minister of Ethiopia, His Excellency Meles Zenawi for his immense contribution to getting the APRM off the ground and steering its work to where it is today when he served as Chairman of the Forum of Heads of State.

Over the past decade of implementation, the APRM has made considerable progress. In spite of its voluntary nature, accession to the APRM is steadily increasing, and we are proud to list our current roster of thirty-three (33) participating countries which include Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Sao Tome & Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, and Zambia. Seventeen of these countries have completed their self-assessment exercise and have been peer-reviewed by the Forum of Heads of State and Government (APR Forum).

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen

The benefits derived from the APRM process are many. I would like to highlight a few:

First, APRM, through the national self-assessment process, has opened up the democratic space for African citizens and provided them the opportunity to systematically and constructively engage their governments. Through the national review process, citizens of all political, social, religious and ethnic backgrounds have been able to articulate their views on issues of interest and concern to them. They have actively participated in various stakeholder discussion forums, and have also been able to freely interact with the external review team.

Second, the APRM process, which involves country self-assessment and the external validation by the Peers, has led to the recognition of common structural and systemic challenges that confront most African states and the need for a collective solution. Recent developments in reviewed countries have demonstrated the strength of the Mechanism as an early warning system for emerging issues and potential crisis. For example, the APRM report for Kenya had anticipated potential political unrest before ethnic related violence broke out in 2007; while the South Africa report had warned against xenophobic tensions that erupted there in May 2008. Other country reports also highlight common challenges across the continent, including managing diversity, curbing corruption and strengthening accountability institutions, youth unemployment; and management of land and natural resources. The diagnostic strength of the Mechanism makes it a promising

tool to identify key areas of intervention and set priorities for reform.

Third, the APRM has contributed to Africa's collective effort to consolidate ownership of its development agenda. By being owned and driven from within the continent, it signals a shift away from accountability to external actors, toward domestically-driven accountability processes. This has the potential to bring forth a new "social contract" that would ensure better development outcomes for all African citizens.

Fourth, the APRM has produced a body of well-documented knowledge, which provides invaluable insights in the four thematic pillars of the Mechanism: Democracy and Political Governance; Economic Governance and Management; Corporate Governance; and Socio-economic Development. The availability of this empirical knowledge represents a shift in African governance, because it allows us to plan for more informed and evidence-based policy making.

Lastly, the APRM has promoted peer learning and sharing among African countries and provides a platform for Africa to tell its own story.

**Excellencies
Ladies and Gentlemen**

While Africa is proud to celebrate the APRM's achievements, we also know that

we have much more to do. As a unique and most innovative initiative, making the mechanism operational has been fraught with challenges. We need to continue our joint efforts, with the support of the international community, to show that APRM matters to the ordinary African citizen. We must demonstrate that it is not a mere talking shop, but a powerful tool that, if strengthened, could make Africa a strong pillar of democratic governance and sustainable, equitable development.

Therefore, as we leave this occasion, let me, on behalf of the Chairperson of the Forum of Heads of State of the APRM, stress that we do not simply leave with sense of self-gratification and self-congratulations, more importantly, we leave with a clear sense of recommitment to the APRM and the vital work it has to do in the next decade and beyond.

I thank you all for your attention