

The African Peer Review Mechanism

Round table on the book:

The African Peer Review Mechanism: Lessons from the Pioneers

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Institute for Research and
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The African Peer Review Mechanism represents an outstanding chance for the African continent to re-examine its governance models and develop, at the continental level, a system of governance assessment articulated by the States themselves. As a unique and innovative tool, it also represents great challenges as it intends to gather a great diversity of stakeholders around a highly political issue. The South African Institute of International Affairs has been engaged, over the last five years, in an in-depth examination of this mechanism. Looking at past experiences of national reviews, SAIIA proposes to shed light on a series of challenges the APRM has to face in order to meet its objectives. The launching of the book *The African Peer Review Mechanism: Lessons from the Pioneers* represents a good opportunity to discuss these challenges with a diversity of actors involved in cooperation policies.

The Institute for Research and Debate on Governance thus proposes to take part in the presentation of this publication, by gathering in Paris practitioners and academics mobilized around the issue of governance assessment. This round-table will be an opportunity for the participants to get an overview of the APRM and its current challenges, but also to focus more specifically on two of these challenges:

- The challenge of civil society participation in the APRM process;
- The challenge of an APRM assessment framework embedded in the reality and the diversity of the African context

These two challenges are directly related to IRG research programs, for which the study of the APRM experience will play a major role in the coming years.

Program of the round table

14:00 - 15:00	Presentation of the book : <i>The African Peer Review Mechanism : Lessons from the Pioneers</i> Ross Herbert, Steven Gruzd
15:00 - 16:00	General discussion
16:00 - 16:30	Break
16:30 - 18:30	Discussion of two key issues within APRM: 1 : The challenges of civil society participation in the APRM process Introduction by Martin Vielajus - IRG 2 : The challenges of the APRM assessment framework Introduction by Séverine Bellina - IRG
18:30 - 19:15	Cocktail with the participants

Thematic Session 1

Exploring the challenges of civil society participation in the APRM process

In its study of the APRM, the South African Institute of International Affairs has paid great attention on the level of openness of the process, and especially on the types of interaction between civil society actors and the government, at the different steps of the review. The level of participation of Civil Society actors and their capacity to prevent an overall control of the review by the State appears as the major political stake of such a process, but also potentially, one of its major added values. Defining APRM as a political process, the SAIIA study explains how the APRM might help to build trust between civil society and governments, and catalyze change. The APRM interactive and inclusive nature has already generated or reinforced a culture of dialogue in the assessed countries.

The book raises a series of interrogations about how an evolution of the framework of the APRM could enhance the quality of such a wide participation:

- A first series of interrogations concerns the direct participation of civil society organizations (CSO) in the APRM national and continental institutions;
- A second series of questions concerns the modalities of the “consultation” process.

On each of these dimensions of participation, SAIIA points out the need for more specific guidelines from continental APRM institutions. Past experiences of national reviews have revealed a great diversity of involvement of Civil Society in the process, and diverging understanding of its role. Should the assessment of this diversity lead to a more detailed framework of civil society participation, taking into account the reality of human and political dynamics of such a process? Does a more precise framework of participation run the risk of a difficult adaptation to diverse national contexts and challenge the sovereignty of the State on the APRM process?

In order to address these questions, the participants will need to reflect on the specific cases of past country reviews, and discuss the diverse types of inputs of CSOs in national processes, before, during and after the review. The involvement of SAIIA as a facilitator of civil society participation in several countries will bring a major input to these discussions.

- IRG’s view: Over the last three years, the IRG has been engaged in a research program concerning State/civil society interaction in different social and political contexts. The reflection around the participation of civil society actors in government assessment processes is one of the priorities of this program for the coming years, both in Africa and in Latin-America. A series of studies and seminars are currently underway and the present

APRM round-table will be an opportunity to enrich the perspectives of the Institute in this field.

Thematic session 2

Exploring the challenges of the APRM assessment framework

As SAIIA points out in its study, the APRM is usually considered as an innovative political process which allows a system of governance measurement embedded in a democratic governance process. Indeed, it lies on dialogue and interactions between actors towards a common target of definition, strengthening an ownership of governance principles. In this sense, the APRM plays an important role in the reflection on innovative types of governance indicators. As a matter of fact, democratic governance leads to a new thinking on the nature of assessment and on the types of indicators better adapted to the needs and the reality of the context of each society/country.

According to the experiences of the current reviews, what are the dimensions of democratic governance that appear to be missing in the current framework of analysis? Is the APRM assessment framework African home-grown enough? More precisely, are the indicators established by the APRM able to reflect the very nature of the process of assessment, based on a democratic governance approach? In this way, are they able to go beyond the mere paradigm of good governance and economical development framework that prevails in the international arena? How can these indicators be improved for a better adequacy between assessment processes and measurement tools? In order to address these issues, the round-table will have to specify the types of indicators that are being used for the review, and the way they have been elaborated.

These questions are directly related to many criticisms made by Africans actors on the APRM even if they support the process. They look at a core issue for such an innovative process: does the toolkit developed for this mechanism match with its inner nature? The study done by SAIIA gives a very good basis for such an analysis to be done by the participants. The participation of SAIIA, an APRM representative, African and European experts will give a unique chance to develop this analysis. The challenge of such a debate closely relates to the issue of ownership and legitimacy of the APRM for African stakeholders. Beyond the interest of external actors, the APRM has to be anchored in African realities and countries. Otherwise, there is a great risk that the political innovative dimension

of the process would progressively boil down to a mere technical mechanism, and another technocratic burden for the countries.

- IRG's view: IRG has developed, since 2005, a program concerning the diverse sources of legitimacy of power. It notably questions the ability for current frameworks of governance assessments to take into account these different sources of legitimacy and thus reflect the diversity of modes of regulations.

Preliminary list of participants

- o **Ross Herbert**, Governance & APRM programme. South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA)
- o **Steven Gruzdz**, Governance & APRM programme. South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA)
- o **Marie-Angélique Savané**, Chair of the APR Panel of Eminent Persons (Dakar)
- o **Donna Muwonge**, German Technical Co-operation (GTZ)
- o **Vincent Fruchart**, Institutional Development Specialist, World Bank
- o **Violaine Billette de Villemeur**, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department of Democratic Governance – Director
- o **Birgit Vleugels**, European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), Governance program
- o **Claire Mandouze**, Board member of the Charles Léopold Mayer Foundation
- o **Dominique Darbon**, Center of African Studies – Professor
- o **Ivan Crouzel**, French Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Department of Democratic Governance - Program officer
- o **Maurice Engueleguele** – French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department of Democratic Governance - Head of democratic governance project (Dakar)
- o **Jacques Ould Aoudia**, French Ministry of Economy, Finance and Industry – Economist
- o **Jean-Eric Aubert**, World Bank Institute, Lead specialist
- o **Massaer Diallo**, Sahel and West Africa Club, OECD- Head of Governance Unit
- o **Damien Helly**, European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS)
- o **Elodie Escusa**, Research fellow
- o **Martin Vielajus**, Deputy Director, Institute for Research and Debate on Governance (IRG)

- o **Séverine Bellina**, Head of external relations, Coordinator of the “Legitimacy” program, Institute for Research and Debate on Governance (IRG)
- o **Claire Launay**, Program Officer Latin America, Institute for Research and Debate on Governance (IRG), Bogota.