



Visionary Leader:

AU Frameworks and Mechanisms **and Egypt's Membership in the African Peer Review Mechanism**



The transformation from the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to the African Union (AU) represents a quantum leap in the Pan-African joint action: the OAU, ever since its inception in 1963, focused on promoting solidarity and unity among the peoples of Africa to eradicate all forms of colonialism and gain Pan-African political independence. Africa, despite the liberation of all the peoples of the continent, has encountered challenges right after the eradication of colonialism due to the weakness of government institutions, disputes, especially the internal ones, corruption, economic mismanagement and deteriorating social conditions in some countries.



Ambassador/ Ashraf Rashid

**Chairman of the National Governance Committee
as part of Egypt's membership in the African Peer
Review Mechanism**

The new millennium has witnessed an increase in the African leaders' awareness of the vital role of addressing the serious challenges facing the continent and the pressing need for a common roadmap to overcome them. Africa, thus, has the main responsibility of advancing its potentials, and therefore, the 2063 Agenda: "Africa We Want", as an affirmation of the continental vision on handling the developmental challenges it faces. The Agenda has taken into account various political, economic and social issues and has devoted special attention to governance issues, through Aspiration 3, "An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law" via building strong institutions and the emergence of development-oriented and visionary leadership, maintaining peace, security and stability, and promoting gender equality

in all spheres and at all levels. Therefore, the African States have embraced a number of frameworks and mechanisms that involve promoting the basic values and principles of good governance and combating corruption – an indispensable criterion for stability and sustainable development.

We shall briefly tackle some of the most important frameworks and mechanisms while surveying the objectives of the African Peer Review Mechanism and Egypt's membership in it, being a unique initiative to monitor, assess and support the States Party with good governance, not only at the African level, but also at the international level.

First: AU Frameworks and Mechanisms for Governance:

The AU, due to the significance of promoting governance, has adopted a number of important initiatives, some of which shall be considered as follows:



Participation of President El- Sisi in one of the Meetings of African Peer Review Mechanism(8 February 2020)

The AU Constitutive Act: It came into effect in 2001 and stipulates the necessity of building partnership between governments and all segments of civil society to promote unity, solidarity and cohesion among the peoples of Africa let alone the need for promoting peace, security and stability as prerequisites for development and integration. It stresses maintaining democracy, and human and peoples' rights, and guaranteeing visionary leadership and rule of law, which has been reflected in various initiatives, treaties and decisions adopted by the AU following its establishment.

The Pan-African Parliament: It is considered a step towards empowering the African peoples to voice their views and encouraging the national and regional parliaments to approve treaties and covenants adopted by the AU and to incorporate them into their legal systems. Its objectives include establishing the democratic practices and the principles of respecting human rights, visionary leadership and the rule of law as well as promoting security, peace and stability in the continent.

The African Court of Justice: It has the jurisdiction of considering the interpretation and application of the Constituent Act of the African Union as well as the AU conventions, legal documents and emanating protocols.

New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Initiative: Approved in 2001, Egypt played a major role in drafting and adopting the NEPAD initiative. This partnership has transformed into the AU Development Agency. NEPAD was based on the belief that political stability and development are dependent on security, good governance and proper management of states' resources and public services. Moreover, the initiative has stressed the necessity of democratization, respect of human rights, transparency and accountability. The NEPAD Initiative was adopted by the African leaders out of their convictions that the previous African strategies for development did not fulfil their objectives and that the African leaders must take the responsibility of devising and implementing the reforms necessary for improving the African development within the framework of reform policies that are owned by the continent and not imposed from outside. The African Peer Review Mechanism emerged as a result of this initiative.

AU Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption: It was adopted in 2003 and stressed the necessity of respect for democracy, peoples' participation, rule of law, good governance, respect for human and peoples' rights, rejecting and condemning corrupt practices and pertinent offences. The States Parties, also, demanded enacting anti-corruption legislations, empowering national anti-corruption bodies,

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ensuring transparency in bidding and in recruiting for public office as well as financing of parties. The Convention stipulated establishment of an eleven-member AU Advisory Board for monitoring the adoption and application of anti-corruption measures on the continent, and for collecting and documenting information on corruption and money laundering offences.

Governance in Africa: It is based on the AU Constitutive Act and its principles and objectives. Moreover, Governance in Africa relies on all relevant treaties, conventions, covenants, protocols and decisions.

Second: The African Peer Review Mechanism:

The Statute for the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) was approved on 9 March, 2003 after the adoption of The Declaration on Democracy, Political and Economic Governance and Corporate Governance by AU summit, which included establishing the Mechanism as an innovative and unique instrument for AU State Members to voluntarily self-monitor and self-assess their governance performance in the broad sense of the term. It aims at sharing experiences, promoting best practices, identifying shortcomings and enhancing the African States capabilities in order to adopt the policies and practices conducive to political stability, increasing the rate of economic growth, achieving sustainable development, combating corruption and expediting economic integration. Performance and progress are measured by the Mechanism in four thematic areas:

- democracy and political governance
- economic governance and management
- corporate governance
- socio-economic development.

The AU State Parties accession to the Mechanism is on voluntary basis. The Mechanism comprises 44 State Members, and it is worth noting that the AU summit adopted a decision calling upon all State Parties' accession to the Mechanism by 2023.

Strengthening the relations with the African States has been a top priority for the Egyptian policy, especially since 2014, a period that has been marked by intensive Egyptian activity in the work of the AU and its institutions confirming the leading role of Egypt in the continent. It witnessed numerous top-level participations in various African fora and hosting numerous African conferences and activities in Egypt. Egypt, also, assumed the presidency of the AU in 2019.

Egypt became a State Member in the African Peer Review Mechanism in 2004. As a reflection of the Egyptian State's concern to promote governance over the past years, a delegation from the African Peer Review Mechanism visited Egypt. During the visit, the Egyptian government stressed Egypt's full support of the objectives of the Mechanism, building on the steps it takes establish good governance principles and practices at the national level, and its desire to closely cooperate with the African brothers in this domain. To this end, the Prime Minister issued a decision to form the National Committee as Part of Egypt's Membership in the African Peer Review Mechanism. The Committee comprises 20 members including representative of the Parliament, the civil society, business and academic institutions, media, women and youth, people with disabilities as well as the concerned government institutions.

The National Committee has commissioned experienced and competent research centers to prepare the self-assessment report on governance, which reviews Egypt's performance at the four thematic areas of the Mechanism. The research centers were:

Al Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies. It prepared the report on the area of democracy and political governance;

Center for Economic and Financial Research and Studies at the Faculty of Economics and Political Sciences, Cairo University. It prepared the report on the area of economic governance and management;

Public Administration Research and Consultation Center at the Faculty of Economics and Political Sciences, Cairo University. It prepared the report on the area of corporate governance;

Institute of National Planning, which prepared the report in the area of socio-economic development;

and Center for Surveys and Statistical Applications at the Faculty of Economics and Political Sciences, Cairo University. It conducted the survey, data collection and data analysis of the four areas under review in accordance with the questionnaire approved by the Member States of the Mechanism.

After the self-assessment report had been completed by the research centers and approved by the National Committee, it was sent to the Secretary of the Continental Mechanism. A Review Delegation of the Mechanism comprising 19 African experts headed by the former Nigerian Minister of Foreign Affairs, the member of eminent figures in the Mechanism visited Egypt from 1st to 18th December, 2019.

The Review Delegation presented the report in the Summit of the Mechanism on 8 February 2020 in Addis Ababa on the sidelines of the AU Summit in the presence of His Excellency, President, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi. The report was approved by the summit to be the first reviewed report of the Arab Republic of Egypt within the Framework of the African Peer Review Mechanism, and included the following main points:

- Paying tribute to the Egyptian civilization and commending its present, highlighting its strengths and achievements, and enumerating the best practices in the country as a model, especially "Transformative



President El-Sisi meets with the Head of the Committee of African Peer Review Mechanism

According to the African Committee of Experts (ACE) report, the Egyptian State was commended for taking many "bold decisions and initiatives to achieve the sustainable development necessary to change the lives of the Egyptians, which demonstrates the strong political will of the Egyptian leadership."

Leadership" of His Excellency, President, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi. The report provided a definition of the same as "the visionary leadership that serves as a model, leads to a higher level of collective performance leading to success, and effectively responds to the needs and interests of the people".

- Commending the Egyptian State for adopting many "bold decisions and initiatives to achieve sustainable development necessary for the transformation of the lives of Egyptians, which demonstrates the strong political will of the Egyptian leadership and its commitment not only to reforming the national social and economic landscape through new actions, legislation and policies, but also by implementing them". The report gave some examples in that regard, including empowering women, achieving inclusive development with the participation of women, youth and people with disabilities, developing the infrastructure and implementing major projects, as well as dealing with the challenges of population growth.
- Providing for the best practices, including the roles of the National Training Academy, the African Presidential Leadership and Anti-Corruption Programme, and the Social Solidarity Programme (Takaful wa Karama). It also praised the expansion of social protection measures, the promotion of religious harmony, the merit-based civil service, and Egypt's wise energy policy, its success in generating excess energy and diversifying its sources. The establishment of the Benban Solar Power Plant and the expansion of the Suez Canal as "an achievement that supports the national economy and Egypt's role as a centre for world trade and a key element in Egypt's broader vision for the modernization and advancement of the Egyptian economy", the report indicates. One of the goals behind it is the development of Sinai.

- Stressing the Government's success in implementing macroeconomic and structural reforms within the framework of the sustainable development strategy: Egypt's Vision 2030, laying the foundation for a more dynamic private sector participation in the economy and improving the business climate, as well as the digital transformation of the economy, and praising the Government's support for assisting those most in need through social security networks.
- Praising the Egyptian role in achieving African integration and launching the African Free Trade Zone, and commending Egypt's initiative to providing some African countries with the medicine for hepatitis and non-communicable diseases as well as training its medical staff on conducting medical surveys.
- In relation to democracy and human rights, the report highlighted Egypt's reform of its electoral system to promote voter participation. It also described the Egyptian position based on complete respect for human rights, including the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, as stipulated in the Constitution, while affirming Egypt's commitment to all regional and international covenants and treaties to which it is party. In addition to enacting legislations and taking action to implement those obligations at the national level, the Government continues to promote democracy, political practice, the integrity of elections, the equality of citizens, the independence of the judiciary, enhancing the role of civil society and promoting freedom of belief and expression, and the establishment of the "Supreme Standing Committee for Human Rights" as an important step to affirm the Government's determination to further promote these rights and to further integrate international and regional human rights obligations into national laws.
- In relation to terrorism and extremism, the report states that "it is not an option for any Egyptian Government to disregard the threats they pose to peace, stability and development." The Government is working to address this within the framework of a comprehensive approach focusing on security and development, and to deal with the ideology that breeds and incites extremism and violence. The report particularly commended the initiative of the President since 2015 to renew the religious discourse and that Egypt continues to strengthen the counter-terrorism measures to enhance national and regional security while ensuring compliance with regional and international obligations on standards of respect for human rights.

Consequently, the report repeatedly described the Brotherhood as the Terrorist Group that poses a genuine threat referring to its infamous historical records in this regard. It affirms that the change that happened in Egypt in 2013 came as a result of an overwhelming public outcry that was supported by the Armed Forces. The report states "that the Armed Forces is a highly respected national institution and they have supported the people in their various revolutions and political transformations, and maintained the Constitution."

In this context, Egypt has submitted a national programme based on the findings of the self-assessment report within the context of the review process that is based on and consistent with the strategy for sustainable development: Egypt's Vision 2030, Africa's Agenda 2063 and the Government's Programme of Action. The Programme of Action is based on the following national priorities: promoting social justice and



Prime Minister announces the launch of the African Peer Review Mechanism in Egypt

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Roads quality projects are a priority in the State's sustainable development strategy 2030

human rights, promoting economic growth, administrative reform, preventing and combating corruption, empowering local governance, improving and protecting the environment, political empowerment and combating terrorism.

The Presidential speech at the summit of the Mechanism that approved the report of the review delegation included that "Egypt's completion of the voluntary audit process is based on the serious steps taken by Egypt to promote good governance and transparency and is in the exclusive interest of Egypt. We look forward to continuing the exchange of experiences with our brothers in Africa in this regard."

The presentation of governance frameworks and mechanisms within the framework of the African Union and Egypt's membership in the African Peer Review Mechanism illustrates the importance of governance in achieving sustainable development and the dire need to promote it in order to build a better future not only at the national level, but also at the continental, regional and international levels. It can be said that Egypt is taking firm steps towards promoting governance and its principles through reforms in various domains.