

The APRM as a Mechanism for Effective Governance



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Is Africa winning the battle?

The 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) compiled by Transparency International, ranks 180 countries and territories around the globe by their perceived levels of public sector corruption on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean). Every region globally is either stagnant in its corruption efforts or showing signs of declining, Africa is not an exception. However, some countries have significantly improved their scores in the last decade.

Whilst North Africa has witnessed improvements, Sub-Saharan Africa maintains the lowest global average of 33, reflecting ongoing struggles with corruption and conflict. Ninety per cent of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa scored below 50 in the 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). Thus Africa's fight against corruption requires more efforts to be won, but progress is being made in certain areas. Civil society engagement, technology and international cooperation is playing key positive roles to address corruption. Governance becomes key because corruption remains rooted in some systems.

What is the role of the APRM?

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), is a mutually agreed instrument voluntarily acceded to by AU member States as an African self-monitoring mechanism. The APRM is often described as "Africa's unique and innovative approach to governance" with the objective of improving governance dynamics at the local, national and continental levels.

The mandate of the APRM is to ensure that policies and practices of participating Member States conform to the agreed political, economic and corporate governance values, codes and standards contained in the African



The relationship between governance, peace, security and corruption is intertwined. Scholars and policymakers have debated its nature for years, with consensus that these elements are interconnected in ways that either reinforce positive outcomes or perpetuate negative cycles. However, although generally connected, the Africa Governance report of 2019 presented evidence showing that the interaction between governance, corruption, peace and security do not always have a direct causal or predictable relationship due to different contexts and situational dynamics. In Africa however, there are several examples to show how poor governance and widespread corruption can contribute to prolonged conflict and instability. Countries with relatively stronger governance frameworks and lower levels of corruption, enjoy more stability, peace and security. Breaking the cycle amongst these factors requires a concerted effort to improve governance, strengthen institutions, reduce corruption and address the root causes of insecurity.

Union Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance. As a voluntary self-monitoring instrument, APRM fosters the adoption of policies, standards and practices that lead to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated regional and continental economic integration through sharing of experiences and best practices, including identifying deficiencies and assessing the needs for capacity building.

The APRM has been an important tool for addressing corruption challenges. Through its comprehensive governance assessments, corruption is identified as one of the cross-cutting issues that has to be tackled holistically due to its overall impact on several areas of governance. The findings show that, generally, the anti-corruption bodies – although established – could face obstacles in some African countries due to weak legal structures and lack of independence of the judiciary. This makes it difficult for the anti-corruption bodies to investigate or prosecute corruption cases effectively. In addition, some anti-corruption bodies are operating with limited budgets, which restricts their ability to conduct thorough investigations and enforce laws.

Africa's Economic loss

The scourge of instability and poor governance have caused enormous economic losses in the Continent. The African Union estimates that corruption costs African economies about US\$150 billion annually through losses from illegal activities such as fraud, illegal natural resource extraction and siphoned funds from public contracts. This is depriving some African governments of much resources needed for socio-economic development such



as infrastructure, healthcare, education, and social services.

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The Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) estimates that conflict and violence costs African economies an estimated \$195 billion annually, or about 15% of the continent's GDP. IEP further proves that armed conflict and political instability have been shown to reduce GDP growth in affected African nations by 2-10% annually. Countries like South Sudan, Somalia, and the Central African Republic have seen substantial declines in GDP due to prolonged conflicts.

Also, the African Development Bank (AfDB) estimates that political instability leads to an approximate 5% decrease in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) per year from investment disruption and capital flight. Over 30 million Africans are either internally displaced or refugees, draining the productive potential of these populations and costs host countries and international agencies enormous resources annually for humanitarian assistance.

Because of conflict, the United Nations, African Union, and other organizations spend billions each year on peacekeeping operations in African countries. For instance, the African Union's mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has cost an estimated one billion USD annually. These resources should have been utilised for more progressive development needs for citizens.

Need for effective governance

Whilst good governance does not guarantee getting rid of corruption, as some countries with well-established governance structures still face issues of corruption through corporate influence, lobbying and entrenched bureaucratic practices. Effective governance remains a crucial element for maintaining peace and security as governments that are transparent, accountable and responsive to their citizens build stronger institutions, foster trust and manage resources efficiently. Thus, good governance is important for creating a stable environment, reducing the likelihood of conflict.

The Africa Governance Report (2022) presents evidence from some regions where governance structures are weak, marginalized groups usually turn to violence, insurgency or civil unrest due to perceived or actual exclusion from political and economic opportunities. These factors have

led to a cycle of instability through weakening the security apparatus, as funds meant for defence, law enforcement, or public safety are siphoned off, leaving gaps that allow for violence, crime, and conflict. As a result, lack of good governance and corruption reinforce each other, making it difficult to break free from insecurity and conflict.

Solution

If there is a mutually reinforcing relationship between good governance, limiting corruption and promoting peace and security, then combatting corruption equally requires a comprehensive, concerted and coordinated

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effort by not only the relevant institutions but also those concerned with the political and economic stability and development of the African Union's member States. First, the APRM, as a valuable tool for promoting self-regulation, cooperation and best practices across Africa. AU member States need to continue to utilise this mechanism which emphasises mutual accountability and transparency.

Utilising the mechanism aligns well with Africa's broader development goals and the AU's endeavours for promoting peace, security, and prosperity across the Continent.

Second, UN convention of 2005, which aims to fight corruption, as well as institutions and organisations such as the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, Transparency International, World Bank and other watchdogs and agencies against corruption should aim to not only to curb corrupt practices but to educate and empower our populations at large. Lastly, Good governance, media freedom, democracy

and democratisation principles such as rule of law, checks and balances, separation of powers and transparency, probity and accountability should continue to be nurtured and rooted in Africa. This represents a political imperative call.

Biography

Ambassador Marie-Antoinette Rose-Quatre is the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Continental Secretariat. She has over two decades of experience in the fields of politics, diplomacy, public policy, management, media and communications. She has served as a member of the Seychelles Parliament as well as the Seychelles Ambassador to several AU Member States.