

Workshop on Accelerating the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda and AU Agenda 2063 in Africa: Building Resilient Institutions for the SDGs in the time of COVID-19

Co-organized by APRM and UN DESA

Cape Town, 28-30 October 2021

Summary of key points

COVID-19 has significantly affected Africa. But crises also bring opportunities. Pandemic recovery presents African countries with an opportunity for a transformation towards more equitable and sustainable pathways. In this regard, participants recognized that effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions are critical to help countries achieve accelerated implementation of the 2030 Agenda and AU Agenda 2063, which are complementary and mutually reinforcing. The following are among the key points participants raised during the workshop:

1. The pandemic underscored the role of public institutions in providing essential public services. The pandemic has also exposed pre-existing weaknesses in the public sector. At the same time, public institutions have also innovated around e-government and digital delivery of services, public private partnerships, and citizen engagement. The lessons learned need to be integrated and scaled up. Capable, adept and agile institutions involve the whole of government and the whole of society, including all levels of government and all relevant stakeholders - parliaments, oversight institutions, civil society - acting in a coherent and cohesive fashion. Strategic alliances, inclusion, participation, and public private partnerships are key, as are collaborative efforts including with the youth.
2. Political will and leadership are imperative to boost institutional and administrative reforms in many African countries. Participants shared examples from Kenya, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Egypt, Botswana and Uganda of how governments are adopting many reforms and policies to tackle the sustainable development issues alongside the modernization of national civil service. Further attention is needed to link national achievements with regional progress. In this regard, the APRM stated its intention to strengthen its connection with regional economic communities (RECs) to ensure that key governance recommendations are considered at different levels to enhance governance progress in many African countries.
3. Many African countries are preparing a new generation of national development plans. Development plans and strategies should enable countries to align their sustainable development activities with ambition and guidance of the 2030 Agenda and the Agenda 2063. Planning must also encompass the “nuts and bolts” of government, such as internal coordination, linkage with budgeting processes, and meaningful monitoring and evaluation. Participants discussed how planning processes could be made robust and resilient in the face of changing circumstances and major shocks such as the pandemic, underlining the need for peer learning and exchange of experiences.

4. The voluntary national reviews (VNRs) offer a significant opportunity for countries to encourage the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, in pursuit of the 2030 Agenda. Under its expanded mandate the APRM serves as a continental peer-learning mechanism on VNRs at the regional level. In this regard, consideration will be given to mainstreaming CEPA principles in this annual exercise, as well highlighting their significance for AU Member States and AU organs.
5. On the voluntary local reviews (VLRs), participants highlighted the experiences with the localization of the SDGs at the sub-national level in Africa. The VLRs are one way to transform sub-national institutions towards resilience and accelerate action to achieve the SDGs. They facilitate a bottom-up approach and localisation of SDGs, enabling institutions to come up with locally backed strategies. It was underlined that the VLRs can be used to input into VNRs.
6. The CEPA [Principles of effective governance for sustainable development](#) were recognized as highly relevant to meeting Africa's governance challenges. Further activities to enhance awareness of the Principles and provide more focussed support to facilitate their adoption in practice are needed. The [Baseline study on implementation of the CEPA principles](#) in Africa constitutes a starting point for tackling many governance issues at the national level. Going forward, the APRM is committed to carry out further assessments and activities to operationalize these principles at the national level, including in the form of targeted reviews on aspects of these principles, based on the requests from our member states. Responding to the capacity development needs identified, and informed by discussions at the workshop, the APRM, UN DESA and regional partners will start developing a toolkit to assist member states in this exercise in partnership with UN DESA and other regional partners.
7. The urgent need for capacity building across Africa was highlighted with sub-regional and national capacity building and experience-sharing having a role. It was noted that investing in African human capital, especially youth and women, requires further alignment between the partners' strategies and national priorities. Participants outlined activities and projects being carried out, such as the newly developed APRM Governance, which will be offering a variety of courses in partnership with African Association for Public Administration and Management (AAPAM) and other members of APRM-CEPA Taskforce for Africa.
8. Participants reinforced the importance of cooperation and new partnerships to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063, building on the collaboration in evidence at the workshop. They underlined the key contribution of the APRM and its African Union sister organizations, especially the AU Commission. They recognized the importance of continued collaboration with the United Nations, including the UN Economic Commission for Africa and at the country level with UN country teams, under the overall coordination of the UN Resident Coordinator.