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THE APRM NEWSLETTER

AFRICA'S GOVERNANCE VOICES

FROM PEER REVIEW TO REAL REFORM: DELIVERING GOVERNANCE THAT WORKS FOR CITIZENS

INSIDE THIS EDITION

APRM
African Peer Review Mechanism

An Institution of the
African Union

Africa's Governance Voices
The APRM Newsletter

2nd Edition | July - Dec. 2026

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome to the second edition of our newsletter!

Following the remarkable success of our inaugural issue, it is both exciting and encouraging to bring you this second edition that invites us to move beyond reflection and into action. Anchored in our theme, **"From Peer Review to Real Reform: Delivering Governance That Works for Citizens",** this edition challenges us to ask a simple but powerful question: What comes next?

Across the continent, the conversation is shifting and rightly so. It is no longer just about identifying challenges or crafting well-intentioned recommendations. The real work, as many of the contributions in this edition remind us, lies in rolling up our sleeves and getting things done. Because at the end of the day, governance must be felt, not just discussed; it must be meaningful, not merely abstract.

This edition features a timely reflection on migration as a critical governance issue for Africa's integration and development. Drawing on APRM Country Review Reports and African Union policy frameworks, the article explores the gap between continental commitments to free movement and the realities faced by migrants, while highlighting commendable practices and the role of effective migration governance in advancing Agenda 2063. It emphasises APRM's contribution to promoting peer learning and supporting Participating States in building a more integrated, inclusive and prosperous Africa.

In these pages, you will encounter thought-provoking insights on Africa's digital future and the urgent need to govern emerging technologies before they outpace us. You will explore how the continent is strengthening its humanitarian response through more coordinated, African-led systems. And you will see how, at the country level, practical and targeted steps are being taken to tackle pressing challenges such as youth unemployment, turning policy commitments into real opportunities for young people.

What ties all these stories together is a shared and refreshing truth: implementation is where impact lives. This edition is therefore a reflection of progress, a call to action, and a reminder that meaningful reform is within reach when vision is matched with execution.

To our contributors, thank you. Your insights, dedication, and willingness to share your work continue to make this platform vibrant and impactful. And to those who are yet to contribute, consider this a gentle nudge. Your voice matters, and this space yearns for it.

As you journey through this edition, we hope you feel inspired, challenged, and perhaps even a little energised. Because the journey from review to reform is not a distant goal… it is already underway.

Happy reading!

Ms. Liziwe Masilela

Senior Media & Communications Officer, APRM
Continental Secretariat

Amb. Marie-Antoinette Rose-Quatre

Chief Executive Officer of the APRM Continental Secretariat

HOW CAN GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRACY ENDURE BEYOND ADMINISTRATIVE TURNOVER?

Governance refers to the capacity of states to regulate public affairs and exercise authority in pursuit of collectively determined goals. At the APRM, we define good governance as the ability of states to govern themselves more effectively for the benefit of their citizens. Central to good governance is a shared commitment among state entities, non-state actors, and citizens to uphold a social contract. But for this to work, governance must endure administrative turnovers. This means that institutional "guardrails" must be strong enough to ensure that checks and balances hold officeholders to account and that agreed rules of political engagement are consistently enforced. In principle, such arrangements should protect democratic continuity. In practice, however, Africa's political history shows recurring collapses of these mechanisms.

Between 2001 and 2023, the continent experienced no less than 50 coups or attempted coups, with at least a quarter reportedly succeeding. The resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government (UCG), particularly since 2020 and especially in parts of Central and West Africa, signals growing fragmentation in our Member States' ability to deliver on the social contract. This has resulted in a growing mistrust among citizens. It also points to more fundamental stresses within prevailing models of democracy. Afrobarometer data on public perceptions of UCG indicates that many citizens, especially the youth, may support an unconstitutional change in government when they believe it will improve service delivery. Similarly, the Africa Governance Report (2023) by the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) attributes much of the prevailing mistrust between state and society actors to persistent gaps in basic service delivery, particularly around employment, housing and food security.

Another driver of UCG is the concentration of power by the state. Democratic erosion is more prevalent where constitutional and political arrangements concentrate authority in the hands of a narrow elite, weakening oversight, democratic institutions, and civil society engagement. This can occur under highly centralised presidential systems, authoritarian regimes, or dominant-party rule. Important to note that these patterns are not defined simply by the absence of elections; they are also characterised by the consolidation of decision-making power in the hands of a few and limited horizontal accountability, what C. Wright Mills calls 'Power elite'. Increasingly, this centrality of power is being contested, in contrast to a more pluralist approach in which political power is broadly shared among various entities or groups. Regardless of theoretical framing, for governance to deliver, society must have strong governance institutions that are ultimately responsible for managing and overseeing the delivery of public goods and services. Yet these responsibilities are frequently undermined when governance structures are under-resourced, politically sidelined, or treated as peripheral to executive decision-making rather than as the state's central infrastructure.

A growing body of scholarship also argues that the institutional models influenced by Western liberal democracy introduced in many contexts through colonialism and post-independence constitutional transfers do not always align with the lived realities, political economies, or governance preferences of diverse African communities. This has intensified debates about the need for democratic renewal that is locally grounded and embodies more traditional African approaches that have always worked, while remaining consistent with core principles of accountability, participation, and the rule of law. Countries like Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa recognise traditional authorities and the critical role they play in maintaining social cohesion. The 1992 Ghana constitution, for instance, recognises the important role of traditional leaders, especially with regard to customary law and practice. This constitutional requirement ensures that power and authority are shared, ensuring greater public participation and accountability, especially at the local level.

On the other hand, countries have attempted to address power concentration through devolution at the federal, provincial or local levels of government. The 2010 Constitution of Kenya, for instance, provides for the transfer of power and resources to the country's 47 county governments. But despite these efforts, the continent has, by and large, failed to address the deeper question of how democracy and governance endure beyond changes in administration.

This brings us to the following central question: **How can governance and democracy endure beyond administrative turnover?**

What remains underexamined is less a matter of public policy or administrative design than a cultural concern, specifically how populations understand and exercise their function within the broader political architecture. From an epistemological standpoint, belief systems are shaped by individuals' perceived capacity to act meaningfully in the world. Political stability, therefore, is deeply tied to how citizens interpret and respond to change, be it political or otherwise. This points to culture as a key determinant of democratic resilience, where culture refers to a collective belief system that is both practised and protected by its actors.

The sustainability of peace and democracy across leadership transitions depends on whether political actors and citizens can collectively uphold and, where necessary, renegotiate the social contract. If that is consistently practised and protected by the actors themselves, then it is much easier for citizens to ensure that the culture of good governance endures administrative turnover. In many cases, power transitions unfold through top-down processes: governments are elected, cabinets are formed, policy agendas are set, and citizens comply, contest, or disengage. While widely accepted as standard practice, this sequence often proves inadequate when policy change substantially affect people's lives or alter the non-negotiable principles of governance.

Even where formal oversight mechanisms exist, reversing entrenched decisions is difficult. Without meaningful political consequences (or a culture around accountability and consequence management), incumbents may be incentivised to consolidate power and lock in particular arrangements. The core problem, therefore, is not simply insufficient oversight; it is an underdeveloped democratic culture that defines the norms, limits, and mutual obligations embedded in the social contract. In other words, the weak link is the absence of sustained, collective capacity to hold governments accountable across electoral cycles and administrative transitions.

Building a culture of good governance and democracy is a viable long-term strategy, though not a simple one. Progress requires a deliberate inflexion point, a shift from aspiration to action. The APRM's mandate should therefore extend beyond diagnostic assessments to the design and coordination of more strategic interventions. Shorter-term measures, such as implementing recommendations from review reports, remain important, but they should sit within a coherent long-term vision for the continent's desired developmental trajectory. Achieving this shift requires sustained, meaningful engagement with all relevant stakeholders in order to drive lasting cultural change.

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Mr Dalmar Jama

Head of Strategic Planning, APRM

MIGRATION IN AFRICA: A CONTINENT'S UNFINISHED CONVERSATION WITH ITSELF

Migration and governance are twin strands of DNA, as old as humanity's journey in Africa itself. Long before colonial borders were drawn across this immense continent, people moved across the Sahel, the Horn, the Great Lakes and the southern grasslands in search of safety, pasture, trade and opportunity. What is new is the growing tension between Africa's stated ambition of continental integration, as articulated by the African Union, and the lived reality of exclusion that too often greets migrants at national borders. As APRM's Country Review Reports demonstrate, this tension is one of the most persistent and cross-cutting governance challenges facing Member States today.

What the reviews tell us

APRM Country Review Reports consistently identify migration and the management of diversity as recurring, cross-cutting concerns that touch democracy and political governance, socio-economic development, and corporate governance alike, and the picture that emerges is genuinely continental. In Sudan, forced and climate-induced migration is treated as both a symptom and a driver of conflict, with displacement, at the time of the Sudan Gap Analysis before the current civil war, concentrated in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile. In Mozambique, insurgency in Cabo Delgado has displaced communities across an international border into Tanzania, illustrating how instability in one country can rapidly become a regional migration and security concern. In Liberia, rural-to-urban migration driven by conflict legacies and weak rural livelihoods has overwhelmed the capital, Monrovia, whose infrastructure was never designed for such growth. Nigeria's review notes the country's accession to the ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, even as coordination among the many agencies responsible for migration policy remains weak. And in South Africa, reviewers have repeatedly flagged the tension between a progressive constitutional and legal framework for refugees and immigrants, and periodic outbreaks of anti-illegal immigrant violence rooted in poverty, inequality and competition for scarce resources. The reality is that this is one version of a challenge that recurs in different forms across the continent. Across the reports, a common thread emerges: national migration policies are frequently reactive, fragmented across ministries, and disconnected from the continental frameworks African states have themselves signed up to.

Migration Governance in Uganda

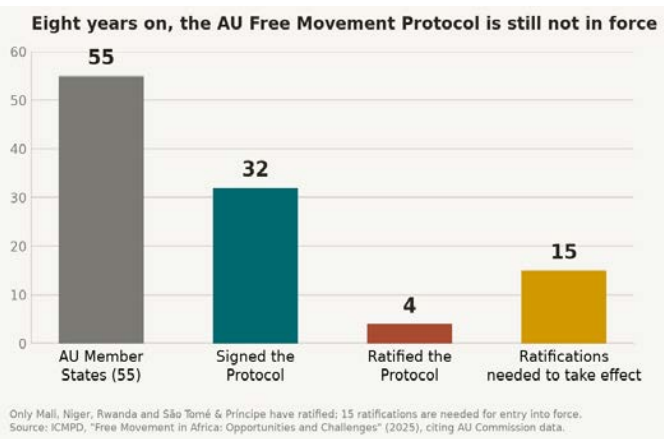
A commendable practice in migration governance from the reviews is that of Uganda, whose refugee policy was identified in the 2017 APRM Second Country Review Report. Rather than confining refugees to camps, Uganda settles them on plots of agricultural land alongside host communities, extending this approach equally to all refugees regardless of ethnicity or country of origin. The 2006 Refugees Act and 2010 Refugees Regulations grant refugees freedom of movement, the right to work, and access to services. These rights allow migrants and refugees to work toward self-reliance rather than long-term dependence on humanitarian aid. The APR Panel of Eminent Persons noted in Uganda's Country Review report that this approach has made Uganda "widely cited as a model at the global level when it comes to the treatment of refugees." The lesson from Uganda is that migration governance works best when anchored in clear legal rights, predictable administrative processes, and a policy logic that treats migrants and refugees as contributors rather than only as burdens.

Progress at the AU level

The African Union has not been silent on this agenda. The Migration Policy Framework for Africa and Plan of Action (2018–2030) gives Member States and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) detailed guidance on labour migration, diaspora engagement, migration and trade, and addresses cross-cutting issues such as fostering accurate migration data as well as the gender and human rights of migrants, explicitly aligned to Agenda 2063 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. The AU Commission's Mid-Term Assessment of the Framework, released in 2026 and drawing on data from 34 Member States and five regional reports, reports on real institutional momentum, including a functioning Monitoring and Evaluation system which tracks implementation, generating a continental evidence base to guide policy through to 2030 (African Union, Mid-Term Assessment of the 2018 Migration Policy Framework for Africa).

Where progress has stalled, however, is on the single instrument meant to operationalise Africa's free movement ambitions, the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment, adopted alongside the AfCFTA framework in January 2018. The AU Protocol has not seen any new signatures or ratifications since 2019, as illustrated in Figure 1, with challenges including misconceptions that free movement means open borders without rules, security and labour-market anxieties, weak civil registration systems, and limited national capacities to issue interoperable travel documents (ICMPD, Free Movement in Africa: Opportunities and Challenges, 2025).

Figure 1: Status of AU Free Movement Protocol (2025)

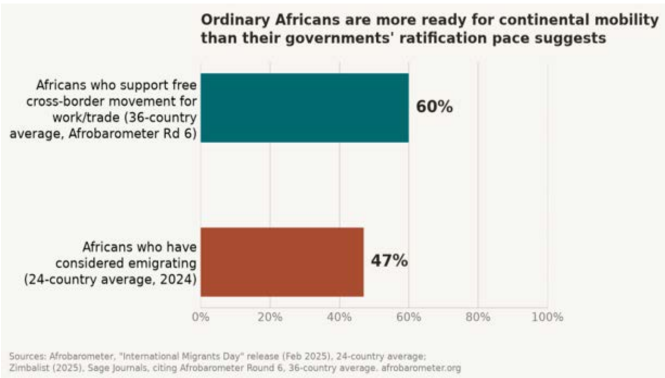


RECs have had a better track record, especially the East African Community (EAC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), where functioning free movement regimes exist. This has been enhanced by a growing list of countries that have liberalised cross-border movement, including Benin, Burundi, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Ghana, Rwanda, Seychelles and Togo, which have unilaterally opened their borders to visa-free entry for fellow Africans. Most recently, Cape Verde joined this growing group by granting visa-free access to citizens of all African countries, providing another practical demonstration that progress towards continental mobility is continuing even as ratification of the AU Free Movement Protocol remains stalled. Real momentum, where it exists, is coming from this "variable geometry" approach rather than from the Protocol's formal ratification track.

Why this matters for Agenda 2063 attainment

The AU's Agenda 2063 envisions "an integrated continent, politically united, based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism" and identifies the free movement of people, capital, goods and services as central to that vision. The African Passport, launched in 2016, was meant to be the visible symbol of this ambition, but it remains largely restricted to Heads of State, senior officials and diplomats, with no clear pathway to ordinary citizens (Open African Tribune). This is a direct consequence of the Protocol's stalled ratification and the intertwined nature of the Protocol and the Passport, described as "like twins…inextricably interlinked" by an AU official in 2018.

Public opinion data suggest African citizens are, in fact, ahead of their governments on this question. Across 24 countries surveyed in 2024 through Afrobarometer's Round 6, 60% agreed that people should be able to move freely across borders to trade or work (Afrobarometer, International Migrants Day release; Zimbalist, 2025, Sage Journals). The appetite for mobility is real, though it is not uniform, with support falling in countries where economic anxiety or anti-migrant narratives take hold, which is a reminder that continental sentiment can mask significant national variation.



Toward a Pan-African spirit of cooperation

If Agenda 2063 is to be more than aspirational, AU Member States should encourage treating migration not only as a domestic security and welfare problem to be managed, but also as a shared continental asset to be nurtured jointly. Concretely, this means:

- accelerating ratification of the Free Movement Protocol;
- building on the AU's own proposed roadmap of legal clarification;
- raising awareness and encouraging the phased implementation of migration while acknowledging prevailing national sentiment;
- investing in the interoperable civil registration and travel document systems required for credible use of an African Passport; and
- pairing continental commitments with national social protection and economic inclusion policies that reduce domestic anxieties that can so often lead to anti-migrant sentiment.

The AU's socio-economic development goals for Agenda 2063 will increasingly depend on the size of the market Africans can access across the continent. Functional continental free movement is an economic imperative for wealth creation and a political imperative for a united Africa. Building common institutions, trade and human capital is urgently needed for Africa to compete on the world stage. The APRM has a key role. By fostering improved migration and economic governance, the Mechanism can help translate the promise of African integration into practice.

Lennon Monyae

Researcher & Civil Society Liason Officer,
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STILL WAITING: AFRICA'S YOUTH, THE GOVERNANCE DEFICIT, AND THE URGENCY OF NOW

Two decades after the adoption of the African Youth Charter on 2 July 2006 in Banjul, The Gambia, a sobering reality persists: Africa's young people are still waiting and their patience is wearing thin. The aspirations enshrined in that landmark instrument have not become the lived experiences of millions of young Africans, many of whom continue to face exclusion, limited opportunities, and unfulfilled promises.

Against this backdrop, and in direct response to growing demands particularly from Generation Z for meaningful engagement and tangible reform, the 5th APRM Youth Symposium was convened. Hosted by the APRM Continental Secretariat in partnership with the Pan-African Parliament from 10 to 11 November 2025 in Midrand, South Africa, the Symposium was held under the theme: "Youth in Governance: From Promise to Prosperity."

The Symposium made one thing unmistakably clear: the era of symbolic youth inclusion in democracy and governance is over. African youth are tired of "waithood." Introduced by Mozambican political scientist Alcinda Honwana, waithood describes the suspended state between adolescence and adulthood, a precarious existence in which millions of young Africans are educated enough to dream, but locked out of the economies, institutions, and political systems that could turn those dreams into reality. They are waiting for opportunities to participate, to lead, and to find jobs that seem like a mirage. They are waiting for leaders who do not listen, and for a seat at a table where they are told their time will come.

A Restless Generation Steps Forward

Across Africa, the pulse of a restless generation can no longer be ignored. It is visible, audible, and deeply felt. Young people in Madagascar, Kenya, and Tanzania have moved from the margins to the centre of political life. Their voices have filled public squares, their messages have flooded digital spaces, and their presence is reshaping the political atmosphere. The sting of tear gas has come to symbolise a demand for transformation rather than an expression of fear.

When young Kenyans mobilised in 2024 and compelled the withdrawal of a controversial finance bill, they demonstrated the power of collective action. From political upheaval in Madagascar to sustained youth-led resistance against entrenched systems in West and Central Africa, a clear pattern is emerging: waithood is not a youth problem. It is a governance failure with a generational face.

What African governments are witnessing in youth-driven outrage is neither disorder nor disengagement. It is a generation confronting the widening gap between promise and reality, between the future they were told to expect and the present they must endure. These young people have waited, participated when invited, and are now asserting themselves when excluded. Their actions reveal a deeper rupture: a governance compact that no longer holds.

When such a compact breaks, silence is no longer an option. This moment demands more than acknowledgement; it demands courage. Institutions such as the APRM are being called upon not simply to respond, but to rise to the scale of this moment with bold, decisive, and transformative action.

The Symposium: Scale and Purpose

With the generous support of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), the Pan-African Youth Union (PYU), Konrad Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS), the Inclusive Society Institute, the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), the Institute of Pan-African Thought and Conversation, South African G20/Youth 20, Afrobarometer, Paramount Media/MTV, the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation, the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie

(OIF), the European Partnership for Democracy, the Ichikowitz Family Foundation, and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Symposium convened more than 700 young participants from across the continent at Africa's legislative seat, the Pan-African Parliament. A further 100,000 virtual attendees engaged via X, YouTube, and Facebook.

The event served as the initial consultation for the Africa Governance Report 2027, to be developed under the theme "Youth in Governance: From Promise to Prosperity."

At the Symposium, young people expressed their grievances with striking honesty, delivered clear demands, and affirmed that the gathering felt like a genuine safe space. Deliberations centred on the African Youth Charter, a continent-wide commitment to the rights, responsibilities, and participation of youth which marks its 20th anniversary in 2026. That occasion calls for more than celebration; it calls for honest reflection.

How many member states have fully ratified the Charter? How many have incorporated its provisions into national law, budget lines, and measurable policy outcomes? The Symposium's deliberations offered few reassuring answers. Across the continent, youth unemployment remains structurally entrenched. Civic space is shrinking. Formal political participation by young people is largely tokenistic celebrated in principle but obstructed in practice.

APRM CEO Ambassador Marie-Antoinette Rose-Quatre described the 5th Symposium not as a milestone to commemorate, but as a mandate to act. She noted that the Symposium also served as a key consultative platform for the Africa Governance Report 2027, a report prepared by the APRM on behalf of the AGA-APSA platform, to be presented to African Union Heads of State and Government in 2027. The voices gathered in Midrand will not be lost; they will form the foundation of that report. For the first time in the AGR's history, youth are not simply subjects of analysis, they are co-authors of the diagnosis.

Waithood and the Anatomy of Disillusionment

Honwana's concept of waithood was not coined to describe a temporary inconvenience. It was coined to describe a structural condition, one in which young Africans are denied the social and economic markers of adulthood not because of personal failure, but because systems are designed, whether by intent or neglect, to exclude them. Fit-for-purpose education. Decent employment. Affordable housing. Political voice. Economic agency. These are not aspirational luxuries; they are the basic infrastructure of full citizenship.

Afrobarometer data from 2024 to 2025 reveal a significant "legitimacy gap" in African governance: youth aged 18 to 35 remain committed to democratic ideals, but are deeply disillusioned by elected governments' failure to deliver economic opportunity and accountable leadership. The same data show that tolerance for military rule has increased, and that young people are increasingly turning to protest rather than formal political participation such as voting.

The 5th APRM Youth Symposium confirmed these findings. Young people stated plainly that government leadership is not listening. They identified ICT skills gaps, unemployment, and systemic marginalisation as the primary drivers of potential social unrest. Pan-African Parliament President Hon. Chief Fortune Charumbira stated that Africa is not sufficiently prepared to convert its demographic advantage into meaningful opportunity. Nearly 60% of the continent's population is under 25, yet economic systems have not evolved to create adequate jobs or pathways for participation.

The result is a powder keg and in many cases, Africa's governance failures are still adding fuel. The Symposium was therefore unambiguous in its call: African governments, policymakers, and development partners must fundamentally reframe how they understand youth unrest. Youth protests across the continent must be seen not as a generational or behavioural problem, but as a visible expression of governance failure.

This reframing is not merely rhetorical, it has profound implications for policy. If youth protest is a governance failure, the response cannot be policing or suppression. It must be structural reform, investment, and the deliberate, accountable redistribution of economic and political power toward the generation that can no longer be kept waiting.

A Generation Designing Its Own Solutions

What distinguished the 5th APRM Youth Symposium from many continental gatherings was not the presence of high-level dignitaries, though there were many. It was the nature of the conversation, uncomfortable, honest, and solution-oriented in ways that defied the usual choreography of institutional events.

Young participants directly confronted the leaderless nature of Gen Z protest movements, acknowledging both their power and their vulnerability to co-optation by elites and military actors. They challenged the tokenism embedded in their own inclusion. Media personality Ms Lerai Rakoditsoe noted pointedly that while young people were present and well-prepared, they were not given adequate space to shape discussions, what she called "youth tokenism": participation that is symbolic rather than substantive.

The youth at the Symposium produced "Now Statements", not wish lists, but action-oriented governance commitments. They demanded an appraisal of the African Youth Charter, proposed that 50% of parliamentary seats be reserved for youth, and called on APRM participating countries to host their own national symposiums on youth and governance. They called for national and continental youth councils with real authority and adequate funding, and argued for evidence-based policy foresight tools accessible enough for policymakers to use. These were not the demands of a generation in despair; they were the blueprints of a generation ready to govern.

From Dialogue to Impactful Delivery: Recommendations for Action

The Symposium produced concrete, cross-cutting recommendations. In the spirit of the youth's own insistence that "accountability must be specific to be real," I present them here for all stakeholders.

For African Union and APRM Member States

Ratify, domesticate, and implement the African Youth Charter without further delay. Political will must match signed commitments, backed by adequate funding for youth development programmes, scholarships for skills development, representation quotas in government and legislatures, and support for youth entrepreneurship.

Establish statutory, formalised youth consultation mechanisms within national governance processes not advisory committees with no mandate, but bodies with real budgets and genuine influence. Link youth participation to measurable governance outcomes, and track, report, and account for progress publicly.

Expand youth access to public procurement, civil service pathways, and economic participation in key sectors including agriculture, mining, and the digital economy. Address the root causes of youth-led protest through structural policy responses not policing and arrests. Unemployment, inequality, and exclusion are governance problems that require governance solutions.

For Development Partners

Fund youth-led governance innovations, not merely youth-focused programmes. There is a meaningful difference between programming for youth and programming with them. Prioritise long-term, multi-year investments in youth economic inclusion, particularly in digital infrastructure, STEM education, technical and vocational training, and entrepreneurship ecosystems.

Provide adequate resources for the APRM's youth engagement process, particularly at the national level, ensuring that the consultation pipeline initiated at the Symposium is sustained and deepened. Support the ratification and domestication of the African Youth Charter across member states through technical assistance and peer learning mechanisms.

For African Youth Themselves

Organise with structure and strategy. The power of Gen Z movements is real, but leaderless uprisings are vulnerable to co-optation. Build coalitions. Develop governance frameworks. Create accountability within your own movements. Do not agonise … organise.

Engage your governments not only in the streets but also in the chambers. Know your Charter. Know your rights. Hold your representatives accountable by name, by record, and by vote. Burning public infrastructure undermines the very livelihoods you are fighting for; demonstrate discipline.

As Mr Emmanuel Muliisa, representative of Uganda's Youth National Governance Council, reminded Symposium participants: the challenge is not merely gaining entry to the room, but refusing to lose your mandate once you are there. Resist co-optation. Do not accept what has been called the "false comfort of Judas", a betrayal of the agenda for a developed and prosperous Africa.

Africa's Now

Ambassador Rose-Quatre closed the Symposium with an African proverb that should resonate with every Pan-African: she urged young people not to burn the village, but to build it, govern it, and transform it. When Africa's youth rise, the entire continent rises with them.

The 5th APRM Youth Symposium was a beginning, not a conclusion. It was the opening consultation of a governance report that will be read by Heads of State. It was a seed planted in the soil of continental accountability. Whether that seed grows depends on what happens next in the member states of the African Union as they work to implement what the Symposium set in motion.

Alcinda Honwana gave us the word "waithood" to name a condition. The task is to end it NOW not in another decade, not after another charter, another symposium, or another report. NOW!!!

AUC CHAIRPERSON MAHMOUD ALI YOUSSOUF UNDERTAKES WORKING VISIT TO APRM AND AUDA-NEPAD

As part of an official mission to the Republic of South Africa, H.E. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), had undertaken a working visit to the shared headquarters of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Continental Secretariat and the African Union Development Agency–NEPAD (AUDA-NEPAD) in Centurion on 30 April 2026.

The visit formed part of a structured programme of institutional engagements focused on strengthening coordination across African Union (AU) organs and advancing the AU reform agenda. During the same visit, the Chairperson's programme also included participation in proceedings at the Pan-African Parliament relating to the election of its Bureau, reflecting broader institutional priorities centred on governance continuity and stability within the AU architecture.

At the Centurion headquarters, the Chairperson was received by H.E. Ambassador Nardos Bekele-Thomas, Chief Executive Officer of AUDA-NEPAD, alongside Dr. McBride Nkhalamba, Acting Director of Governance and Specialised Reporting, and Dr. Rachel Mukamunana, Acting Director for Country Reviews and Assessments, representing H.E. Ambassador Marie-Antoinette Rose-Quatre, Chief Executive Officer of the APRM Continental Secretariat. The presence of senior leadership and staff from both institutions reflected the integrated operational environment and the importance of the engagement within the AU system.

H.E. Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, received by Dr. McBride Nkhalamba and Dr. Rachel Mukamunana

Briefings covered ongoing programmes and institutional mandates. The exchanges moved beyond procedural reporting to include analytical engagement on implementation constraints and areas requiring enhanced alignment across AU organs and agencies.

A substantive component of the visit focused on direct engagement with staff across departments, with particular emphasis on institutional culture as a determinant of performance and delivery capacity. The Chairperson underlined that institutional strength is anchored in human capital, highlighting professionalism, accountability, integrity, and mutual respect as structural enablers of effective governance and institutional credibility. The engagement also addressed the ongoing AU institutional reform agenda, with emphasis on administrative modernisation, reduction of procedural inefficiencies, and strengthening of coherence through all AU structures. The Chairperson stressed the importance of direct staff engagement in identifying operational constraints, including issues related to remuneration frameworks, recruitment and promotion processes.

While acknowledging the complexity of reform within a multilateral institutional environment, the discussions reaffirmed the necessity of sustained efforts toward greater transparency and administrative efficiency across the Union.

A central analytical thread emerging from the interaction was the principle of collective responsibility in institutional performance. Staff were encouraged to approach their responsibilities with discipline, humility, and a shared commitment to organisational objectives, with emphasis on the interdependence between structural reform and behavioural alignment within institutions.

The visit concluded with an expression of appreciation to the leadership and staff of both APRM and AUDA-NEPAD for their continued professionalism and dedication to mandate delivery. The engagement was regarded as substantively significant, reinforcing principles of accessible leadership, institutional coordination, and reform-oriented dialogue within the African Union system, while spotlighting the importance of sustained coherence between reform objectives and day-to-day institutional practice.

Theroshen Naidoo

Editorial Team, APRM Continental Secretariat

05

THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA USHERS IN A NEW NGC LEADERSHIP

Bradley Tjongarero

Chief Policy Analyst, APRM National Secretariat , Namibia

THE 3RD APRM NATIONAL GOVERNING COUNCIL

Windhoek – 20 April 2026 –The President of the Republic of Namibia, H.E. Dr. Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, on 20 April 2026 at State House in Windhoek, officially inaugurated the 3rd National Governing Council (NGC) of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), reaffirming Namibia's commitment to democratic governance, accountability and sustainable development. In her address, President Nandi-Ndaitwah affirmed that "today's inauguration of the Third National Governing Council reaffirms Namibia's commitment to strengthening the governance architecture as outlined in the Sixth National Development Plan (NDP6) and contributing to Africa's Agenda 2063." She emphasised the centrality of good governance to development outcomes, stating: "If your governance is questionable, you will not succeed. Good governance is the backbone of any institution." She further stressed the urgency of addressing youth unemployment through sustained, practical interventions.

Namibia acceded to the APRM in 2017 and has since completed the Targeted Review on Youth Unemployment (2019) and the Country Review Report (2021). Most recently, Namibia presented its First Progress Report on the implementation of the National Programme of Action arising from the Targeted Review on Youth Unemployment to the 35th APR Forum of Heads of State and Government, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in February 2026. These milestones have positioned Namibia as an active contributor to addressing one of Africa's most pressing socio-economic challenges.

The newly inaugurated Council, chaired by Ambassador Wilfried I. Emvula, is mandated to lead Namibia's Second-Generation Country Review Report, oversee the implementation of governance reforms, and strengthen monitoring and reporting on progress — including interventions aimed at tackling youth unemployment. The 3rd APRM National Governing Council comprises the following members: Ambassador Wilfried I. Emvula (Chairperson), Dr Roseta Nawases (Vice Chairperson), Ambassador Elia G. Kaiyamo, Dr Betty K. Schroder, Professor Esau Kaakunga, Ms Naita Hishoono, Ms Rosemary M. Nalisa, Mr Uhuru Dempers, Mr Hakusembe, G. Hakusembe, and Mr Salom N. Hei.

The President reaffirmed Namibia's full commitment to the APRM process and formally declared the 3rd National Governing Council duly inaugurated.

> "GOOD GOVERNANCE IS THE BACKBONE OF ANY INSTITUTION"

Mme Diana Demba-Mutondo

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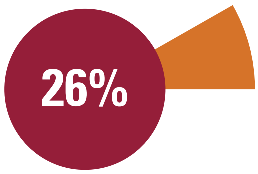
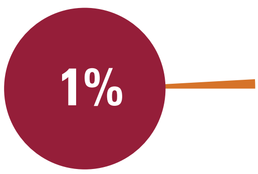
LA FEMME AFRICAINE EN POLITIQUE :
défis persistants et nouvelles opportunités

La femme africaine occupe une place centrale dans la société. Cette réalité, largement documentée par les travaux de recherche, les organisations de la société civile et les institutions internationales, dépasse le cadre du rôle traditionnellement associé à la famille. Les femmes contribuent de manière déterminante à la paix, à la cohésion sociale, à la croissance économique et au développement durable. Pourtant, si cette contribution est largement reconnue, leur représentation dans les sphères de décision politique demeure insuffisante.

Malgré les avancées réalisées au cours des dernières décennies, la participation des femmes à la vie politique reste confrontée à de nombreux obstacles. Selon ONU Femmes, en janvier 2026, seules 28 nations dans le monde étaient dirigées par une femme chef d'État ou de gouvernement, dont quatre pays africains : la République démocratique du Congo, la Namibie, la Tanzanie et la Tunisie. Par ailleurs, le Women's Political Participation Barometer indiquait en 2024 que les femmes ne représentaient que 26 % des sièges parlementaires en Afrique, soit une progression limitée d'un point de pourcentage par rapport à 2021. Ces chiffres témoignent des progrès accomplis, mais également du chemin restant à parcourir pour atteindre une représentation plus équilibrée.



Les femmes occupent seulement 26 % des sièges parlementaires en Afrique,



une progression de seulement 1% par rapport à l'année 2021 Loin de l'objectif d'une représentation équilibré

Les instruments et rapports du MAEP mettent en évidence plusieurs défis structurels qui continuent de freiner l'engagement politique des femmes. Parmi ceux-ci figurent l'accès limité aux ressources financières, les discriminations persistantes ainsi que les violences politiques fondées sur le genre. Avec l'essor du numérique, ces violences prennent désormais de nouvelles formes : harcèlement en ligne, campagnes de désinformation, discours sexistes, intimidations et menaces diffusés sur les réseaux sociaux.

La transformation numérique des processus politiques a également créé de nouvelles exigences. Les campagnes électorales, les débats publics et la mobilisation citoyenne se déroulent de plus en plus sur les plateformes numériques. Dans ce contexte, l'insuffisance des compétences en communication politique, en leadership numérique et en gestion de l'image publique peut constituer un désavantage important pour de nombreuses femmes engagées en politique.

À ces contraintes s'ajoutent des normes socioculturelles et des stéréotypes de genre profondément ancrés. Plusieurs études montrent que les perceptions des électeurs continuent d'être influencées par des représentations traditionnelles des rôles masculins et féminins. Les hommes sont souvent perçus comme plus aptes à gérer les questions économiques ou sécuritaires, tandis que les femmes sont davantage associées aux secteurs sociaux tels que la santé ou l'éducation.

Cette situation nourrit ce que certains chercheurs qualifient de « double contrainte ». Les femmes politiques sont fréquemment confrontées à des attentes contradictoires : lorsqu'elles adoptent des qualités traditionnellement associées au leadership, telles que l'autorité, la fermeté ou l'ambition, elles risquent d'être perçues comme agressives ou autoritaires. À l'inverse, lorsqu'elles privilégient des qualités telles que l'empathie ou la coopération, elles peuvent être jugées insuffisamment compétentes pour assumer de hautes responsabilités. Cette dynamique constitue un obstacle supplémentaire à leur pleine participation à la vie politique.

Face à ces défis, l'éducation et la sensibilisation des populations aux droits des femmes demeurent essentielles. Une meilleure connaissance des mécanismes de protection existants, ainsi que des cadres normatifs régionaux et internationaux, peut contribuer à réduire les discriminations et à favoriser une participation politique plus inclusive.

Dans cette perspective, le MAEP a entrepris diverses initiatives visant à renforcer les capacités des femmes engagées dans les processus de gouvernance, notamment des femmes parlementaires. Ces programmes visent à approfondir leur compréhension des mécanismes de gouvernance et à renforcer leur rôle dans le suivi des politiques publiques et des réformes visant à promouvoir l'égalité entre les sexes.

Toutefois, le renforcement des capacités devrait également intégrer davantage les domaines du marketing politique, de la communication stratégique et de la maîtrise des outils numériques. Ces compétences sont devenues indispensables pour construire une image publique crédible, contrer les stéréotypes, répondre efficacement aux campagnes de désinformation et utiliser les réseaux sociaux comme leviers d'influence et de mobilisation.

À plus long terme, l'élargissement de l'accès des femmes aux infrastructures numériques et aux technologies de l'information constitue une condition essentielle à une participation politique plus équitable. Cela souligne la nécessité d'accélérer l'adoption et la mise en œuvre de cadres de gouvernance numérique inclusifs, capables de protéger les droits des femmes dans l'espace numérique et de lutter contre toutes les formes de discrimination. Une telle démarche s'inscrit pleinement dans les engagements continentaux et internationaux, notamment consacrés par la Convention sur l'élimination de toutes les formes de discrimination à l'égard des femmes (CEDAW) et par le Protocole de Maputo.

Le renforcement de la participation politique des femmes ne relève pas uniquement d'une exigence d'équité. Il constitue également un impératif de bonne gouvernance, de démocratie et de développement durable. Une représentation plus inclusive des femmes au sein des instances de décision demeure l'une des conditions essentielles pour construire des sociétés africaines plus résilientes, plus justes et plus prospères.

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Theroshen Naidoo
Editorial Team, APRM Continental Secretariat

APRM CONTINENTAL SECRETARIAT HOSTS COURTESY VISIT BY DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE AUC, STRENGTHENING ENGAGEMENT ON INSTITUTIONAL COHERENCE

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Continental Secretariat had the honour of receiving Her Excellency Selma Malika Haddadi, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), for a courtesy visit during her official mission to the Republic of South Africa. The engagement provided a timely opportunity to reflect on the APRM's evolving role within the African Union's governance architecture and its contribution to strengthening good governance across AU Member States.

The Deputy Chairperson was received by the APRM Chief Executive Officer, Ambassador Marie-Antoinette Rose-Quatre, together with members of senior management. The visit commenced with introductory exchanges, followed by a comprehensive briefing on the Secretariat's current priorities, programme of work, and emerging areas of engagement — establishing a substantive basis for the deliberations that followed.

In her opening remarks, Ambassador Rose-Quatre observed that the visit comes at a significant moment in the APRM's evolution. She noted that the Mechanism has progressively extended its scope beyond its foundational review mandate and is increasingly engaged in supporting governance processes across APRM Participating States. This growth, she indicated, reflects both the rising demand for the APRM's analytical outputs and its responsiveness to the continent's shifting governance imperatives.

Subsequent discussions focused on the APRM's contribution to governance and institutional resilience. Ambassador Rose-Quatre emphasised the Mechanism's role in producing evidence-based assessments, facilitating structured peer learning, and supporting AU Member States in addressing governance challenges in a constructive and systematic manner. She further highlighted that governance remains a fundamental determinant of peace and stability, noting that deficiencies in governance systems often serve as early indicators of potential instability.

Within this context, particular emphasis was placed on the APRM's role in early warning and conflict prevention. It was noted that the Mechanism's analytical framework enables it to identify structural vulnerabilities within Participating States and generate timely, preventive insights capable of informing both national and continental responses.

In her response, Deputy Chairperson Haddadi commended the Secretariat for the consistency, rigour, and quality of its work. She acknowledged the leadership of the institution and the technical expertise of its staff, noting that the APRM continues to be regarded as a credible and indispensable instrument within the African Union system. She also welcomed the Secretariat's new premises, describing it as a tangible sign of institutional consolidation and sustained growth.

Drawing on her engagements within the African Union Commission, the Deputy Chairperson observed that Member States are demonstrating increasing confidence in the APRM's work — particularly in its capacity to inform governance reforms and national policy processes. She also highlighted continued progress towards universal accession to the Mechanism, noting that broader participation enhances both its legitimacy and the depth of its peer review processes.

Deliberations further addressed the importance of strengthening coherence between the APRM and other African Union organs. Both parties underlined the need to ensure that APRM findings and recommendations are systematically integrated into wider AU processes, particularly in areas relating to governance, peace, and security. Deputy Chairperson Haddadi reaffirmed the Commission's readiness to explore practical modalities of support aimed at enhancing the APRM's operational capacity and institutional impact.

H.E. Selma Malika Haddadi at the Continental Secretariat in Centurion, South Africa

Senior management contributed to the engagement through presentations on key areas of work, including country review processes, thematic governance assessments, and continental dialogue platforms.

These presentations illustrated the breadth and depth of the Secretariat's engagement across Participating States. The exchange reaffirmed a shared understanding that effective governance is a cornerstone of sustainable peace and development, and that accountable leadership and inclusive policy frameworks are indispensable to conflict prevention and long-term stability.

In her closing remarks, Ambassador Rose-Quatre expressed sincere appreciation to the Deputy Chairperson for the visit and the quality of engagement, noting that the discussions had yielded valuable strategic insights to inform the continued strengthening of the APRM's mandate and institutional effectiveness.

The visit concluded with a reaffirmation of the shared commitment between the APRM and the African Union Commission to advance the aspirations of Agenda 2063. Both institutions underscored the importance of sustained collaboration to ensure that governance remains central to the promotion of peace, stability, and sustainable development across Africa.

Q&A with

DR. MISHECK MUTIZE

Expert in sovereign credit ratings, development finance, and African financial governance

Dr. Misheck Mutize

APRM Credit Ratings Expert & 100 Most Influential Africans 2025

To begin, could you briefly introduce yourself and your work in the field of credit ratings and African development?

I joined the APRM in January 2020 to establish the credit ratings program, which has now extended to include debt sustainability and Africa's financial architecture reforms. My research focuses on helping African countries better understand and engage with international credit rating agencies, improve transparency, strengthen governance systems and reduce the cost of borrowing. I am also involved in the development of the African Credit Rating Agency initiative, which seeks to provide fair, credible and context-sensitive assessments of African economies. Ultimately, my passion is about building a self-financing and sustaining African Financial Architecture that is not constrained by distorted perceptions of risk and limited access to affordable finance.

Why are credit rating agencies so important for Africa's development agenda?

Credit rating agencies play a critical role because they influence how global investors perceive the risk of lending to countries. Their assessments directly affect borrowing costs, access to international capital markets, investment inflows, and even exchange rate stability. For Africa, this is extremely important because many countries rely on external financing to fund infrastructure, healthcare, industrialisation, and development programmes. A downgrade can increase debt servicing costs overnight, while a fair and accurate rating can unlock affordable financing for development. In many ways, ratings shape the economic opportunities available to African governments and citizens.

In your view, how do credit ratings intersect with governance and reform on the continent?

Credit ratings and governance are deeply interconnected. Rating agencies closely monitor policy consistency, institutional strength, fiscal discipline, political stability, transparency, and the effectiveness of public institutions. Strong governance builds investor confidence and improves creditworthiness, while weak governance increases perceptions of risk. This means that reforms aimed at improving public financial management, fighting corruption, strengthening institutions, and enhancing accountability are not only governance objectives, they are also economic imperatives that can improve a country's ratings and reduce borrowing costs. In this sense, governance reforms are directly linked to development financing outcomes.

There has been growing debate about the fairness of international credit rating agencies when assessing African economies. What is your perspective?

There are legitimate concerns about the methodologies and assumptions sometimes applied to African countries by international credit rating agencies. We have seen instances where African economies are rated more harshly than peers with similar macroeconomic fundamentals elsewhere in the world. Concerns have also been raised about limited contextual understanding, overreliance on perception-based risks, and procyclical downgrades during crises. This does not mean that all ratings are incorrect, but it does mean there is a need for greater transparency, accountability, and methodological consistency. Africa is not asking for favourable treatment — it is asking for fair, evidence-based, and balanced assessments.

What should be the mindset of African governments and citizens when interpreting ratings from international agencies?

African governments and citizens should view ratings as opinions, not absolute truths. They are important market signals, but they should not define the entire narrative of a country's economic prospects. Governments must engage constructively with rating agencies by improving data quality, transparency, and communication, while also building strong domestic institutions. Citizens should understand that ratings affect the economy in practical ways, including inflation, debt costs, employment, and investment. At the same time, Africa must build confidence in its own institutions and analytical capacity rather than depending entirely on external perspectives.

There is increasing momentum around establishing an African credit rating agency. What is the vision behind this initiative?

The vision behind the African Credit Rating Agency is to create a credible, independent, and globally respected institution that provides balanced assessments of African economies using methodologies that better reflect African realities and development trajectories. The objective is not to replace global agencies, but to diversify voices within the global financial system and reduce information asymmetries that disadvantage Africa. It is also about strengthening African ownership of financial narratives, improving market confidence through better contextual analysis, and contributing to a more equitable international financial architecture.

How would an African-owned credit rating agency benefit governments and citizens?

An African-owned credit rating agency could help reduce unfair risk perceptions that often inflate borrowing costs for African countries. Lower borrowing costs would allow governments to invest more resources into development priorities such as infrastructure, healthcare, education, and industrialisation. It would also strengthen Africa's financial sovereignty by ensuring that assessments are informed by local realities and long-term development potential. For citizens, the benefits could include stronger economic growth, increased investment, more jobs, and improved public services. In addition, the existence of an African agency would encourage greater competition and methodological diversity in the ratings industry.

A critical question remains: do African institutions have the credibility and recognition needed for their ratings to be respected globally?

Yes, African institutions absolutely have the capacity to build globally respected and credible institutions. Credibility is not determined by geography — it is built through professionalism, transparency, strong governance, technical expertise, and independence. Africa already has globally respected institutions in banking, finance, telecommunications, and multilateral governance. An African credit rating agency must therefore adhere to the highest international standards, maintain operational independence, and build trust over time through quality analysis and consistency. Recognition will come through performance and credibility, not merely historical dominance.

Do you believe Africa currently receives fair treatment from global lending and rating institutions?

There are still significant imbalances in the global financial system that affect Africa. African countries often face higher borrowing costs than countries with similar or weaker fundamentals elsewhere. During periods of global uncertainty, African economies are frequently treated as a single high-risk bloc despite their diversity. This contributes to capital flight, elevated risk premiums, and constrained development financing. While reforms are taking place globally, there remains a strong case for improving fairness, representation, transparency, and inclusivity within international financial and rating systems.

If the international community were to resist or reject an African credit rating agency, can Africa still succeed independently?

Africa must move forward with confidence and strategic clarity regardless of external resistance. Every major global institution began by establishing credibility over time. The success of an African credit rating agency will ultimately depend on the quality of its work, institutional independence, and the confidence it builds among investors and stakeholders. Africa has the market size, intellectual capacity, and economic potential to support its own financial institutions. The continent cannot continue to outsource the interpretation of its economic realities indefinitely. Success may take time, but it is achievable with commitment, unity, and technical excellence.

Finally, what message would you like to share with APRM member states as they move from review to reform?

My message to APRM member states is that governance reform is not simply a compliance exercise — it is a pathway to economic transformation and sustainable development. Countries that strengthen institutions, improve transparency, enhance policy consistency, and invest in accountability build stronger economies and attract greater investor confidence. Africa must move from being reactive to becoming proactive in shaping its economic future. The continent has enormous potential, but unlocking it requires bold reforms, regional solidarity, and confidence in African-led solutions. The time for Africa to shape its own financial narrative is now.

Jibril Ibrahim-Kano
e-Governance Lead Expert, APRM Continental Secretariat

THE INTELLIGENCE CURSE: WHY AFRICA MUST GOVERN INTELLIGENCE BEFORE IT GOVERNS US

In my previous article, Innovation Without Governance, I argued that Africa's rush to adopt digital technologies without corresponding governance frameworks risks producing systems that outpace institutional control creating imbalance rather than enabling sustainable progress.

That concern has since evolved into something more structural. The question is no longer whether innovation is moving faster than regulation, but whether intelligence itself is racing ahead of our ability to govern it. Most African countries are beginning to grasp that the challenge is not simply about disruption or iteration cycles, it is about something deeper.

What is increasingly evident across global discourse is that good governance and sustainable development are not achieved through constant disruption or episodic reform, but through the disciplined design of systems that can absorb change, adapt continuously, and turn complexity into value. This distinction is critical for Africa. The urgency is not simply to digitalise, but to ensure that governance evolves in tandem with the technologies that are redefining our economic and political realities.

The New Arena of Global Competition

Global competitiveness is now being contested in the realm of algorithms. Nation states and large corporations alike are doubling down on investments in artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and other frontier technologies. Proposals have emerged for global powers such as the United States and China to cooperate on AI governance, a noble idea in principle, but one that sits uneasily within a fiercely competitive environment where technological leadership translates directly into geopolitical leverage.

For those who believe international collaboration on enforceable AI standards is a non-starter, consider who benefits from inaction. Cyberattacks on government and corporate systems continue to escalate. In the United States, Cambridge Analytica harvested personal data from millions of Facebook profiles to deliver micro-targeted political messages to individuals who would otherwise never have received such direct electoral influence and nothing in existing regulations prevented it. In Africa, similar tactics were deployed during general elections in Nigeria and Kenya. More recently, state actors including Iran and others have used coordinated social media campaigns to push narratives and shift public opinion across multiple countries. This is what emerges in the absence of governance: intelligent systems weaponised at scale.

The Militarisation of Intelligent Technology

The transformation of warfare through autonomous systems further illustrates the stakes of unregulated technological advancement. The future of conflict is being rewritten by off-the-shelf drone technology, now deployed with precision against targets by state and non-state actors alike. Powered by AI-driven command and control systems, drones are giving countries asymmetric ways to project power enabling precise, distributed strikes at a scale previously available only to major military powers.

The growing use of drones for commercial deliveries across Africa pales in comparison to their military application across the continent. Drones are ushering in an era of cheaper, smaller, and less conspicuous warfare conflict that is harder to attribute, harder to contain, and, as it becomes increasingly decentralised, harder to govern.

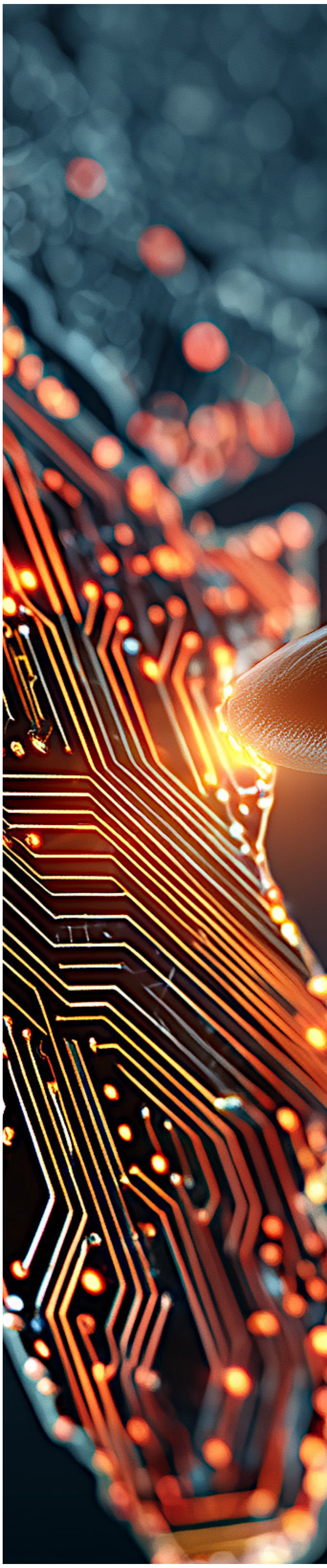
Africa's Structural Vulnerability

For Africa, these developments intersect with a distinct structural reality. The continent is rapidly integrating digital technologies into governance and economic systems, yet much of the infrastructure that processes and stores African data remains located abroad. This creates a condition in which Africa actively participates in the global digital economy while lacking full authority over the systems that underpin it.

Connectivity is expanding, but sovereignty over data and digital infrastructure remains uneven. Governments are embedding technology into everything from land registries to pension systems. The problem is that the technology being adopted is largely owned by companies and governments elsewhere. As African governments and businesses become more connected, they are generating and storing data about their citizens on external platforms and servers.

Compounding this is the growing complexity of the global regulatory environment. Data protection regimes, emerging AI governance frameworks, and proposed international agreements on frontier technologies are evolving rapidly and often reflect priorities shaped outside the African context. The result is a layered compliance landscape in which national legal systems must navigate overlapping and sometimes conflicting standards, making it increasingly difficult to align domestic policy objectives with external regulatory expectations. Whether it is Europe's GDPR, a proposed AI treaty, or a UN framework on emerging technologies, African businesses and governments are rapidly entering a world where compliance with multiple, sometimes irreconcilable, international standards will be the norm.

The pace of technological evolution compounds this challenge further. Artificial intelligence can already make decisions faster than humans can scrutinise them, and its reasoning is



not always transparent or interpretable. Traditional regulatory approaches are struggling to keep up. Governance, in this context, must evolve beyond static rulemaking toward adaptive systems capable of responding to continuous change.

From Strategy to Execution

A hard lesson drawn from years of digital transformation experience is that implementation always wins. The best strategy in the world will go nowhere without the systems to execute it. Fragmented initiatives, centralised decision bottlenecks, and weak institutional coordination can undermine even the most ambitious digital agendas. For Africa, this underscores the importance of moving from isolated digital programmes toward integrated governance systems that align policy, infrastructure, and institutional capacity.

Encouragingly, the continent is not starting from scratch. Continental frameworks on cybersecurity, data governance, and digital trade provide a foundation for coordinated action. The challenge lies in implementation: translating those instruments into enforceable national laws, building regulators with genuine capacity and jurisdiction, and fostering institutions that think holistically about managing these systems.

A truly holistic approach must also address inclusion. Digital transformation that benefits only a few leaves entire segments of the population vulnerable, unable to contribute to or benefit from the economy, and increasingly susceptible to manipulation and control. Access to connectivity, skills development, and safe online environments are not merely good policy choices. They are prerequisites for security and legitimate governance.

Intelligence Without Guardrails

There is a broader lesson that extends beyond Africa. Intelligent systems, whether artificial or human, will do what they are designed to do. They do not inherently pursue what is best for humanity. If we do not build the guardrails that govern intelligence, we should not be surprised when it turns against us. Without those guardrails, technological advancement can amplify risk as readily as it creates opportunity.

It may be easy to conclude that the United States and China will never reach agreement on AI standards. It is far harder to accept the consequences of that inaction, consequences that are already visible in cybersecurity breaches, information manipulation, and the remilitarisation of technology through autonomous systems. The absence of governance is not a neutral condition- it is a catalyst for instability.

Africa's Strategic Imperative

Africa's response must therefore be both strategic and pragmatic. It requires a deliberate shift from policy ambition to institutional execution; from setting targets to building the institutions capable of managing complexity while remaining adaptable to change. By doing so, technology can be harnessed to enhance, rather than erode, our sovereignty.

In practical terms, this means embedding data sovereignty into national laws and procurement frameworks; ensuring that independent regulators have the authority and resources to hold entities accountable; accelerating investment in homegrown digital infrastructure such as regional data centres and public sector cloud platforms; and cultivating widespread expertise in cybersecurity, AI governance, quantum computing, and digital forensics. It also means aligning continental initiatives with national implementation strategies, improving interoperability across systems, and developing cross-border data governance frameworks suited to Africa's realities.

Governments must also recognise that connectivity access, digital literacy with particular emphasis on meaningful digital competency and security by design are essential public services. Without these, digital advancement will continue to leave individuals and their data exposed, both in daily life and online.

International negotiations on AI governance are unlikely to produce binding outcomes any time soon. Africa does not need to wait. There is more than enough that the continent can and should do to build consensus and capability within its own governance structures. The more technology advances, the more direct the relationship between data, intelligence, and sovereignty becomes.

Whoever governs intelligence will shape the future. Africa must ensure it has a seat at that table.

Nonkululeko Masoek

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RETHINKING RESILIENCE: GOVERNANCE, POWER AND AFRICA'S POSITION IN A CHANGING GLOBAL ORDER

Resilience is increasingly understood not simply as the capacity of states to respond to shocks, but as the ability of governance systems to function, adapt, and sustain outcomes under conditions of continuous and compounding stress. Climate variability, conflict, and the long-term effects of global health crises no longer occur as isolated events, they interact across systems, producing overlapping and mutually reinforcing risks that manifest simultaneously across economic, social, and political domains. These dynamics unfold within a broader global context shaped by economic volatility, shifting geopolitical alignments, and evolving trade and financial regimes, all of which influence how risk is generated, transmitted, and distributed across regions.

In this context, the central question is not only the degree of exposure to shocks, but how governance systems shape the path from risk to outcome. The effectiveness of institutions, the coherence of decision-making, and the distribution of authority within states determine whether pressures are absorbed and managed or whether they escalate into crisis. Resilience, therefore, is not an abstract property of systems; it is a function of how governance actually operates under conditions of uncertainty.

This challenge is particularly acute in the African context, where governance systems face a dual set of pressures. Domestically, they must respond to structural vulnerabilities linked to inequality, infrastructure deficits, and rapid demographic change. Externally, they must navigate constraints embedded in global economic and political systems, where asymmetries in power, finance, and trade narrow the range of available policy options. These external dynamics influence not only the distribution of opportunities but also the transmission of risk often amplifying domestic pressures in ways that are difficult to anticipate or control.

Within this environment, resilience depends fundamentally on the quality and organisation of governance. Institutional continuity and coherence allow core state functions to persist even as conditions shift. Decision-making systems must remain functional and aligned so that policy priorities can be translated into action despite political or economic pressures. Governance effectiveness, in this sense, is not defined solely by formal frameworks, but by the capacity of institutions to act consistently and coherently over time.

Equally important is the ability to coordinate across sectors and levels of government. Many of the risks facing states today do not fall neatly within institutional boundaries. Climate impacts, for example, intersect with food systems, infrastructure, migration, and urban development. Health crises have shown how vulnerabilities in one sector can rapidly spill over into broader economic and social disruption. Effective governance therefore requires mechanisms for timely coordination, information sharing, and collective response across institutional domains.

At the core of resilience are several governance foundations that shape how states function under pressure. Institutional continuity provides stability in the face of uncertainty, ensuring that core functions are maintained even as conditions evolve. Bureaucratic integrity and public sector performance enable policy intent to be translated into implementation particularly in contexts where uneven enforcement and informality can undermine effectiveness. Digital and data capability strengthens states' ability to anticipate and respond to risk, supporting timely decision-making and coordination.

Rights-based legitimacy and social cohesion underpin trust between states and societies. Public trust is not only a normative goal; it is a functional requirement for resilience, shaping compliance, cooperation, and citizens' willingness to respond to public policy in times of uncertainty. Foreign policy and strategic positioning extend these dynamics beyond national borders, enabling states to navigate external risks, manage dependencies, and engage with global systems in ways that support domestic stability.

Public communication and civic engagement serve as a critical enabling function across all of these foundations. Governance systems depend not only on generating information and policy decisions, but on whether these are understood, trusted, and acted upon by society. Without effective communication, even well-designed systems may struggle to translate capacity into behavioural response, limiting both anticipatory action and crisis management.

These governance foundations should be understood as interdependent, not isolated. Institutional continuity enables stability, but without bureaucratic integrity it may not translate into effective action. Digital capability can generate timely information, but without trust and legitimacy, that information may not produce the intended response. Foreign policy may open doors for engagement, but without strong domestic systems, those opportunities may not lead to sustained outcomes. Resilience emerges from the alignment and interaction of these elements and not from any single one in isolation.

The importance of these governance conditions becomes clear when we consider how compounding risks translate into real-world disruptions. Climate shocks, economic volatility, health crises, and trade and logistics disruptions do not affect all systems equally - their impact depends on how governance systems process and respond to them. Where institutions are fragmented, coordination limited, and decision-making delayed, risks are more likely to escalate into systemic shocks. In practice, this can manifest as supply chain disruptions, fiscal strain, inflationary pressures, and declining productivity. The vulnerability of global supply chains particularly in maritime transport has demonstrated how external shocks can rapidly flow through to domestic economic outcomes.

These dynamics are further shaped by broader geopolitical and economic trends. While globalisation has created opportunities for growth and integration, it has also produced uneven outcomes across regions. Financial volatility, shifting trade regimes, and evolving climate governance frameworks influence how risks are distributed and managed, often reinforcing existing asymmetries. African states operate within these systems and engaging with them, but not always on equal terms. As a result, resilience is shaped not only by internal capacity, but by the ability to navigate external constraints without reinforcing patterns of dependency.

This is especially evident in the restructuring of global supply chains driven by the energy transition. The growing demand for critical minerals has placed African countries at the centre of emerging global priorities. Yet the distribution of value within these supply chains remains uneven. Without deliberate strategies to strengthen domestic processing, develop local value chains, and coordinate policy responses, participation in these systems may not translate into broader structural transformation. In this context, resilience is deeply tied to economic governance, industrial policy, and the capacity of states to shape the terms of their engagement with global markets.

At the domestic level, resilience is grounded in the systems that sustain economic and social stability. Health systems, infrastructure networks, food systems, and local value chains determine whether shocks are absorbed or amplified. The COVID-19 pandemic illustrated vividly how vulnerabilities in health systems can cascade into broader economic disruption, reversing development gains and exposing deep structural inequalities. Climate risks compound these dynamics further, particularly in coastal and urban areas where infrastructure and economic activity face growing environmental pressures.

Africa's demographic and spatial trends reinforce these challenges. Rapid urbanisation and population growth are reshaping the distribution of risk and opportunity across the continent. Cities are absorbing the majority of future population growth, driving demand for infrastructure, services, and governance capacity. Where these dynamics are well managed, they can support economic productivity and long-term resilience. Where they are not, they risk deepening inequality, social tension, and systemic vulnerability.

Building resilience in this context requires rethinking how governance systems are organised and deployed. Strengthening institutions in principle is necessary but not sufficient. What is needed is greater alignment between early warning systems and decision-making processes, supported by clear institutional triggers and operational protocols. Anticipatory governance depends on the ability to translate risk signals into timely action, ensuring that potential shocks are managed before they escalate. This also requires sustained investment in digital and data systems that enable real-time analysis and coordination, as well as stronger local governance structures that are often the first line of response. Public trust remains central and built through transparent communication and inclusive governance processes that reinforce legitimacy. At the same time, strategic engagement in global systems is essential to manage external exposure and expand policy space.

Resilience, in this sense, is not a fixed condition but a continuous process, shaped by how governance systems respond to evolving pressures over time. It is reflected in the ability of states to maintain economic continuity, protect livelihoods, and sustain public trust under uncertainty. Where governance systems function well, the result is timely decision-making, coordinated action, and institutional credibility. Where they fall short, pressures can deepen into crises and recovery may be uneven and prolonged.

Ultimately, resilience is shaped by the interaction between governance, power, and positioning within the global system. It reflects not only the strength of domestic institutions, but the capacity of states to navigate an increasingly complex and interconnected world. Strengthening resilience therefore requires a balanced approach, one that aligns institutional capability, societal trust, and strategic engagement, enabling states to manage both internal vulnerabilities and external pressures in a coherent and sustained way.

ADDRESSING YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN NAMIBIA

Bradley Tjongarero
Chief Policy Analyst – APRM National Secretariat - Namibia

The 2023 Labour Force Survey conducted by the Namibia Statistics Agency recorded a youth unemployment rate of 44.4% , a figure that underscores the urgency of coordinated action. The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), through its 2021 Targeted Review Report on Youth Unemployment, examined how youth unemployment is understood at a multi-stakeholder level and how it can be effectively addressed in the Namibian context. The report confirms that young people face significant barriers to entering the labour market, and identifies the following as key contributing factors:

- An education system with gaps in access, equity, quality, and efficiency
- A growing mismatch between the skills young people acquire and those the labour market demands
- Corruption and nepotism
- Personal and behavioural barriers specific to youth job seekers

To address these challenges, the APRM Targeted Review Report makes the following recommendations for Namibia:

- Establishing a Youth Programme Coordination and Implementation Unit with appropriate convening power, political authority, and institutional standing
- Reforming the education system
- Strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)
- Introducing legislation on procurement and local content
- Strengthening Agri-based value chains and value addition to create youth employment
- Legislating and establishing a Sovereign Wealth Fund

The proposed Youth Programme Coordination and Implementation Unit would consolidate funding across government Offices, Ministries, and Agencies (OMAs); monitor and evaluate youth employment programmes; and develop a database capturing the composition and specific needs of different youth segments.

The report also calls specifically for free TVET education, targeted tax incentives for internships, and legislation to prioritise youth-owned small and medium enterprises in public procurement. Additional proposals include reviewing the Green Scheme programme, allocating land for youth engaged in small-scale farming, and providing targeted funding to reward and support youth innovators in Agri-based value chains.

NOTABLE PROGRESS

1. National Youth Development Fund (NYDF)

In 2025, Namibia operationalised the pilot phase of the National Youth Development Fund — a 257-million Namibian dollar initiative designed to:

- Promote youth entrepreneurship and innovation
- Reduce youth unemployment by creating sustainable economic opportunities
- Support young people in starting, growing, and scaling businesses
- Enable access to affordable financing and business support services
- Encourage youth participation in priority economic sectors
- Promote inclusive growth, with a particular focus on rural youth, young women, and youth living with disabilities

The Fund is implemented by the Ministry of Finance and Social Grants Management. To ensure reach across all regions, applications and project submissions can be made at the nearest Regional Governor's office, the Development Bank of Namibia (DBN), the Environmental Investment Fund, or Agribank offices.

2. Sovereign Wealth Fund (Welwitschia Fund)

Established in 2020 following recommendations from the Bank of Namibia, the Welwitschia Fund has grown to 450 million Namibian dollars. It serves two core objectives:

- Savings for future generations through an intergenerational account
- Fiscal and reserve stabilisation through a stabilisation account

Seed capital was drawn from the national budget and central bank dividends, with investments placed across a diversified asset base. The Fund is expected to play an important role in building intergenerational equity and supporting long-term national development priorities.

3. Free Tertiary Education

From 2026, tertiary education at all public universities and Technical and Vocational Education Centres will be fully subsidised by the Government, meaning students will no longer pay registration or tuition fees. In June 2025, the Ministry of Education, Innovation, Youth, Sport, Arts and Culture (MEIYSAC) established a task force to develop a roadmap for the phased implementation of this subsidy.

4. Internships

In April 2025, the Ministry of Finance issued a directive requiring all government Offices, Ministries, and Agencies, as well as Regional Councils and Local Authorities, to budget for apprenticeships and internships during the 2025/26 and 2026/27 financial years. The directive mandates each OMA to hire a minimum number of apprentices, interns, and graduate interns at specified monthly stipend amounts, or to reprioritise funds from existing budgets where necessary.

Conclusion

Initiatives such as the fully subsidised Technical and Vocational Education and Training programme and the National Youth Development Fund represent meaningful steps by the Government of the Republic of Namibia toward addressing the foundational challenges identified in the APRM Targeted Review Report on Youth Unemployment. Sustained implementation and accountability will be key to translating these commitments into lasting impact for Namibia's youth.

Amb. Lineekela J. Mboti (left of the front row) leads the APRM in Namibia, serving as the Focal Point and the Chief Executive Officer of the National Secretariat as a representative of the President. Additionally, the National Governance Council (NGC) provides the APRM with policy direction. The NGC is comprised of seven (7) members, including representatives from government, academia and civil society and is led by Amb. Wilfred I. Emvula (middle of the front row) as its Chairperson who oversees the APRM process.

AFRICA AND THE AI ECONOMY: AVOIDING THE SHIFT FROM DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND TO GOVERNANCE BURDEN

The fundamental determinants of wealth creation and long-term economic growth are shifting beneath our feet. Imagine a world where your productivity is determined not by the size of your population, but by your ability to own, control, and profit from digital technologies. Welcome to the age of Artificial Intelligence.

The defining economic paradigm shift of the past decade can be summed up in two words: Artificial Intelligence. Accelerating at an astonishing pace, AI is set to become the defining technology of our lifetime and more fundamentally, it will rewrite the age-old formula linking population, productivity, and prosperity.

Population Was Power .... Until Now

For much of the post-war period, the prevailing view was that population growth drove economic prosperity. More people meant more workers, which meant more output, more consumption, and bigger markets. That assumption is now being turned on its head. The long-standing relationship between population growth and economic growth once debated by economists and demographers from optimistic to pessimistic to nuanced positions is being fundamentally disrupted.

Artificial intelligence is driving that disruption with unprecedented speed. In the age of automation, productivity can increase even as populations decline. Machines are replacing workers at both blue- and white-collar levels, powered by data and machine learning, and productivity gains no longer automatically translate into job creation.

The ageing crisis facing advanced economies may, paradoxically, prove to be their saving grace: technological adoption allows them to substitute capital for labour. Countries that have already exhausted their demographic dividend will face adjustment, but that transition will be far smoother for them than for Africa, which faces the opposite challenge entirely.

Africa's Window Is Closing

Home to over one billion people and the fastest-growing population on the planet, Africa is the newest entrant into the AI age. By 2050, that number is projected to exceed 2.5 billion, with one in three young people in the world expected to be African. Where rising populations once promised Africa a monumental demographic dividend, that window of opportunity is narrowing. Rapid population growth, if not matched by effective policy, could become a structural crisis in the age of automation.

The relationship between population and productivity is being severed by technology.

In the industrial age, Africa's statistics would have been a reliable bet for GDP growth. Armed with technology, automation, and a youthful workforce, Africa would have been unstoppable. Today, that story is far more complicated. Africa can still seize the moment but only if it acts quickly.

As machines assume more economic functions, Africa's young and growing population will face mounting pressure to find productive employment in economies that increasingly do not need human labour. Rather than investing in people and opportunity, many governments may find themselves investing simply to maintain baseline service delivery and social cohesion. If population was once Africa's greatest strength, it risks becoming its greatest weakness.

The Jobs Crisis

The size of Africa's population is already at the centre of policy debates around job creation, migration, and social services across the continent. The workforce will double, but the number of available jobs will not. African governments will face greater pressure than ever before to provide employment, education, healthcare, housing, and digital access to more citizens, all while AI threatens to displace both skilled and manual labour, widening the marginalisation of young Africans and fuelling social tensions.

> The question facing policymakers is no longer "How big is our population?" It is: "What will we do with it?"

Africa will need to create employment for millions of new labour market entrants every year, even as the global economy places less and less value on human labour. Schools, hospitals, universities, housing markets, roads, and digital networks will all struggle to keep pace with demand.

Compounding this is the deepening crisis of youth disconnection. Despite near-universal adoption of mobile internet, more than half of Africa's youth are neither employed nor in education. Millions are digitally connected but not digitally engaged.

As technology advances, that gap will only widen. Rising population pressures combined with youth disconnection threaten to destabilise a continent already grappling with governance deficits.

The Ownership Economy

Underlying the new economy is a fundamental tension. Populations across the world are ageing, with too few workers as birth rates decline and lifespans increase. Where labour shortages were once a constraint on growth, technology is overcoming that constraint. Structural transformation is often easier in countries with shrinking populations and economies that can focus on productivity gains without needing to absorb ever-larger workforces each year. Factories no longer need workers to staff assembly lines and offices no longer need staff to run them. Robots and AI systems now perform both physically demanding and knowledge-intensive tasks.

Africa, by contrast, must continuously integrate more and more people into the labour market or risk instability and unrest. Automation will displace the African worker just as it displaced Americans and Europeans who watched their jobs migrate to China. Africa runs the risk of growing ever more dependent on technologies it neither owns nor fully controls. New technologies present real opportunities for Africa, but only if the continent builds indigenous capabilities at scale, and fast.

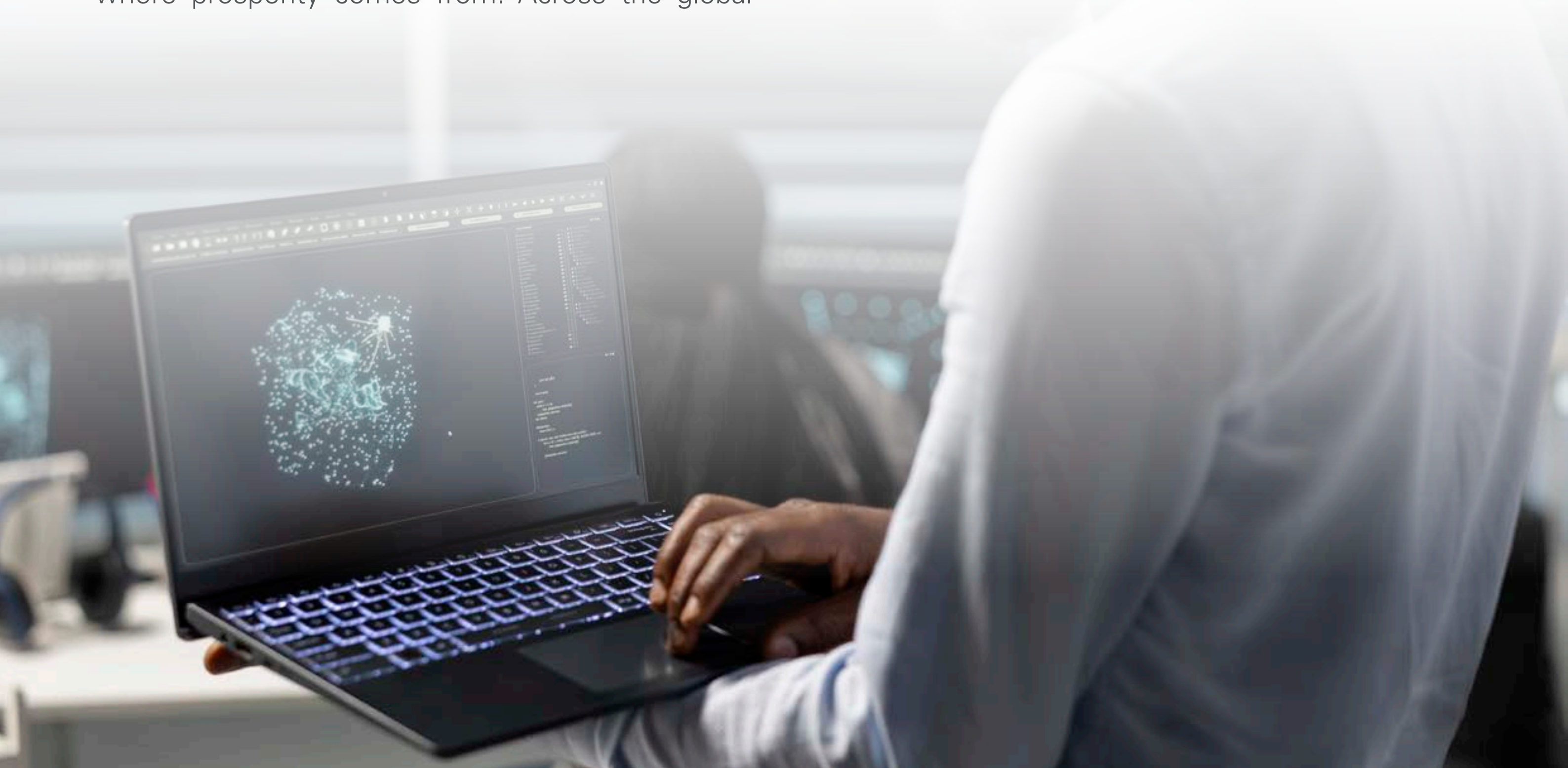
At the heart of this challenge is a profound shift in where prosperity comes from. Across the global economy, more and more wealth is being generated by returns on assets rather than labour. The source of power is shifting from those who work to those who own the means of automation. Ownership not labour is fast becoming the defining determinant of wealth creation. Economic value is increasingly derived from platforms, digital marketplaces, data ecosystems, and capital, not from human effort.

A Structural Contradiction

Africa's new demographic reality is producing a structural contradiction. The continent's youthful population represents tremendous potential but only if that potential can be productively channelled. Africa will need to invest in human capital and education at an unprecedented scale, equipping its people with the skills to thrive in a world where employment may never return to what was once considered normal.

At the same time, the rest of the world is moving away from labour and toward ownership. The global workforce is shrinking because fewer workers are needed to generate economic value. Robots are replacing not just blue-collar workers, but white-collar workers too. The global economy is rewarding capital owners and Africa risks being left out.

As Apple, Google, Meta, Nvidia, and other technology giants consolidate their grip on productivity-enhancing technologies, more wealth will continue to flow to a small handful of countries none of which are in Africa.



Put plainly, technological change is transferring power from labour to capital. This will have profound implications for development, and Africa finds itself at the centre of these dynamics.

AI is already generating wealth at a massive scale, but almost all of the returns are flowing to technology owners. Just as Africans have long provided the labour that powers others' economies, African states must now decide whether they want to own an equitable share of the technology reshaping the global economy. Africa can choose to adapt to the AI economy by consuming technologies that others create. But if Africa chooses to lead, it must strategically commit to becoming a technology owner and manufacturer in its own right.

From Digital Inclusion to Digital Ownership

Creating millions of AI-enabled jobs is not simply a matter of getting more Africans online or delivering more digital services. It requires a fundamental shift from digital inclusion to digital ownership.

As the premier continental governance institution, the APRM is well-positioned to help Africa make that shift. Our work on e-governance is already helping African countries think more strategically about governing the digital economy. Through continuously improving frameworks and capacity-building initiatives, the APRM is committed to helping states accelerate their digital transformation while managing its risks responsibly.

Success in this era will depend less on connectivity than on how African countries govern digital transformation. Infrastructure investment matters, but as experience around the world has shown, infrastructure alone does not guarantee positive development outcomes. What will guarantee positive development outcomes is effective and accountable governance backed by the rule of law. Investment in physical infrastructure must therefore be coupled with investment in institutional capacity.

For Africa to convert its demographic advantage into sustainable prosperity, policy coordination must be organised around six imperatives: building digital capabilities and harnessing the demographic dividend; expanding digital infrastructure; increasing access to capital and asset ownership; improving digital sovereignty and data governance; and strengthening institutional capacity through a robust rule of law.

If we get this right, Africa stands to benefit enormously from its growing population. If we get it wrong, the demographic dividend will become a demographic nightmare. Africans must decide what kind of future they want and act with urgency to make it a reality.

The Choice Before Africa

Speaking at the Forward Africa Leaders Summit in Kigali on 15 May 2025, the CEO of the African Peer Review Mechanism framed the choice facing Africa with striking clarity:

"Africa's greatest asset is its people. But in the age of artificial intelligence, population is no longer power. Power lies in how we build our own technology ecosystem, how we own our own assets, and how we transform our demographic dividend into a digital dividend. Power lies in how we educate our young people, for the jobs of today and the jobs that don't yet exist. If we don't act now, our demographic dividend will become our demographic burden. But should we get this right, should Africans choose to lead, Africa will not just succeed in the age of artificial intelligence. It will define it."

Gospel J. Kazako
Public Information Expert, APRM Continental Secretariat

TRANSLATING GOVERNANCE INSIGHTS INTO TANGIBLE REFORM THROUGH STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Across Africa, translating governance insights into tangible reform increasingly depends on how effectively institutions engage citizens particularly young people within a rapidly evolving digital landscape. The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) has long advanced peer learning and evidence-based governance through its country reviews and policy recommendations. The next frontier is ensuring that these insights are communicated, contested, and co-created in the spaces where citizens already participate online, mobile, and networked.

Youth are central to this shift. As the most connected demographic on the continent, young people shape public discourse, mobilise communities, and influence accountability in real time. With internet penetration across Africa continuing to expand and significantly higher among urban youth digital platforms such as Instagram, X, and LinkedIn have become central spaces for civic engagement and policy dialogue. Aligning with the aspirations of Agenda 2063 and the commitments of the African Youth Charter, there is a clear opportunity to move beyond consultation toward sustained youth participation in policy design, implementation, and oversight, enabled by digital tools.

In this context, communication is not simply dissemination it is a governance function. Translating APRM findings into accessible, multilingual, and locally relevant formats through digital platforms, data visualisations, and interactive content can strengthen public understanding and ownership of reform agendas. When citizens understand policy, they are more likely to engage with it; and when they engage, reforms are more likely to endure. Strategic communication therefore becomes a key bridge between technical assessments and lived realities.

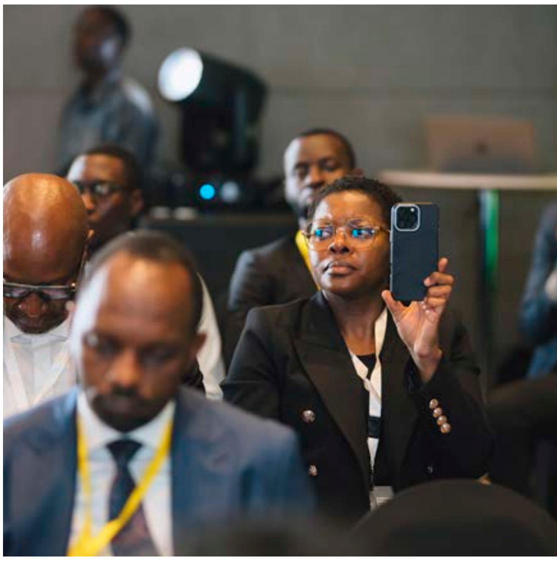
However, the promise of digital engagement must be coupled with thoughtful regulation and purposeful utility. Digital governance frameworks across the continent are evolving to address issues of data protection, platform accountability, and information integrity. Striking the right balance is essential: regulatory frameworks must protect citizens and build trust, while preserving the openness and freedom required for participation, innovation, and civic dialogue. This evolving policy space is increasingly being shaped by innovative organisations such as the Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA), a non-profit based in Kampala, Uganda, that works to promote effective and inclusive ICT policy and practice for improved governance, livelihoods, and human rights across the continent. Leveraging such partnerships will be crucial for advancing conversations on internet freedom as a core component of good governance.

Investment in digital public goods accessible information portals, open data systems, and civic technology platforms can expand access to information, lower barriers to participation, and strengthen transparency in governance processes. These tools not only help citizens understand policy decisions but also create channels for ongoing engagement and feedback between institutions like the APRM and the public. However, these opportunities must be safeguarded. As evidenced by instances of internet shutdowns, restricted access, and the broader erosion of online freedoms in some member states, digital spaces can also become sites of exclusion. This underscores the importance of balanced regulatory approaches that protect rights while preserving openness, ensuring that digital transformation serves as a practical instrument for inclusion rather than a constraint on civic participation.

Within APRM processes, a clear pathway for action exists. Integrating digital governance considerations such as access to information, the inclusivity of digital platforms, and the protection of online civic space into country reviews and National Programmes of Action will strengthen accountability and ensure that governance reforms reflect the realities of an increasingly digital society. Embedding digital engagement mechanisms within APRM processes can also improve feedback loops between institutions and citizens, making governance more responsive and participatory.

Partnerships will be critical in advancing this agenda. Collaboration with institutions such as the South African Institute of International Affairs and initiatives like the AfricaYouth Portal can help amplify youth-led research, foster policy dialogue, and create more structured avenues for engagement between young people and decision-makers. These platforms also play an important role in building the capacity of young people to contribute meaningfully to governance processes, particularly in digital and policy spaces.

Ultimately, delivering governance that works for citizens in the digital age requires more than robust assessments. It demands inclusive engagement, strategic communication, and enabling digital ecosystems that connect policy to people. By centring youth, leveraging digital platforms, and advancing balanced regulatory approaches, the APRM can further strengthen its role in ensuring that peer review processes translate into responsive, accountable, and impactful reform across the continent.



APRM
African Peer Review Mechanism

THIS WEEK @APRM

Weekly Highlights

As part of our ongoing commitment to strengthening internal communication, enhancing visibility, and amplifying the impactful work taking place across the Secretariat, APRM has introduced "This Week @APRM" a weekly bulletin designed to keep colleagues informed, connected, and engaged. The bulletin serves as a dynamic platform for showcasing key activities, milestones, meetings, missions, partnerships, and achievements from across the organisation. By highlighting the breadth and depth of our work, This Week @ APRM aims to foster greater awareness of our collective efforts, celebrate successes, and strengthen collaboration across teams. Through consistent storytelling and knowledge sharing, this initiative contributes to building a more informed Secretariat while ensuring that the important work of APRM continues to be documented, amplified, and communicated effectively. We look forward to using this platform to share the stories, people, and programmes that advance our mandate and bring the APRM vision to life.

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Emmanuel Merissa
Chercheur-coordonnateur de pays
Chargé de communication/Coordonnateur du Réseau des communicateurs du MAEP

LE RÉSEAU DES COMMUNICATEURS DU MAEP : POUR UNE COMMUNICATION PLUS FLUIDE AU SERVICE DE L'AFRIQUE

Créé en 2003 à la faveur de réformes ayant conduit à la transformation de l'Organisation de l'Unité africaine (OUA) en Union africaine (UA), le Mécanisme africain d'évaluation par les pairs (MAEP) a pour mandat de promouvoir la bonne gouvernance sur le continent. Cette mission se traduit notamment par la conduite régulière d'évaluations thématiques ou globales, dites « évaluations de pays ».

Depuis plus de vingt ans, le MAEP a réalisé une trentaine d'évaluations dans plus de la moitié de ses États participants. Ces évaluations ont porté sur des problématiques au cœur des priorités des pouvoirs publics africains, telles que la transformation économique, l'exploitation équitable des ressources minières afin d'assurer une meilleure captation des revenus, le développement du tourisme, ainsi que les causes des divers changements anticonstitutionnels de gouvernement qui, ces dernières années, ont fragilisé la démocratie et les libertés civiles dans plusieurs régions du continent.

Le MAEP constitue aujourd'hui le fer de lance de la promotion de la bonne gouvernance en Afrique et demeure un instrument unique de l'Union africaine, sans pareil dans le reste du monde. Sa capacité à diagnostiquer les défis qui entravent la gouvernance sur le continent, mais également à alerter sur les crises émergentes, est largement saluée par les décideurs politiques africains, les milieux universitaires et de la recherche, la société civile ainsi que les partenaires au développement.

Cependant, malgré la pertinence de son mandat et de ses réalisations, le MAEP a longtemps éprouvé des difficultés à vulgariser efficacement ses activités, ses rapports et ses initiatives afin d'en favoriser une appropriation plus large par les populations africaines. La nécessité d'une communication plus stratégique et plus accessible s'est donc progressivement imposée, afin de rapprocher l'institution de ses différentes parties prenantes, notamment la jeunesse africaine, qui attend de ses dirigeants et des institutions nationales, régionales et continentales des améliorations concrètes de ses conditions de vie. Cette réorientation stratégique a nécessité plusieurs réformes internes visant à instaurer une communication plus dynamique, fluide et transparente. La réorganisation de l'unité chargée de la communication a ainsi permis de mobiliser davantage de ressources humaines et matérielles au service des initiatives du MAEP.

Le lancement du réseau des communicateurs du MAEP.

Par ailleurs, l'adoption du Plan stratégique 2025-2028 a défini une feuille de route claire pour les relations futures entre le MAEP et ses parties prenantes. Le pilier 4 de ce plan, consacré à la communication, au plaidoyer et à la sensibilisation, vise à renforcer le flux d'informations entre le MAEP et le grand public afin de mieux faire connaître les efforts déployés pour l'accomplissement de son mandat. Dans cette dynamique de transformation engagée au cours des deux dernières années, la création du réseau des communicateurs du MAEP constitue une avancée majeure qui consolide l'architecture des structures nationales du MAEP, notamment les secrétariats nationaux et les conseils nationaux de gouvernance.

La composition de ce réseau se veut inclusive et représentative. Il regroupe des professionnels de la communication issus des structures nationales du MAEP et désignés par leurs États respectifs, d'anciens champions régionaux de la communication du MAEP, des professionnels des médias africains ainsi que les membres de l'équipe de communication du Secrétariat continental du MAEP. À la suite des nominations reçues l'année dernière, le réseau a été officiellement lancé lors du cinquième Symposium du MAEP sur la jeunesse, tenu en novembre 2025 à Midrand. À cette occasion, les objectifs du réseau ont été présentés aux participants, avant la tenue d'une réunion de travail consacrée à l'adoption des termes de référence encadrant son fonctionnement.

À l'avenir, le réseau se réunira dans le cadre de son Forum annuel chargé de valider les plans de travail et d'évaluer les activités réalisées. Grâce à ce réseau, le partage de l'information a été institutionnalisé, permettant ainsi une diffusion plus régulière des communiqués de presse relatifs aux ateliers, missions d'évaluation et autres activités du MAEP. Cette dynamique contribue à une meilleure compréhension des réalisations du MAEP en matière de promotion de la bonne gouvernance en Afrique et renforce, par conséquent, le sentiment d'appropriation et de fierté au sein des sociétés africaines.

La communication demeure un puissant vecteur de rapprochement, de confiance et de mobilisation. Aussi noble soit-il, un mandat institutionnel ne saurait, à lui seul, garantir une collaboration durable entre une organisation continentale et les populations qu'elle sert au quotidien. Une communication ciblée, claire et régulière permettra non seulement de susciter un intérêt durable pour les enjeux de gouvernance, mais également de promouvoir les bonnes pratiques des États membres du MAEP dans les domaines de la reddition des comptes, de la croissance économique soutenue, de l'intégration régionale et de la démocratie. Le réseau des communicateurs du MAEP contribuera également à revitaliser le processus du MAEP dans les pays où celui-ci connaît un ralentissement.

Il est parfois reproché à l'Afrique d'adopter une posture passive face aux grands enjeux contemporains. Pourtant, le continent ne manque ni d'idées novatrices ni de volonté politique. Trop souvent, par pudeur ou par lassitude de devoir déconstruire des schémas fondés sur des préjugés persistants, l'Afrique laisse à d'autres le soin de façonner le récit qui la concerne. Ces perceptions biaisées influencent inévitablement les relations du continent avec le reste du monde, mais aussi avec lui-même. Or, le premier acte du rééquilibrage des relations de l'Afrique avec le monde réside dans une introspection lucide et assumée. Mieux se connaître constitue une étape essentielle de la renaissance africaine prônée par les pères fondateurs du MAEP, qui aspiraient à un continent libre, prospère et fier de son identité.

Il est donc temps pour l'Afrique de reprendre pleinement le contrôle de son narratif. Son avenir en dépend. Le philosophe français Michel Foucault écrivait : « L'homme est dominé par le travail, la vie et le langage : son existence concrète trouve en eux ses déterminations ; on ne peut avoir accès à lui qu'au travers de ses mots, de son organisme et des objets qu'il fabrique ». À travers son réseau de communicateurs, le MAEP entend informer ses parties prenantes de manière transparente, régulière et proactive dans le cadre de sa mission visant à contribuer à la réalisation des aspirations des peuples africains, telles qu'énoncées dans l'Agenda 2063 de l'Union africaine. Cette contribution à la construction d'une Afrique forte, responsable et prospère mérite l'encouragement et le soutien de tous.

Les membres du réseau pour adopter les termes de référence qui régissent ses activités

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Dr Vasu Gounden
Founder and Executive Director, ACCORD

WHY GOVERNANCE IS ON A DOWNWARD TREND IN AFRICA AND HOW TO REVERSE IT

Across Africa, the promise of improved governance has long been anchored in continental frameworks designed to promote accountability, policy learning, and self-correction. Foremost among these is the African Peer Review Mechanism, an innovative instrument created to allow African states to assess one another's governance performance in a spirit of Pan-African solidarity. Its founding premise was both bold and necessary: that African leaders could constructively critique one another, learn from shared experience, and raise governance standards across the continent.

Yet, despite important achievements over the past two decades, governance outcomes across several African sub-regions are stagnating or declining. This raises an urgent question: why is governance trending downward, and what must change if peer review is to become real reform that improves the lives of citizens?

The answer lies beyond surface-level diagnosis. Africa's governance challenges are rooted in deep structural weaknesses, intensified by global shocks and complicated by new political, technological, demographic, and security pressures. Reversing the trend requires not only stronger institutions, but also a renewed commitment to African Agency the capacity of African states, regional institutions, and citizens to define, drive, and take ownership of their own governance transformation.

One major driver of decline is the erosion of democratic norms and constitutionalism. Across parts of the continent, democratic backsliding has become increasingly visible through constitutional manipulation, weakened electoral institutions, restrictions on civic space, and contested elections. While elections continue to be held, their credibility is often disputed. When electoral processes are perceived as rituals rather than genuine expressions of popular sovereignty, they deepen public mistrust and undermine the legitimacy of the state.

A second driver is chronic state capacity constraints. Many governments have ambitious policies but lack the institutions, skills, resources, and administrative coherence to implement them effectively. Public institutions are often under-resourced, fragmented, and unable to deliver essential services such as healthcare, education, water, sanitation, and security. The persistent gap between policy promises and citizens' daily realities fuels frustration and erodes confidence in government.

Third, corruption remains a systemic barrier to equitable development. Although many countries have anti-corruption laws, agencies, tribunals, and public accountability frameworks, enforcement is often selective, politicised, or ineffective. Elite networks continue to circumvent accountability mechanisms. Corruption does more than divert public funds it distorts policy priorities, discourages investment, deepens inequality, and alienates citizens from the state.

Africa's governance trajectory is also shaped by external pressures. The return of intense geopolitical competition has made the continent a strategic arena for global powers seeking minerals, markets, military access, and diplomatic influence. This can create opportunities for infrastructure investment, but it also enables some governments to engage in what may be called "governance arbitrage" selectively choosing external partners who prioritise transactional interests over transparency, human rights, and accountability.

Macroeconomic volatility has further weakened governance. The aftershocks of the COVID-19 pandemic, supply chain disruptions, inflation, and rising interest rates have placed many African countries under severe fiscal pressure. Debt servicing now consumes a growing share of public resources, reducing the fiscal space available for social services, institutional reform, and long-term development. Under such conditions, governments often prioritise short-term crisis management over structural governance reform.

Climate change has become another central governance challenge. Droughts, floods, desertification, and resource scarcity are placing enormous strain on already fragile institutions. Where governments lack adequate coordination and resilience, climate shocks can rapidly escalate into food insecurity crises, displacement emergencies, and communal conflicts over land and water.

New governance challenges are also emerging. Digital technology is transforming politics and public administration. It can expand financial inclusion, improve service delivery, reduce bureaucratic inefficiency, and increase transparency. But it can equally be used for surveillance, internet shutdowns, disinformation, and the suppression of dissent. Without clear regulatory frameworks and accountable institutions, digitalisation can entrench authoritarian control as readily as it can deepen democracy.

Insecurity is another growing threat. Violent extremism, insurgency, maritime piracy, organised crime, and cross-border illicit networks are eroding state authority across several regions. In fragile contexts, insecurity disrupts local administration, hollows out the rule of law, and diverts scarce resources from development to military expenditure. Where the state cannot guarantee basic security, governance reform becomes extremely difficult to sustain.

Africa's demographic and urban transitions add further urgency to these challenges. The continent has the world's youngest population and is urbanising at a rapid pace. This creates enormous potential, but also serious risks. Young Africans are increasingly educated, connected, and vocal in demanding accountability, inclusion, employment, and justice. Where political systems fail to include them meaningfully, the result may be alienation, migration, unrest, and deepening distrust of institutions.

It is in this context that African Agency becomes essential. Too often, governance reform in Africa has been shaped by external templates, donor conditionalities, and imported metrics. This has produced what can be described as institutional camouflage: states adopt the appearance of reform without changing the underlying substance. True African Agency requires African societies to define their own governance priorities, grounded in local realities, histories, and aspirations.

For the APRM, this means moving beyond peer review as a performance staged for external partners. It must become an internal compact between the state and its citizens. African Agency also removes the excuse of domestic leadership failure. If Africans claim ownership of the governance agenda, they must equally accept responsibility for its success or failure. This demands domestic resource mobilisation to finance governance institutions and reduce dependence on externally driven agendas.

The APRM has produced valuable country assessments. Its central challenge, however, remains the implementation gap between diagnosis and reform. Closing this gap requires four critical shifts.

First, APRM recommendations must be integrated directly into national development plans, budgets, and medium-term expenditure frameworks not left as optional advisory notes. Parliaments should oversee implementation, and line ministries should be required to report regularly on progress.

Second, the APRM should move closer to citizens through subnational peer review. Governance is experienced most directly at municipal and provincial levels, where services are delivered or fail. Reviewing local government performance would expose corruption, inefficiency, and service delivery failures where they have the greatest impact.

Third, citizen participation must be substantive, not symbolic. Civil society, independent media, youth movements, and community organisations should have protected roles in national APRM structures. Independent civic monitoring can help prevent state-controlled reporting and build a more credible accountability system.

Fourth, the APRM must become more data-driven. Digital tools, citizen-reporting platforms, dashboards, and real-time evidence can transform peer review from a periodic report into a continuous feedback loop between citizens and the state.

Africa's governance decline is serious, but it is not inevitable. The continent already possesses many of the tools required for renewal. What is needed now is political courage, institutional discipline, and uncompromised ownership. By transforming the APRM from a peer review exercise into a genuine catalyst for reform and by placing African citizens at the centre of governance Africa can build states that are more capable, legitimate, resilient, and accountable.

Mr Tseliso Lesenya

Deputy Principal Secretary (DPS) in the Office of the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Lesotho I Served as an expert on unconstitutional changes of government during the African Peer Review MechanismTargeted Review Mission for Lesotho

FROM PEER REVIEWTO REAL REFORM: LESOTHO'S JOURNEY TOWARD STABLE, CITIZEN-CENTRED GOVERNANCE

The African Peer Review Mechanism has evolved into one of Africa's most important instruments for strengthening democracy, accountability, and institutional reform. More than a continental assessment exercise, the APRM represents a platform for transformation. One that encourages African states to confront governance challenges honestly while advancing practical, citizen-centred solutions.

For the Kingdom of Lesotho, the APRM process has provided an opportunity not only to reflect on the country's governance challenges, but also to chart a path toward stronger institutions, constitutionalism, and sustainable development. The 2022 APRM Targeted Review on Unconstitutional Changes of Government acknowledged both Lesotho's governance fragilities and the country's commitment to reform.

The APRM identified several drivers of instability in Lesotho, including weak institutions, unemployment, poverty, coalition fragility, the politicisation of security institutions, and the concentration of executive power. Yet the report also recognised the resilience of the Basotho people and the Government's willingness to pursue reforms through inclusive national dialogue. This demonstrates that the APRM is not merely a peer review exercise; it is about translating assessment into action, and reform into results.

One of the most significant developments has been the advancement of constitutional reforms under the national reform agenda known as "The Lesotho We Want." This process emerged from broad consultations involving government, civil society, political parties, traditional leaders, youth, women, academia, and development partners. It reflects a core APRM principle: that sustainable governance reforms must be locally owned and people-driven.

Among the notable achievements of the Government has been the passing of the Tenth Amendment to the Constitution. This reform seeks to strengthen professionalism, accountability, and stability within the public service and the broader governance system. In practical terms, Principal Secretaries have been redesignated as Permanent Secretaries and are now recruited through the Public Service Commission.

This development directly responds to APRM recommendations calling for a more professional, results-oriented, and people-focused public service. By institutionalising merit-based appointments and reducing the politicisation of public administration, Lesotho is taking meaningful steps toward building state institutions capable of delivering effective services to citizens.

Governance reforms become meaningful only when they improve the lives of ordinary people. The APRM report emphasised that unemployment, poverty, and inequality remain major threats to political stability and democratic consolidation in Lesotho. In recognition of this reality, the Government has intensified programmes aimed at reducing unemployment, empowering youth, and addressing poverty.

The Government has declared a state of emergency on youth unemployment, as well as on drought and hunger. This reflects an important truth: governance cannot be separated from economic opportunity. Citizens are more likely to trust democratic institutions when governance produces jobs, dignity, inclusion, and hope for the future.

The APRM also highlighted the need to strengthen accountability institutions, justice systems, and public confidence in the rule of law. In this regard, efforts to reinforce the courts, oversight bodies, anti-corruption institutions, and the broader justice sector remain essential for sustaining democratic governance.

At the same time, Lesotho faces emerging security and social challenges that require careful and coordinated responses. The report warned of dangers posed by criminal networks associated with illegal mining, commonly referred to as "Zama Zamas," as well as violent gang activity linked to certain factions within the Famo music scene. The Government's efforts to combat criminality, strengthen border cooperation, and address gang violence are therefore important not only for domestic stability but also for preserving strong bilateral relations with South Africa. In this context, certain music groups associated with violence have been banned and declared illegal.

This remains particularly important at a time when parts of South Africa continue to experience growing tensions around migration, unemployment, and frustration directed at foreign nationals. While these tensions are driven by broader socio-economic pressures, they serve as a reminder that Lesotho and South Africa must continue working together carefully, diplomatically, and responsibly to preserve regional solidarity and social cohesion.

Basotho and South Africans share deep historical, economic, cultural, and family ties that must never be undermined by criminality, misinformation, or violence. The fight against illegal mining syndicates and organised crime is therefore both a governance imperative and a regional stability concern.

Encouragingly, Lesotho has continued to strengthen regional cooperation through Bilateral National Commission engagements with South Africa and Botswana. These platforms promote collaboration on governance, trade, security, infrastructure, and institutional coordination. They also reflect the APRM principle that African countries should address governance and security challenges through partnership and dialogue.

Another important development is Lesotho's growing political stability. For the first time since the coalition era began in 2012, the country appears to be approaching a full parliamentary term without a collapse of government. This is a significant milestone for a country that has historically experienced coalition fragility and repeated political disruption. Greater continuity creates space for the implementation of reforms, policy consistency, and the restoration of citizen confidence in democratic institutions.

Equally important is Lesotho's renewed commitment to revitalising its APRM national structures. After periods of limited participation, the country has begun re-energising the APRM process to ensure stronger national ownership, monitoring, and follow-through on governance reforms. This renewed engagement reflects Lesotho's understanding that governance reform is an ongoing process requiring sustained institutional commitment.

The election of former Prime Minister Moeketsi Majoro as an APRM Eminent Person further strengthens Lesotho's contribution to continental governance discourse. His appointment reflects confidence in Lesotho's experience with reform, dialogue, and democratic resilience, while positioning the country to contribute meaningfully to governance conversations across Africa.

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Mr. Germain Tshinu
Country Coordinator, APRM Continental Secretariat

THE CASE OF MOZAMBIQUE UNDER THE APRM: FROM COMMITMENT TO TRANSFORMATION

Since acceding to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) in 2003, Mozambique has demonstrated a sustained, structured commitment to advancing good governance, accountability, and inclusive socio-economic development. As one of the APRM's pioneer participants, Mozambique's experience illustrates the gradual transformation of the Mechanism from a voluntary diagnostic tool into a practical instrument for policy reform and institutional change.

The country's engagement has been iterative and cumulative beginning with its first Country Review in 2008–2009, progressing through successive progress reports, and deepening with the Second Country Review conducted in 2018 and adopted in 2019. These processes enabled Mozambique to critically assess its governance systems, identify structural weaknesses, and develop a National Programme of Action (NPoA) grounded in national priorities.

The APRM process in Mozambique has been notably inclusive, involving government, parliament, civil society, and the private sector, enhancing both legitimacy and accountability. This participatory approach has ensured that reforms are not merely technocratic, but genuinely responsive to citizens' needs. Mozambique's journey demonstrates that peer review, when internalised, can drive systemic transformation rather than remain a compliance exercise. The country's experience offers a compelling example of how governance frameworks can evolve into tangible development outcomes that benefit ordinary citizens.

Anchoring Governance in Standards and Accountability

A central pillar of Mozambique's reform trajectory has been its deliberate alignment with international and continental governance standards. By ratifying key instruments including the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance; the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption; and the United Nations Convention against Corruption, Mozambique has committed to a rules-based governance system anchored in transparency and accountability.

This alignment has translated into concrete legislative and institutional reforms, including the harmonisation of domestic laws with international obligations and the strengthening of oversight institutions. Anti-corruption frameworks have been reinforced through improved legal provisions and clearer institutional mandates, contributing to enhanced scrutiny of public officials and public resources.

The APRM has also encouraged improvements in reporting standards and the adoption of best practices in public administration, with particular impact on public financial management, where accountability mechanisms have been progressively institutionalised. By embedding international standards into domestic systems, Mozambique has demonstrated that peer review can yield sustainable institutional transformation rather than temporary compliance.

Deepening Democracy and Political Governance

Mozambique's democratic consolidation has been significantly shaped by its APRM engagement, particularly in strengthening electoral processes and reinforcing the separation of powers. Since the end of civil conflict and the introduction of multiparty democracy in the early 1990s, the country has consistently held elections at presidential, legislative, provincial, and municipal levels.

Through APRM recommendations, Mozambique has undertaken reforms aimed at improving the credibility and transparency of electoral management bodies, modernising electoral systems, and expanding voter registration all contributing to more inclusive participation. Civil society organisations have been increasingly engaged in electoral observation and civic education, further strengthening democratic accountability.

The APRM has also reinforced the importance of institutional checks and balances, prompting reforms to enhance the capacity and independence of the judiciary and legislature. Parliamentary oversight has been gradually strengthened, enabling more effective scrutiny of executive actions and public expenditure. While challenges remain particularly regarding the full operational independence of institutions the trajectory is one of incremental, measurable progress.

Peacebuilding as a Foundation for Development

Peacebuilding has emerged as a cornerstone of Mozambique's governance reforms, with the APRM playing a supportive role in institutionalising dialogue and reconciliation. The country's history of conflict, resolved through the Rome Peace Agreement of 1992, underscores the centrality of peace to national development.

In recent years, Mozambique has reinforced this commitment through Inclusive National Dialogue processes that bring together political actors, civil society, and religious leaders. These platforms have been formalised through legislative frameworks, ensuring that dialogue is embedded within the governance system rather than conducted on an ad hoc basis.

At the same time, Mozambique continues to face serious security challenges, particularly in Cabo Delgado Province, where violent extremism has disrupted livelihoods and displaced communities. The government's response supported by regional partners has focused on restoring stability and facilitating the return of affected populations. This dual approach, combining security measures with dialogue and development, reflects a comprehensive understanding of peacebuilding. The APRM has reinforced the importance of addressing the root causes of conflict, including socio-economic inequalities and governance deficits.

People wait to cast their votes at a polling station for the general elections, Maputo, Mozambique, October 9, 2024. © 2024 Carlos Equeio/AP Photo

Advancing Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

Mozambique's progress in promoting gender equality illustrates how governance reforms can produce meaningful social outcomes. Under the APRM framework, gender has been treated as a cross-cutting priority, resulting in increased representation of women in political and decision-making positions. Women's participation in parliament and local governance structures has improved significantly, reflecting deliberate policy interventions and legal frameworks that promote inclusivity.

Access to education and technical training for women has also expanded, enabling greater economic participation and empowerment. Programmes aimed at preventing early and forced marriage have been strengthened, and access to reproductive health services has improved with positive implications for maternal health and overall well-being.

These achievements are underpinned by Mozambique's commitment to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which has guided national policies and institutional reforms. The APRM has played a key role in highlighting gender disparities and promoting targeted interventions to address them advancing a more inclusive and equitable model of development.

Reforming Economic Governance and Public Financial Manage

Mozambique's economic governance reforms provide a clear example of how APRM recommendations can drive structural improvements in public financial management. The country has modernised its fiscal systems through the introduction of electronic tax platforms (e-Tax), which have improved revenue collection and reduced opportunities for corruption. The establishment of a Sovereign Wealth Fund represents an important step in managing natural resource revenues more transparently and sustainably, while strengthened public debt management frameworks reflect lessons learned from past fiscal challenges.

Despite external shocks, including climate-related disasters and global economic volatility Mozambique has demonstrated resilience through prudent fiscal and monetary policies. Fiscal decentralisation efforts, including revenue-sharing mechanisms, have further enhanced local governance and accountability. By strengthening public financial management, Mozambique has created a more stable and predictable environment for development.

Improving Corporate Governance and the Business Environment

Mozambique's efforts to improve corporate governance reflect a broader commitment to fostering private sector development. The adoption of International Financial Reporting Standards has enhanced transparency and accountability in financial reporting, increasing investor confidence. Revisions to the Commercial Code and the digitalisation of business registration processes have simplified administrative procedures and reduced barriers to entry.

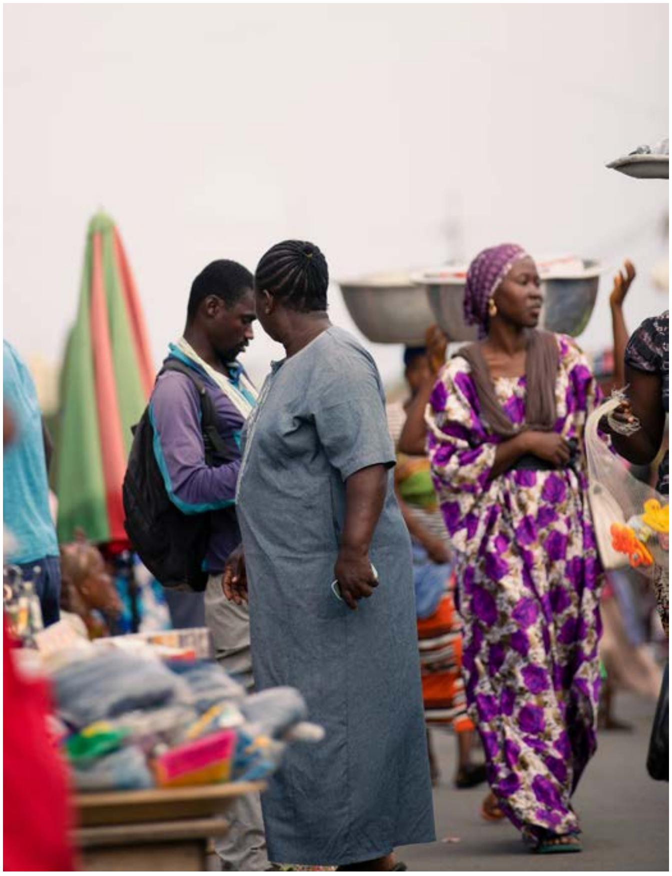
The strengthening of the Competition Regulatory Authority has improved oversight of market practices, promoted fair competition and reducing anti-competitive behaviour particularly important in a developing economy where a dynamic private sector is essential for job creation and innovation. The APRM has helped identify regulatory gaps and promote reforms aligned with international best practices, positioning Mozambique to attract investment and support entrepreneurship.

Delivering Socio-Economic Development for Citizens

The ultimate test of governance reform lies in its impact on citizens, and Mozambique has made notable progress. Social protection programmes have been expanded to support vulnerable populations, contributing to poverty reduction and improved resilience. Investments in health and education have gradually improved human development indicators, and maternal health services have expanded considerably through targeted interventions and increased resource allocation.

One of the most visible achievements is the expansion of electricity access through the "Energy for All" programme, which raised the national electrification rate from 31% to over 60% between 2018 and 2024. This has had transformative effects on rural communities, enabling economic activity and improving quality of life. Youth development has also been prioritised, with policies promoting employment, entrepreneurship, and skills development.

These outcomes demonstrate that governance reforms can translate into tangible improvements in living standards. By focusing on inclusivity and sustainability, Mozambique has made meaningful progress toward both Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals.



Governance that Works for Citizens

Mozambique's experience under the APRM demonstrates that peer review can be a powerful tool for driving meaningful, sustained governance reform. The country has moved beyond mere compliance with recommendations to implementing concrete actions that have strengthened institutions and improved service delivery.

Challenges remain particularly in addressing security threats in Cabo Delgado, managing economic vulnerabilities, and building institutional capacity. Yet the overall trajectory is one of progress and resilience. The APRM has provided a structured framework for identifying challenges, implementing reforms, and monitoring progress over time, while fostering a culture of accountability and continuous improvement within government.

Mozambique's journey affirms that governance is not an abstract concept but a practical reality that shapes citizens' daily lives. By translating peer review into real reform, the country has shown that good governance delivers tangible benefits. As Mozambique continues its reform journey, its experience offers valuable lessons for other African nations seeking to strengthen governance and achieve inclusive development and demonstrates that when peer review is taken seriously, it becomes a genuine driver of transformation.

Mohamed Alpha Koroma
Special Assistant to the Chief Executive Officer, APRM Continental Secritariat

GOVERNANCE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES AFRICA'S SEARCH FOR CHANGE

> Governance in uncertain times is not about surviving crisis- it is about turning uncertainty into opportunity.

Governance in Africa has never been a static notion confined to the pages of a constitution or the proclamations of a few officials. It is a dynamic, lived reality in the marketplaces of Freetown where traders negotiate against the Atlantic breeze; in the classrooms of Accra where children recite lessons with hope in their eyes; in the hospitals of Nairobi where doctors struggle to balance limited resources against overwhelming demand, and in the parliaments of Cape Town where laws are debated with promises of justice but too often diluted by political compromise.

In an era of deepening uncertainty, when crises multiply and shocks cross borders, the question is not whether governance exists but whether it serves. Whether it delivers dignity, justice, and opportunity to citizens. Whether it is resilient enough to weather the storm, and visionary enough to turn uncertainty into a spur for reform rather than a harbinger of failure.

The Weight of Uncertainty

The evidence facing Africa is multilayered and complex. The Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance (2023) documents meaningful progress in human development. Higher literacy levels, road construction, and greater access to healthcare, but the same index reveals alarming declines in rule of law and security, reminding us that progress in one domain does not automatically produce resilience in another. Afrobarometer surveys consistently rank unemployment, corruption, and poor service delivery among citizens' greatest concerns, while World Bank

Governance Indicators point to persistent failures in accountability and corruption control. Notably, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), Africa's homegrown governance tool has highlighted enduring challenges - institutions that appear strong on paper but fail in implementation, policy frameworks that are drafted but never executed, and citizens who are consulted but have little real voice.

Uncertainty has become the defining condition of our time. Volatility in commodity prices destabilises economies dependent on oil in Nigeria, gold in Ghana, and coffee in Ethiopia, leaving governments scrambling to stabilise fiscal balances. In Zambia and Kenya, mounting debt burdens undermine fiscal stability and constrain governments' ability to deliver social services. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the fragility of health systems across South Africa and Senegal, while climate change continues to bring floods to Mozambique, droughts to Kenya, and cyclones to Madagascar, disrupting livelihoods, displacing communities, and forcing governments to adapt rapidly. Conflicts in Sudan, the Sahel, and the DRC are a constant reminder that fragility is never far away, while the rise of social media, cyber threats, and misinformation has transformed citizen participation in governance, sometimes empowering voices, sometimes destabilising societies.

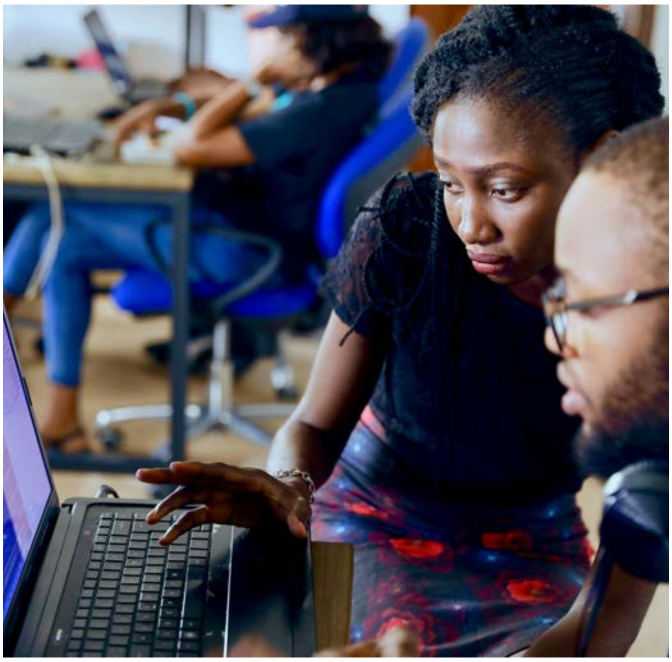
Yet amid this uncertainty, governance stories emerge that reveal both promise and peril. Rwanda demonstrates how public services can be made efficient, the cleanliness of Kigali's streets and the discipline of institutions rebuilt after genocide show that through determination and vision, a country can be transformed. Ghana has been a bright spot for stability in West Africa, with peaceful transfers of power, though corruption scandals and economic pressures continue to test its institutions. Ethiopia's federal experiment highlights great economic success whilst the challenges of managing diversity remains. South Africa, with its proud constitutional heritage, now grapples with continued public service delivery challenges and corruption scandals. Sierra Leone, a country that emerged from an eleven-year civil war has embraced the APRM as an instrument for restoring faith and strengthening institutions yet still wrestles with ensuring that reforms reach the grassroots, where they are needed most.

Reform as Imperative

Resilience requires reform and reform is not a luxury but a necessity. Institutions must be strengthened to withstand shocks and deliver justice impartially. Courts must be independent, free from political interference, and capable of ensuring that no one is above the law. Parliaments must be vigilant, holding executives accountable and ensuring that laws serve citizens rather than narrow interests. Anti-corruption agencies need genuine autonomy the power to investigate and prosecute without fear and without impunity. Institutions cannot exist only on paper; they must function in the real world with transparency, accountability, and fairness.

Citizens should not be passive subjects of governance but active co-authors of it. Governance cannot be a monologue it must be a dialogue. Participatory budgeting in Kenya, community monitoring in Uganda, and civic education in Ghana all illustrate how governance can become a collective enterprise. When citizens monitor progress, demand accountability, and contribute ideas, outcomes improve. The marketplace in Monrovia, the village in Libreville, and the township in Johannesburg must all be spaces where people know that their voices matter.

Technology offers a powerful avenue for change. Digital platforms can open channels of transparency, improve service delivery, and reduce opportunities for corruption and inefficiency. Mobile Apps can enable citizens to track government spending, report poor service delivery, and access public information. But technology is also vulnerable to misuse through misinformation and cyber threats. Digital disruption must therefore be harnessed constructively, not left to destabilise.



Continental integration is equally central to reform. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is more than an economic project it is a governance project. By reducing reliance on volatile commodity markets, generating employment, and strengthening institutions, AfCFTA promotes resilience through integration. It can foster solidarity among African nations, empowering them to address shared challenges collectively rather than in isolation.

Climate change also demands urgent reform. Governance systems must embed adaptation strategies and early warning systems into their planning frameworks. Floods, droughts, and cyclones are not distant or occasional events they are recurring realities. Governments must invest in resilience, protecting vulnerable communities and ensuring that climate shocks do not escalate into governance crises.

Reform as Non-Negotiable

Governance in uncertain times is not about surviving crises it is about turning uncertainty into opportunity. Collapse occurs when institutions fail, when corruption destroys trust, and when citizens lose confidence in those who govern them. Transformation becomes possible when uncertainty is embraced as a catalyst for reform, when resilience is understood as a shared endeavour, and when leaders and ordinary people work together toward a common purpose.

Africa's governance story is one of resilience, reform, and hope. It is written in the determination of young Africans who refuse to accept corruption as inevitable, who demand decent work, justice, and dignity with greater insistence than ever before. It is inscribed in the quiet resolve of elders who remind us that to govern is not to wield power, but to render service. It is expressed in the courage of leaders who are reforming institutions and innovating to meet the demands of our time.

Uncertainty can be the root of failure or the seed of transformation. Africa's path forward is clear, even if the choice is difficult. Reform is not merely desirable; it is urgent, necessary, and non-negotiable. The APRM provides a pathway but pathways must be walked. Citizens are waiting. The time for reform is now.

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THE AFRICAN HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION PLATFORM: A STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY FOR THE AFRICAN PEER REVIEW MECHANISM

Mahé, Seychelles 19th May 2026, the African Union Commission (AUC), through its Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development (HHS), convened a landmark continental meeting in Mahé, Seychelles, from 18th to 21st May 2026, bringing together representatives of the AUC, AU organs and specialized agencies and Regional Economic Communities (RECs).

The meeting took place against the backdrop of a deepening humanitarian crisis across Africa, where over 160 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance and approximately 45 million are forcibly displaced, inclusive of refugees, internally displaced persons and asylum seekers. Driven by conflict, climate shocks, food insecurity, public health emergencies and structural vulnerabilities, the crisis is further compounded by a significant financing gap, with only about 26.7% of required humanitarian funding currently met.

Pursuant to relevant AU policy frameworks, including Assembly/AU/Dec.707(XXXI) and Executive Council Decision EX.CL/Dec.1282(XLVI), as well as the outcomes of the Malabo Extraordinary Humanitarian Summit and Pledging Conference, the meeting focused on operationalizing the African Humanitarian Coordination Platform. The Platform was formally launched as a continental mechanism to strengthen coordination, information-sharing, joint planning, policy harmonisation and accountability among African humanitarian actors.

Participants underscored the urgent need to shift from fragmented responses toward more structured, predictable and action-oriented humanitarian systems. They further emphasised the importance of integrating the Humanitarian-Peace-Development Nexus, strengthening early warning and anticipatory action and advancing resilience-building approaches to address the continent's interconnected crises.

APRM's Strategic Role and Comparative Advantage

The APRM actively contributed to the meeting, supporting the formulation of the draft work plan, finalisation of the Platform's Terms of Reference and the design of operational modalities for implementation. As a specialised AU organ with an expanded mandate to support early warning and conflict prevention, the APRM brings a unique governance perspective to the humanitarian architecture. Its work on the Governance of Resilience and Country Structural Vulnerability and Resilience Assessments (CSVRA) positions it at the critical intersection of governance, risk prevention and resilience-building.

The Seychelles meeting outcomes open several areas of strategic alignment for the APRM within the Humanitarian Coordination Platform:

- **Early warning and anticipatory action:** Integrating APRM governance-based risk analysis into continental early warning systems to strengthen proactive crisis prevention. Through its structural vulnerability assessments and governance diagnostics, the APRM is best placed to identify emerging political, social and institutional risk factors before they escalate into full-scale humanitarian crises, thereby reinforcing anticipatory action frameworks across the continent.
- **Accountability and peer learning:** Leveraging on Mechanisms Peer Review methodologies and monitoring frameworks to enhance mutual accountability and track the implementation of humanitarian commitments. The Mechanisms' established peer review architecture offers a structured platform for mutual learning, follow-up and performance tracking among Member States and regional institutions engaged in humanitarian coordination.
- **Resilience-Building:** Applying a Resilience lens, particularly within its CSVRA tools to support national resilience planning and inform durable solutions for displacement and recurring crises. These tools enable a deeper understanding of systemic vulnerabilities and strengthen evidence-based planning for recovery, adaptation and long-term resilience.
- **Institutional coordination and localisation:** Strengthening collaboration across AU organs, RECs and Member States through tested governance and peer-learning mechanisms. The APRM's cross-sectoral governance mandate and convening capacity can support improved coherence, alignment and coordination among continental and regional actors, whilst reinforcing locally driven approaches to humanitarian response.
- **Humanitarian index development:** Contributing methodological expertise from the African Governance Index and African Governance Atlas to support the design of a transparent, evidence-based Humanitarian Index that captures host country contributions and solidarity efforts. This includes strengthening data credibility, comparability and national ownership in measuring the full spectrum of humanitarian support, including often under-recognised domestic and community-level contributions.

A Partnership for Africa's Humanitarian Future

The Seychelles meeting represents a significant step in advancing African-led humanitarian coordination at a time of unprecedented need and persistent funding gaps. It reflects a collective continental commitment to strengthen coherence, effectiveness and ownership in humanitarian action.

For the APRM, the outcomes present a strategic opportunity to deepen its role within Africa's humanitarian governance ecosystem, translating its mandate on governance, resilience and early warning into practical contributions that enhance preparedness, coordination and long-term recovery.

As Africa moves from policy commitment to implementation, the APRM stands ready to support the operationalisation of the Humanitarian Coordination Platform in line with Agenda 2063 and the vision of a resilient, peaceful and self-reliant continent.

Nonkululeko Masoek
Lead Coordinator for Resilience Governance | Governance and Specialised Reporting | APRM Continental Secretariat

Mr Belete Hiruy Kellil
Project Officer (NORCAP Expert) | Department of Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development | African Union Commission

APRM SETS PRECEDENCE AMONG AFRICAN UNION ORGANS BY OFFERING AI TRAINING TO ALL STAFF

In a decisive move that signals a shift in how African institutions prepare for the digital age, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) has distinguished itself from its peers by announcing that it will offer foundational Artificial Intelligence training to all staff members becoming the first African Union organ to do so. Championed by APRM CEO Ambassador Marie-Antoinette Rose Quatre, this initiative marks a significant step toward embedding digital competence at the heart of governance.

Amid widespread debate about AI's impact on jobs and economies, the APRM has quietly taken a different approach one grounded in purpose and principle. As Ambassador Quatre put it:

> Charity begins at home. We tell our brothers and sisters across Africa to ensure their institutions are ready for AI before making declarations about leading the digital economy. We had to walk the talk and start with getting our own house in order.

From Policy Rhetoric to Institutional Practice

Discussions about digitalisation, data governance, and emerging technologies have featured prominently in African institutional dialogue for some time. However, rhetoric has not always matched ambition. With this latest initiative, the APRM is changing that narrative by rolling out training designed to familiarise all staff members with artificial intelligence.

Notably, the programme is not limited to units or directorates with existing technological expertise it is open to everyone. By building a common baseline of AI knowledge across the institution, the APRM aims to enable richer, more informed conversations about how AI affects governance, accountability, and service delivery. This is what taking concrete steps toward institutional digital transformation looks like in practice.

Preparing the Workforce of the Future

Central to this initiative is a clear vision for what the African Union employee of tomorrow should look like. Under Ambassador Quatre's leadership, the APRM recognises that tomorrow's governance professionals must be digitally literate, agile, and equipped to navigate growing complexity.

This AI training programme is therefore about more than imparting new technical skills. It is about preparing staff to thrive in a rapidly changing world — professionals who understand how algorithms influence decisions, how data shapes policy outcomes, and how digital tools can advance transparency and efficiency in public institutions.

Scaling AI Skills Beyond the APRM Secretariat

Providing AI training to internal staff is an important first step toward building an institution ready for the AI era. But the APRM's ambitions extend further, by making this educational resource available to stakeholders including member states and partners, the organisation has signalled that its vision is continental in scope. Strong digital ecosystems require broad-based capacity, and the APRM intends to help build exactly that.

Showcasing Leadership in Africa's Digital Future

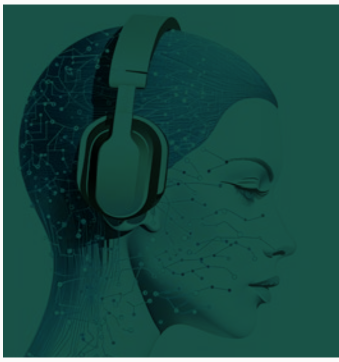
At a time when conversations about AI are dominating global discourse on technology regulation, data privacy, and digital sovereignty, Africa has much at stake. As major tech companies and industrial nations race to develop AI solutions and policy frameworks, African nations risk being recipients of decisions made elsewhere with little regard for their priorities or interests.

The APRM's rollout of an AI training package for staff and stakeholders is a step in the right direction. By equipping itself with digital skills and preparing to scale this effort beyond its own workforce, the APRM is positioning itself and the African Union as a leader at a moment when too many African institutions remain on the sidelines.

Paving the Way for Other African Union Institutions

As the first AU organ to equip staff with AI training and toolkits, the APRM is blazing a trail for what other institutions across the Union can and should do.This initiative demonstrates that preparing for the age of Artificial Intelligence begins with investing in people, institutional culture, and broadly distributed skills.

Under the stewardship of CEO Ambassador Marie-Antoinette Rose Quatre, the APRM is showing what it means to take ownership of Africa's digital future. If one institution can begin at home investing in its people and scaling its approach to include external stakeholders others can too.

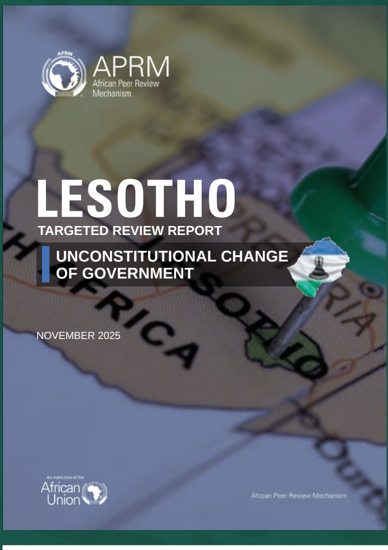


APRM CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

The African Peer Review Mechanism invites all interested parties to apply for its Capacity Building Programmes on Frontier and Emerging Technologies.

To apply, please send email to aitraining@aprm-au.org

FEATURED REPORTS



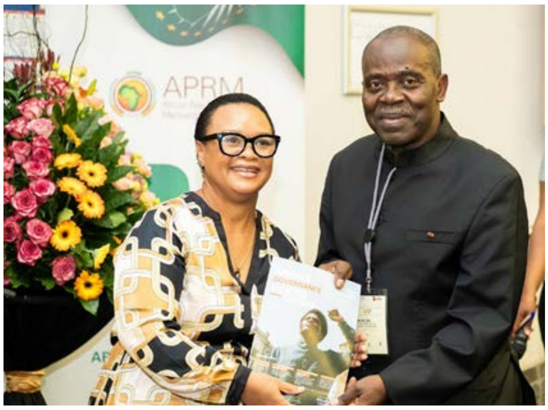
This Targeted Review Report examines the drivers of unconstitutional changes of government in the Kingdom of Lesotho. The Report forms part of a broader study that the African Union's Heads of State and Government, at their 16th Extraordinary Summit held on 28th May 2022 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, directed the APRM to undertake on unconstitutional changes of government in Africa. The Kingdom of Lesotho is one of six countries that were identified to undergo an APRM Targeted Review as case studies on unconstitutional changes of government in Africa, Lesotho being one of the countries that have in the past experienced this phenomenon. The case studies will form part of the next edition of the Africa Governance Report (AGR-2023), which is the African Union's biennial flagship report on the state of governance in Africa.

This report contains the findings of the Targeted Review on Youth Unemployment in Namibia. The Targeted Review, referred to as Voluntary or Special Review, is a short, topicspecific, focused, cost effective report which is consistent with the Six-Point Revitalization Strategy of the APRM. Targeted Reviews usually cover one theme or sector of interest within the spectrum of governance issues in African States. The reviews are therefore seen as a form of focused governance assessment. Although the core APRM Review is conducted in APRM Member States only, the Targeted Review can take place in both APRM and nonAPRM Member States in line with APRM's drive 'Towards Universal Accession'. Namibia became the 36th African Union (AU) Member State to voluntarily accede to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) in January 2017. Following its accession, the country requested a Targeted Peer Review on "Youth Unemployment".

The Africa Governance Report (AGR) is a publication of the African Union (AU) on the state of governance in Africa. The report provides relevant, accurate and informative assessments of selected key governance areas across all 55 member states of the AU based on expert research and analysis. Accordingly, the AGR presents evidence based, objective, and balanced reviews on the state of African governance in contributing to the attainment of long-term political, social, and economic stability and development on the continent. Each report focuses a selected theme and sub themes identified by the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government as strategic priorities of the Union. It enumerates commendable practices in those selected governance themes, identifying challenges and submits recommendations for action by the African Union, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and AU member states.

APRM IN PICTURES 2026

A mid-year reflection on progress, partnerships, and priorities in advancing good governance across the continent.

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AFRICAN PEER REVIEW MECHANISM
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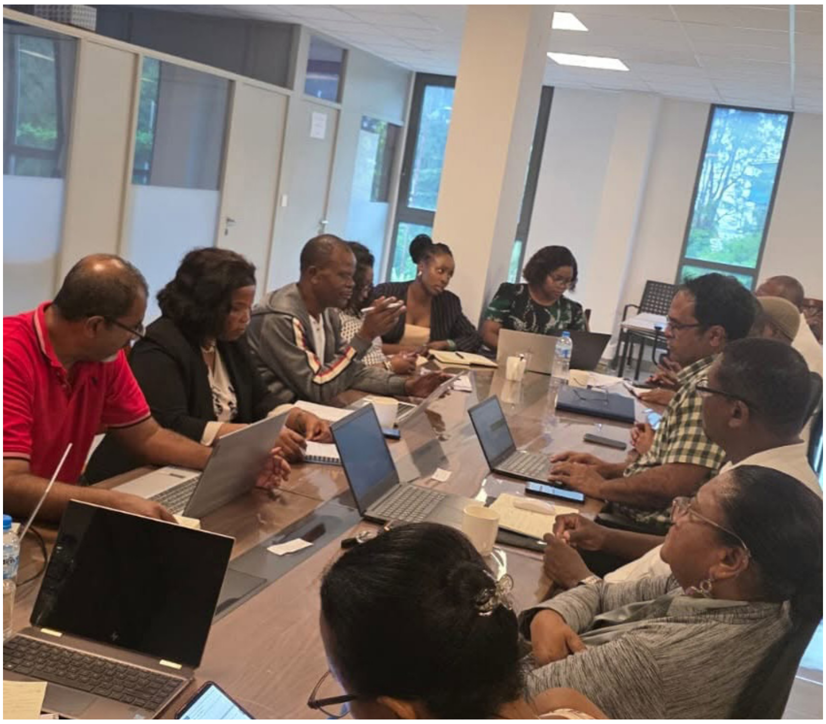
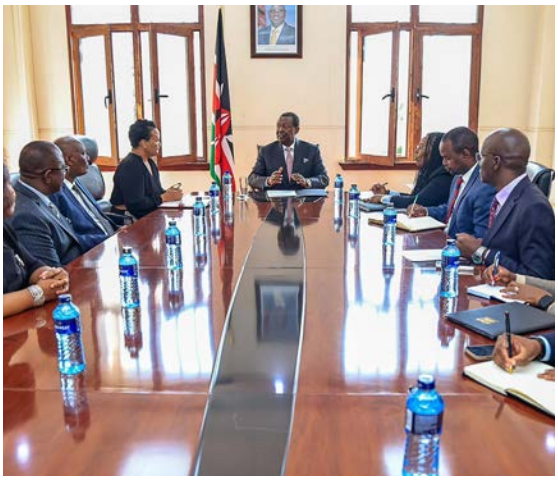
FORWARD
AFRICA
LEADERS
SYMPOSIUM


Promouvoir
et la bonne
en Afrique





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