

**JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ ON THE COUNTRY SUPPORT MISSION OF THE AFRICAN PEER
REVIEW MECHANISM (APRM) IN BENIN
14 - 17 NOVEMBER 2005**

Objectives and Process

The Country Support Mission [CSM] of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) to Benin was held from 14-17 November 2005. The Mission, led by Mrs. Marie-Angélique Savané, Member of the APRM Panel of Eminent Persons also comprised Mr. Gaston Bushayija, Coordinator for Socio-Economic Development at the APR Secretariat; Mr. Sudir Chuckun, Advisor at the APR Secretariat; Mr. Emanuel Nnadozie, Senior Economist and APRM Focal Point at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa [ECA]; Mr. Guy Ranaivomanana, ECA Development Manager; Mr. Michael Mahmoud, Financial Advisor at the African Development Bank [ADB]; and Mr Racine Kane, ADB Economist in charge of Benin. Ms Edith Gasana, United Nations Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in Benin represented the UNDP. The main objective of the CSM was to assist Benin in launching its self-assessment process. The APRM is a self-monitoring mechanism established by African Heads of State and Government in July 2002 to monitor good governance performance in the four following fields: Democracy and Political Governance; Economic Governance and Management; Corporate Governance; and Socio-Economic Development.

The Mission was privileged to be received by His Excellency General Mathieu Kerekou, President of the Republic of Benin, who enquired upon the progress made by the APRM process in Africa in general and especially in Benin. During the meeting the Mission paid tribute to the Government for its commitment in completing the first phase of the APRM process. President Kerekou reiterated his support and personal involvement in the preparation of his country's self-assessment process. The CSM was also received by the President of the Constitutional Court who promised the full collaboration of her institution in ensuring that Benin's self-assessment becomes a model for other countries of the region and even for Africa.

The Mission was also received by His Excellency Mr Rogatien Biaou, Minister of Foreign Affairs and African Integration and APRM National Focal Point of Benin. The Mission held several working sessions with the members of the APRM National Commission and representatives of the civil society and private sector, the Public Services Moral and Ethics Unit, Technical Research Institutions [TRIs] in order to explain the APRM principles, organization and process. The Mission also met with the Diplomatic Corps and representatives of international organizations to explain the objectives and expected outcomes of the APRM process. During these meetings, the CSM called upon all stakeholders toward greater involvement in the APRM process.

The Main Results

The APRM Country Support Mission to Benin achieved the following results: (i) signing of the technical memorandum on the peer review mechanism in Benin; (ii) assessing and strengthening the process and mechanisms set up by Benin to undertake her review exercise so as to prepare her self-assessment report and a preliminary programme of action; (iii) conducting an informative and guiding mini seminar for the National Commission on the APRM process; and (iv) defining the content of the road map in order to accelerate the different activities of the self-assessment process.

The technical memorandum on the peer review mechanism in Benin was signed by Mrs. Savané, Member of the APR Panel, on behalf of the Forum of Heads of State and Government participating in the APRM, and by His Excellency Mr. Rogatien Biaou, Minister of Foreign Affairs and African Integration, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Benin on 14 November 2005, in the presence of the members of the Mission. This MOU spells out among others the scope, objectives, and modalities of the Technical Assessments and the Country Review Visits, as well as the responsibilities of the country, including the logistic support, and the organization of participatory process. More concretely, the Government of Benin undertook to: (i) promote regular contacts and information sharing between national structures and the technical review team in the fields related to the technical review, more specifically, information allowing the review team to be informed on any change likely to influence review results; (ii) Provide the resources necessary to help the technical assessment, including logistics and any other assistance required for the success of the technical assessment mission and the APRM.

During the signing ceremony, Minister Biaou reiterated his country's full determination and commitment to the APRM process as well as his Ministry's availability in his capacity as Focal Point. The Mission welcomed this commitment especially as Benin is the first Francophone country in West Africa to start its self-assessment process. The Minister again stressed on the determination of the Beninese authorities to conduct the country self-assessment in total transparency and with the participation of all components of the society.

Assessment and strengthening of the processes and mechanisms set up by Benin for its self-assessment exercise: The self-assessment exercise should normally be led by an independent National Commission. During various working sessions with the Focal Point and the Members of the National Commission, the CSM underlined the necessity for this Commission to have a membership on an equitable basis and representative of all stakeholders including all the layers of the Beninese society as well as the various geographical regions, so as to ensure a transparent and all-inclusive self-assessment.

After hailing the election of the Commission's Bureau, the CSM explained the APRM process, insisting on the necessity to build up consensus through dialogue. The

delegation paid tribute to Prof. Honorat Aguessi, Chairperson of the National Commission and the other members of the Commission for their patriotic commitment. Mrs. Savané underscored the effective involvement of the Chairperson of the Commission whose leadership is a pre-requisite for the success of the APRM in Benin.

The Bureau of the Commission, on the other hand, undertook to set up as soon as possible a working methodology to conduct the APRM process in conformity with the agreed schedule. The compliance with this schedule would ensure completion of the Country Self-Assessment Report and the draft Programme of Action by 15 February 2006.

The road map outlined, at the end of the CSM, by the National Commission focuses around the following elements: (i) Setting-up of 4 thematic groups of the Commission (Democracy and Political Governance, Economic Governance and Management, Corporate Governance, and Socio-Economic Development); (ii) Identification of the four Technical Research Institutions [TRIs] in order to start, under the supervision of the Commission, workshops and working sessions on the four APRM themes at national level; (iii) Development of the terms of reference for the TRIs; (iv) Preparation of the schedule of activities, comprising sensitization and information seminars and workshops on the self-assessment, as well as proposal of a budget, and presentation of a Country Self-Assessment Report and draft Programme of Action to the APR Secretariat.

During the various consultations, the CSM also noted the commitment and engagement of the private sector and the civil society for the success of the APRM in Benin. These stakeholders were encouraged to better organise themselves in order to choose their representatives in the National Commission and to evolve a strategy to enhance their participation in the self-assessment process.

Acknowledgements and Conclusions

At the end of the CSM, it was convened that the capacities of the Secretariat of the National Commission should be built and reinforced with a view to completing the self-assessment exercise of Benin and preparing the Country Self-Assessment Report and draft Programme of Action within three months taking into account the March 2006 electoral schedules.

The Beninese authorities undertook to achieve a number of actions, including the review of the National Commission membership so as to enhance Government's representation by including Ministers into the Commission and ensure the participation of trade unions, the private sector, the academia and researchers community, women,

youth etc., with the view to strengthening the transparency and quality of the self-assessment process.

The Beninese authorities also committed themselves to work more closely with the APRM Panel of Eminent Persons, through Mrs. Savané, in charge of the Benin Review and the APRM Secretariat, in order to take full advantage of the experiences of other countries which have successfully conducted the same exercise.

A technical follow-up Mission is scheduled in *mid-December 2005*, in order to assist the National Commission and the Technical Research Institutions in defining the self-assessment activities and the organisation process. This will be followed by a Follow-up Mission led by Mme. Savané, Member of the APR Panel in January 2005 to assess progress as agreed in the road map.

The visit of the Country Support Mission to Benin ended on a satisfactory note. The CSM thanked the Beninese authorities for their warm welcome through Mrs. Savané, Team Leader. Mme. Savané also requested the host His Excellency Mr Rogatien Biaou, Minister of Foreign Affairs and African Integration to convey the gratitude of the CSM to President Kerekou and the people of Benin and its hope that this exercise will reinforce the democratic process and contribute to the consolidation of peace and prosperity in Benin.

Cotonou, Benin
17 November 2005

MRS. MARIE ANGELOU SAVANE MEMBER OF APRM PANEL OF EMINENT PERSONS	H.E. MR. ROGATIEN BIAOU MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND AFRICAN INTEGRATION OF BENIN
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