

ADDRESS BY
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GOVERNMENT IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE AND THE AFRICAN PEER REVIEW
MECHANISM [APRM] FORUM at the
3RD Summit of the APRM Forum,
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Excellencies, Heads of State and Government Members of the APRM Forum

Heads of Delegation

Honourable Ministers

Members of the APRM Panel of Eminent Persons

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my privilege and pleasure to welcome you all to Abuja on the occasion of the 3rd Summit of the APRM Forum. It is really good to have you here for this very important and momentous day. Today, without doubt, is a great day for our dear continent. It is momentous because every one of us, in fact the whole world, is waiting anxiously for the APRM Country Review Reports on Ghana and Rwanda.

Today's event represents one of the landmark achievements of the long and sometimes tortuous journey that began on March 2003 here in Abuja, in this very same venue, when 10 pioneer countries, including Ghana and Rwanda voluntarily signed on to the APRM. Many others signed on later and we are now 23 African countries in total adhering to the principles of the APRM. Today, by the Grace of God, our determination and full dedication to re-charting and refocusing the fortunes of our continent and respective nations, we are here to review the reports presented by the APR Panel. No matter what anyone might think or say and no matter what afro-pessimists and professional cynics might proclaim, this is progress and it constitutes a living proof of our determination and commitment to change the status quo for the better.

Many had doubted whether we could go so far with this process while some of our detractors, without sympathy for the difficulties often encountered in starting up such a far-reaching initiative, and the need to get it right and to ensure quality, fairness, credibility and integrity for the process, complained that we were slow. We all know that any new venture needs a reasonable amount of time and space to move from inception to completion.

The APRM process, in many cases, called for the setting up of new national institutions to fully address the type of in-depth and broad-based consultations with all stakeholders which is a prerequisite of the process. Given the novelty and uniqueness of the APRM process compounded with our well known financial and capacity constraints, I must admit that we, as Africans, have done pretty well in taking the bull by the horns and mapping out an alternative mechanism for repositioning Africa for stability, peace, development and democracy. In my view, that it took two years to deliver the first set of results is indeed very commendable.

It would be, thus, very appropriate if I start by congratulating and thanking the Members of the APR Panel and the APR Secretariat for delivering on our commitments and producing these reports under very difficult circumstances. I must also acknowledge the unflinching support, in this process, of our strategic partners namely the African Development Bank, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.

I will not like to revisit the APRM and what it stands for. All of you should be well aware of the special significance of the APR process by now. All of us, individually and collectively, have a responsibility for the renewal and development of our continent. The establishment of the African Union (AU) itself, together with the launch of its socio-economic programme-NEPAD, has presented us with a framework and opportunity for effectively addressing the issues relating to peace and stability, democracy and good governance, and socio-economic development of the African continent.

The APRM is the critical instrument for advancing reforms in governance and socio-economic development and in building capacity to help implement our various recovery and development plans. The APRM, in case anyone is still in doubt, is not an instrument for punishment or exclusion, but rather it is a mechanism to identify our strong points, share experiences, and help rectify our weak areas. Therefore, it is important to always view the APRM within this context as an instrument for monitoring and evaluating the progress that we, as Africans, are making in improving governance and development in our continent. As I have reiterated this many times, I have no doubt that the APRM will enable us to adopt policies and practices that conform to the agreed political, economic and corporate governance values and that it is more about ownership of the process and adapting it to circumstances that are relevant to Africa through identified areas of priority.

It is my firm belief that the APRM is the critical instrument for advancing reforms in governance and socio-economic development and in building capacity to implement these reforms.

Let me make a few remarks on funding for the APRM. We must not allow this splendid initiative to be bedevilled by the failings of the past. Our peoples and indeed the entire world are watching how far and how well we can go as leaders

that have individually and collectively committed to good governance, democracy, social justice, and democratic development. It is therefore imperative that we allocate more financial resources to the APRM to consolidate and take full ownership of the process even if the APRM Trust Fund is functional as reported in our 2nd Summit in Algiers in November last year. It is somewhat disappointing that some of us are not keeping up to our agreements in this respect. I therefore, urge again, all African countries participating in the APRM to give practical demonstration of their commitment to the APRM and to commit to the process substantive amounts, according to their means, as was decided in Algiers.

How do we go forward from here? Today, the APRM Panel will present to us the Country Review Reports of Ghana and Rwanda. We will also allow some time to hear the comments of our brothers from Ghana and Rwanda as well as questions and comments from all of you. We will then give you time to study these reports in your respective countries and at our next Forum, we will be able to undertake the peer review: In other words, Ghana and Rwanda will present to us their own plans for the implementation of their Programmes of Action, their concrete needs and expectations in the political, financial and human resources domains. We also hope to benefit and learn from the current best practices in Ghana and Rwanda as highlighted in the reports. This interaction constitutes the essence of this whole process.

We should remember that the "peer review" is the main responsibility of this Forum through a constant dialogue with the countries under review. The APRM Forum will, therefore, have to play a more prominent role in this aspect and I am confident that we will receive the full support of our brothers from Ghana and Rwanda as well as all the other members of the APRM Forum.

Let me conclude by saying that the task ahead of us might look challenging. We have faced challenges before and this will be no exception and there is no doubt in my mind that the APRM Forum is more than ready to tackle anything and Africa stands ready.

It is now my distinct pleasure to declare the 3rd Summit of the APRM Forum open.

May God continue to bless Africa. I thank you all.