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Examining the relationship between good governance and development: the case of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)

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ABSTRACT

The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) was established on 9 March 2003 by the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee (HSGIC) as an innovative instrument to improve governance in Africa. The APRM is a voluntary mechanism which enables African leaders to periodically monitor and review each other's governance performance thus promoting peer-dialogue and peer-learning. The rationale behind the establishment of the APRM is the realization that socio-economic development and good governance are inextricably linked. Furthermore, for NEPAD to achieve its goal of placing African countries on a path of sustainable growth and development, it is imperative to ensure that an environment of good political and economic governance is created. In 2013, the APRM will mark ten years since its inception. This significant milestone provides scholars interested in governance and development issues on the continent with an opportunity to assess the gains (successes) which have been registered and the weaknesses regarding the implementation of this innovative African initiative. It is against this backdrop that this study undertakes to perform a retrospective analysis of the APRM since its inception in 2003. The study identifies as assesses the achievements and challenges of the APRM over the decade (2003-2013) as well as provides recommendations aimed at overcoming the challenges, strengthening the Mechanism as well as positioning it to effectively and efficiently carry out its mandate. The study establishes that there exists a positive correlation between good governance and development. The study further illustrates that the APRM has achieved much in its relatively short time of existence. Lessons have been learnt. However, as is the case with any new initiative, the Mechanism has experienced some teething problems (challenges) that ought to be addressed if the APRM is to effectively deliver on its mandate and improve the quality of governance across African countries. In essence, the APRM have proven itself to be a tool that holds immense potential for improving governance on the African continent.

Keywords: good governance, peer-review, peer-learning, peer-sharing, socio-economic development