



61st ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES RIGHTS  
Banjul, November 2017

**STATEMENT BY HON MABANDLA  
MEMBER OF THE APR PANEL OF EMINENT PERSONS**

Your Excellency the Chairperson of the Commission, Hon Soyata Maiga,  
Honourable Ministers,  
Heads of Delegation,  
Your Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I am pleased to represent the African Peer Review Mechanism at this 61<sup>st</sup> Ordinary Session, marking the 30th Anniversary of the Commission, and join other participants in thanking the government and people of Gambia for their very warm hospitality, and the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights for continually seeking to strengthen ties between governance and human rights institutions on the Continent.
2. Over the last thirty years, the Commission has been instrumental in promoting and protecting human rights on the continent, and in interpreting the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The APRM also adds its voice in thanking the out-going commissioners and bureau, ably led by Commissioner Tlakula, and sends warm wishes to the incoming bureau.
3. Excellencies, the African Peer Review Mechanism is a specialised agency of the African Union that is constantly advancing the quest for better governance at all levels through multi-stakeholder dialogue and participation. This includes supporting a culture of robust and people-centred stakeholder dialogue and engagement, self-criticism and transparency. The APRM meets citizen aspirations for inclusion and information-sharing, and leads to a better informed and empowered citizenry. The successful APRM Member States have completed inclusive self-assessment processes that allow for vibrant stakeholder engagement, and have ensured a people-driven and result-oriented approaches. They have implemented APRM Programmes of Action emanating from their reviews through harmonisation of these programmes with existing national development plans, in Member States as diverse as Benin, Ghana, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Uganda.
4. In the fourteen years since its formation, the APRM has registered significant progress, with its member states increasing from six at the outset to 36 at present, with Namibia acceding at the 26th APR Forum of Heads of State and Government held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 28 January 2017. Twenty Member States have been reviewed by the APRM governance reviews, with Chad, Djibouti, Senegal and Kenya having completed reviews in January 2017, and Sudan, Liberia, Uganda and Cote d'Ivoire scheduled for review in January 2018.
5. The APRM is at a turning point in its history. In January 2016, the Forum, under the leadership of H.E. President Uhuru Kenyatta, declared 2016 as the year of APRM revitalisation and

appointed the first permanent CEO in over seven years. The Strategic Plan 2016–2020, was developed and adopted by the APR Forum of Heads of State and Government in August 2016. The Strategic Plan is guided by the values and guiding principles of the APRM, while considering the new and emerging realities on the Continent, including AU Shared Values and Agenda 2063, as well as the SDG Agenda 2030.

6. 2017 marks the first full year of Strategic Plan implementation. Revitalisation of the APRM is now well underway, and is founded on a three-pronged programme for restoration, reinvigoration and renewal of this indigenous African program for governance reform.
7. Excellencies, one of the priority areas underlined by the Strategic Plan is enhanced support to AU programs and Africa's regional integration agenda. This includes working closely with the African Union (AU) Commission's Departments for Political Affairs (DPA) and Peace and Security, to initiate policy dialogues and linkages between APRM reviews, the African Governance Architecture (AGA), and the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA). The integration of APRM into the two continental architectures is a key to full utilisation of APRM's strengths in advocating and strengthening human rights and preventing or resolving crises at earlier stages.
8. The APRM presentation that I will deliver on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November 2017 will focus on two of the four APRM Member States peer-reviewed during the January 2017 26th Summit of the APR Forum of Heads of State and Government of Djibouti and Chad. As most of APRM member states are equipped with formal constitutions protecting human rights, the above-mentioned two countries signed and ratified some standards and codes relating to human and peoples' rights.
9. The review reports reveal a wealth of information on human rights and governance processes, based on broad stakeholder engagement and participation, and have unearthed complex issues such as gender inequality and gender-based violence, failure at protecting minorities as well as failure at managing diversity, corruption, youth unemployment, inequitable land use as well as failure to regulate extractive industries. Member States are encouraged to utilize fully the potential of the APRM to bring about better governance and socio-economic transformation.
10. The APRM reviews have opened up space for citizen participation and it is my hope that in partnership with the African Commission and other continental human rights and governance institutions, we can meet the high aspirations of Agenda 2063 by ensuring domestication and adherence to key human rights instruments including the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. Good governance and implementation of progressive socio-economic development plans are imperative to improved quality of life for the peoples of Africa.

**I thank you**