

**BENIN AND THE AFRICAN PEER  
REVIEW MECHANISM: CONSOLIDATING  
DEMOCRATIC ACHIEVEMENTS**  
A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE  
APRM PROCESS IN BENIN

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# Preface

This report is the fourth in a series of studies commissioned by the Africa Governance, Monitoring and Advocacy Project (AfriMAP), to evaluate the African Peer Review Mechanism's (APRM) implementation in participating countries. Similar assessments of the APRM have been published on Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius and Rwanda, with others still underway to examine the process in South Africa, Algeria, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Nigeria and Uganda.

AfriMAP is an initiative of the Open Society Institute's network of African foundations, and was established to monitor the African Union (AU) member states' compliance with the good governance standards adopted by the AU. In the AU's Constitutive Act, African states promise to promote human rights, democratic principles and institutions, public participation and good governance. Other more specific commitments in favor of good governance have been made within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the APRM.

Benin was an early pioneer for good governance, leading the democratisation movement in the early 1990s, and continues to lead the way today as the first French-speaking West African country to complete the critical and rigorous test of the APRM. However, as the APRM report has demonstrated, Benin needs to assess its 18-year-old participatory democracy; its pioneering role does not grant it immunity from criticism. The APRM was specifically conceived to serve as an instrument by which countries can evaluate their progress and identify weaknesses to be corrected in their system of governance. The purpose of this study is to offer a critical analysis of the way Benin has conducted the self-assessment of its governance within the framework of the APRM.

This report was prepared by Gilles Badet, a researcher at the University of Abomey-Calavi specialising in local good governance. The report is based on notes taken at official meetings during the process, discussions with many leaders

and participants, and close personal observations of the APRM process in Benin from its inception in March 2004 until the report was presented to APRM member countries in January 2008. The primary purpose of this report is to examine the extent to which the self-assessment process in Benin has fulfilled the criteria of effectiveness and credibility defined by the founding documents of the APRM, and in particular, the extent to which it has been open, participatory, transparent and responsible. Gilles Badet reviews the problems which confronted the process, including weak public awareness, administrative problems within the institutions responsible for managing the process, and inadequate financial resources. He also emphasises the strong points of the process, the first of which being President Boni Yayi's personal interest in it and his involvement at all stages.

The principal assignment for Beninese leaders and citizens is now to implement the Programme of Action developed at the end of the self-assessment. AfriMAP hopes that this report will serve as a resource for Beninese civil society organisations who wish to monitor the implementation of the Programme of Action and to participate in improving governance in Benin.

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# Summary

Benin signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) committing it to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) on 31 March 2004, following in the footsteps of other African countries. The two-stage APRM process of self-assessment followed by an independent review by the continental APRM Secretariat facilitated an open national dialogue by providing the entire Beninese population with the opportunity to voice their opinions on their country's governance. Benin holds the distinction of being the first French-speaking West African country to submit to and complete both the self-assessment and the APRM independent review. The question raised was whether Benin was up to the task.

The implementation of the APRM in Benin was characterised by a genuine effort to maximise citizen participation in the self-assessment. The Independent National Commission for the Implementation of the APRM (*Commission Nationale Indépendante de Mise en œuvre du MAEP*, CNIM-MAEP), a body of almost one hundred members drawn from public institutions and groups representing all social strata, was created as part of this effort. However, the diversity of the commission's composition was both its strength and its weakness. In fact, the Independent National Commission suffered from significant administrative shortcomings, primarily due to the fact that from the outset its representativeness was championed over its ability to effectively conduct the self-assessment process. Poor financing of the process and problems administering the questionnaire only exacerbated the administrative weaknesses of the CNIM-MAEP.

To a great extent, strong commitment to the APRM from high-ranking Beninese politicians compensated for these administrative weaknesses. Former president Mathieu Kérékou and his successor Boni Yayi expressed clear support for the APRM. President Yayi, in particular, was able to bring together key elements of his government's political resources to support the APRM process. His government has since adopted measures to ensure that the APRM Programme of

Action will be effectively implemented in Benin. One such measure is the creation of a National Governance Commission (*Commission nationale de gouvernance*).

Benin's commitment to the APRM is the logical result of its already well-established commitment to participatory democracy. Benin has been viewed as a model of good governance in West Africa since the Sovereign National Conference of 1990, which successfully ended the authoritarian leadership of Marxist and military regimes and inaugurated a long period of elected government. Multi-party, transparent elections, overseen by a relatively independent institution, have been held periodically over the last 18 years and have resulted in peaceful democratic transitions between governments. Among the main reasons that successive governments have generally respected the constitution of 1990 has been the oversight and guarantees ensured by the Constitutional Court, whose independence is now secured. This institutional progress has paved the way for the recognition of a growing number of economic and social rights. The struggle against corruption is now at the core of the government's programme of action, along with efforts to offer free education and to expand healthcare coverage.

The APRM, conceived as a way to assess the state of society and to create a space for dialogue between citizens and leaders about issues of governance, has the ability to harness national energies to consolidate and build upon Benin's democratic and social achievements. The widespread participation in the implementation of the APRM and the support it received from the government mean that the process can be a tool to improve on the democratic evolution begun in 1990. The Programme of Action developed at the end of the APRM process should be consolidated with other government-established development programmes in order to create a roadmap for citizen participation in defining governance in Benin.

This report offers an independent review of the APRM process as it has taken place in Benin. It presents the most

important stages in the process, from the time Benin signed the APRM MoU on 31 March 2004, until the presentation of the report on Benin to the APR Forum of Heads of State participating in the APRM (the actual 'peer review') on 30 January 2008. The report also considers whether the presentation of the report to the APR Forum was followed by a real debate about governance in Benin, and the conditions under which such debate should be organised. Finally, the report offers recommendations for the implementation phase for the APRM Programme of Action in Benin.

# The New Partnership for Africa's Development and the African Peer Review Mechanism

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is a strategic framework setting out a 'vision for Africa's renewal'. Five heads of state initiated NEPAD – Algeria, Egypt, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa – and its founding document was formally adopted by the 37th summit of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in Lusaka, Zambia, July 2001. NEPAD is now a plan of the African Union (AU), successor to the OAU, though it has its own secretariat based in South Africa to coordinate and implement its programmes. Successive AU summits have proposed the greater integration of this secretariat, and NEPAD in general, into the AU processes and structures.

NEPAD's four primary objectives are to eradicate poverty, promote sustainable growth and development, integrate Africa into the world economy, and accelerate the empowerment of women. It is based on the underlying principles of a commitment to good governance, democracy, human rights and conflict resolution; and the recognition that maintaining these standards is fundamental to the creation of an environment conducive to investment and long-term economic growth. NEPAD seeks to attract increased investment, capital flows and funding, providing an African-owned framework for development as the foundation for partnership at regional and international levels – though some African critics have argued that NEPAD in its present form does not provide an adequate framework for Africa to challenge the hegemonising forces of contemporary globalisation.

A Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee (HSGIC) governs NEPAD. The HSGIC comprises three states

for each region of the African Union, with President Obasanjo (Nigeria) as the first elected chair, and Presidents Bouteflika (Algeria) and Wade (Senegal) as deputy chairmen. Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia is the current chair. The HSGIC reports to the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government. There is also a steering committee, comprising 20 AU member states, to oversee projects and programme development.

In July 2002, the Durban AU summit supplemented NEPAD with a Declaration on Democracy, Political, Economic and Corporate Governance. According to the Declaration, states participating in NEPAD 'believe in just, honest, transparent, accountable and participatory government and probity in public life'. Accordingly, they 'undertake to work with renewed determination to enforce', among other things, the rule of law; the equality of all citizens before the law; individual and collective freedoms; the right to participate in free, credible and democratic political processes; and adherence to the separation of powers, including protection for the independence of the judiciary and the effectiveness of parliaments. The declaration also commits participating states to establish an African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) to promote adherence to and fulfilment of its commitments. The Durban summit adopted a document setting out the stages of peer review and the principles by which the APRM should operate.

In March 2003, the NEPAD HSGIC, meeting in Abuja, Nigeria, adopted a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the APRM. This MoU effectively operates as a treaty. It entered into effect immediately in Abuja, when ten states

agreed to be subject to its terms; as of January 2008, 29 countries had acceded. Those that do not are not subject to review. The March 2003 meeting also adopted a set of objectives, standards, criteria and indicators for the APRM. The meeting agreed to the establishment of a secretariat for the APRM, also based in South Africa, and the appointment of a seven-person 'panel of eminent persons' to oversee the conduct of the APRM process and ensure its integrity.

The APRM Secretariat, functioning by late 2003, developed a questionnaire based on a wide range of African and international human rights treaties and standards to guide participating states' self-assessments of their compliance with the principles of NEPAD. Its questions are grouped under four broad thematic headings: democracy and political governance, economic governance and management, corporate governance, and socio-economic development. The questionnaire was formally adopted in February 2004, in Kigali, Rwanda, by the first meeting of the APR Forum, made up of representatives of the heads of state or government of all states participating in the APRM. At this point, the formal process of peer review was ready to start: the meeting identified the first four countries to undergo review as Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius and Rwanda. Since then six APRM-acceding countries have completed their reviews: Algeria, Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda and South Africa.

Each country to be reviewed is assigned to one of the seven eminent persons, who consider and review reports, and make recommendations to the APR Forum. The first set of seven eminent persons, with the position of chairperson rotating among them, is made up of the following: Marie Angelique Savané (Senegal), Adebayo Adedeji (Nigeria); Bethuel Kiplagat (Kenya); Graça Machel (Mozambique); Mohammed Babes (Algeria, replacing the original Algerian appointee, Mourad Medelci); Dorothy Njeuma (Cameroon); and Chris Stals (South Africa). Some members of the panel are due to be replaced during 2008. At the national level, participating countries establish a National Focal Point and a National Coordinating Committee to drive the review process and liaise with the continental APRM Secretariat.

APRM documents identify five stages in the review process:

### **Stage One: Self-assessment**

A Country Support Mission from the APRM Secretariat, led by the assigned eminent person, visits the participating country to ensure a common understanding of the rules, processes and principles of the APRM. The team liaises with the country focal point and organises working sessions and technical workshops with stakeholders. The eminent person

signs a Memorandum of Understanding with the government on modalities for the Country Review Mission. The country then begins its self-assessment report, based on the APRM questionnaire. The country is also expected to formulate a preliminary plan of action based on existing policies, programmes and projects. The self-assessment is supposed to involve the broad participation of all relevant stakeholders, including civil society organisations as well as government ministries and departments.

### **Stage Two: Country Review Mission**

A country review team – also led by the eminent person and made up of representatives of the APRM Secretariat and of the APRM partner institutions, which include the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Development Bank and other institutions – visits the country to carry out broad consultations, clarify any issues that may require discussion, and help to build national consensus on the way forward.

### **Stage Three: Country review report and modification of plan of action**

The country review team drafts a report on the country, based on the information it has gathered during its review mission and on independent issues papers developed by the continental APRM Secretariat, and shares its findings with the government. Based on the self-assessment report and the country review team's report, the country finalises its plan of action outlining policies and practices for implementation.

### **Stage Four: Conduct of peer review**

In the fourth stage, the country review team's report and the plan of action are presented at the APR Forum by the eminent person and the country's head of state or government for consideration by the other participating heads of state and government.

### **Stage Five: Publication of the report and plan of action**

In the final stage, after the report has been considered by the APR Forum, it is tabled at the AU Summit, before being made public.

# Implementation of the APRM in Benin

## **Benin's adherence to the process and the establishment of an Independent National Commission**

It was the administration of President Mathieu Kérékou, whose two five-year terms ended in 2006, that took the steps for Benin to join the APRM process and established the necessary institutional framework. Benin signed the APRM Memorandum of Understanding on 31 March 2004. After several meetings between the administrative authorities of Benin and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), an agreement for a US \$150 000 financial assistance package to launch the review process was signed on 12 May 2005 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and African Integration and the Resident Representative of the UNDP in Cotonou.

Steps to establish a legal framework and institutions to manage the APRM process then followed. On 1 July 2005, a recruitment notice for a national APRM Coordinator was published in the media. In August and September 2005 the Beninese Minister of Planning and Development and the Minister of Foreign Affairs and African Integration collaborated with the UNDP on the hiring process. Mr Cyprien Gagnon, a jurist and a specialist in programme management in the area of human rights and community development, emerged as the leading candidate and was hired as the National Coordinator of the APRM. He started work on 18 October 2005.

Together with a small APRM group set up by the Beninese government, the National Coordinator held preparatory meetings for putting together a suitable institutional framework. This group prepared a draft decree to create the Independent National Commission for the Implementation of the APRM in Benin (*Commission Nationale Indépendante de Mise en œuvre du MAEP*, CNIM-MAEP), which the

Minister of Foreign Affairs and African Integration (in charge of the National Focal Point for the APRM process in Benin) then submitted to the Council of Ministers for approval. Although the draft decree was only officially approved by the Council of Ministers in March 2006, the implementation of the institutional framework it set out began with the establishment of the Independent National Commission on 11 November 2005.

According to the decree the objectives of the CNIM-MAEP were to provide proper integration of APRM objectives at national level and to promote the adoption of policies, standards and practices intended to improve political, economic and corporate governance in Benin, and to strengthen capacity to ensure policy stability in these areas. Its mission was to lead the Benin review process and to promote cooperation between Benin and leading APRM authorities within the context of the Benin review.<sup>1</sup>

For these purposes, it was charged with:

- defining the methodologies to be used within the framework of the review;
- translating the principles, processes, objectives and work of the APRM into popular language to make them accessible to various actors in the area of development, and to increase national public awareness about the APRM;
- rendering the Memorandum of Understanding and the Declaration on the APRM understandable in everyday language;

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1 Decree No. 038C of 13 March 2006 on the creation, powers, composition and organisation of the National Commission for the Implementation of the APRM (*Décret N°038C du 13 mars 2006 portant Création, attributions, composition et organisation de la Commission Nationale de mise en œuvre du MAEP*).

- overseeing the impression that Benin made at international level through the implementation of the APRM;
- undertaking efforts to strengthen the process of democratic renewal and the consolidation of the rule of law;
- developing projects and programmes to be submitted to the National NEPAD Commission to be adopted and implemented by NEPAD authorities;
- monitoring the implementation of national activities carried out within the framework of the APRM;
- promoting improved integration of national activities within the context of the APRM;
- producing periodic reports about APRM implementation progress;
- ensuring follow-up of the review results and their translation into a coherent and implementable national Programme of Action consistent with the various development programmes already in place in the country, often also prepared in a participatory way.

The CNIM-MAEP is composed of 97 members as follows:

**Public institutions:**

- five representatives of the National Assembly (two deputies from the governing party, two from the opposition and one parliamentary official);
- two representatives of the Economic and Social Council;
- twenty-one representatives of the executive branch of government, including:
  - four from the Presidency of the Republic (two technical advisors of the President of the Republic, one from the Committee on Public Ethics, and one independent person chosen by the Head of State);
  - six directors from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and African Integration, including the minister himself;
  - eight representatives of other ministries;<sup>2</sup>
  - one representative of the Permanent National Commission of French-Speaking Countries (*Commission nationale permanente de la francophonie*);
  - one representative of the National Association of Municipalities of Benin (*Association nationale des communes du Bénin*); and
  - one journalist working for the civil service.

2 The other ministries or sub-ministries involved in this framework which have each appointed a representative include: the Ministry of Planning and Development; the Ministry of Finance and Economy; the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Employment Development; the Ministry of Justice, Legislation and Human Rights; the Ministry for the Public Service, Labour and Administrative Reform; the Ministry of the Environment, Habitat and Urban Planning; the Ministry for the Family, Social Security and Solidarity; and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries.

All together there were thus 28 representatives of state institutions.

For **civil society** there were:

- six representatives of universities and research centres;
- five representatives of private sector media;
- eleven NGO representatives;
- six trade union representatives;
- two representatives of underprivileged persons;
- seven representatives of religious groups and charitable associations;
- five representatives of women’s organisations;
- five representatives of youth associations; and
- seven private sector representatives.

If we add six of the nine designated resource persons for the process (Prof. Albert Tévoédjrè, former international civil servant and former minister; Prof. Honorat Aguessy; Mr Nestor Aho and Mr Yves de Souza, both researchers and academics; Soulé Daouda, a physician and Bertin Borna, an attorney), we reach the number of sixty people from civil society in its widest sense.<sup>3</sup>

Six individuals representing Benin’s **technical and financial partners** (one for UNDP, one for UNESCO, one for the Francophonie, and three for the financial and banking institutions).

If to them we add three of the nine resource persons that could not be grouped with representatives of civil society because they are officials or affiliated with a ministry, we arrive at the nine people that, added to the 88 already listed, bring the total number of members of the Independent National Commission to 97. Of these 97 members, eighteen were women.

It should be noted that aside from the six media representatives, the two representatives of the underprivileged, and three representatives of financial or banking institutions, the decree creating the CNIM-MAEP specifically or expressly appointed the persons or organisations from which they

3 The seven representatives of the private sector are accounted for here, although they are representatives of business. The same situation exists with the six representatives of trade unions who are not always considered members of civil society in the same way as the others. A report of the National APRM Secretariat proposes another classification of members of the Independent National Commission: 27 representatives of the government, if we ignore the unaffiliated individual appointed by the President of the Republic; 13 representatives of the private sector, that is, the seven officials and six other persons working in the business sector, even if such persons are not part of the National Independent Commission for this purpose. So by this other classification there are 57 persons from civil society.

must be chosen, whether they are technical or financial partners, state institutions or civil society organisations.

All of these people were placed according to their expertise among the various structures to ensure the most effective working system.

## Structure of the Independent National Commission (CNIM-MAEP)

### *Executive committee*

All 97 members of the Independent National Commission are under the authority of a four-person executive committee composed of the chairperson, the first vice-chair, the second vice-chair and the rapporteur. The first three of these are elected; while the fourth person, the rapporteur, is National Coordinator Cyprien Gagnon, recruited after a call for candidates.

The decree stipulates that the chair and one of the vice-chairs of the executive committee must come from civil society, while the second vice-chair should be held by a member of parliament (*député*).

The election results granted the chair to Professor Honorat Aguessy, a member of civil society. He is a recognised leader in Benin, both as an academic and as the founder of a pan-African civil society organisation. Professor Aguessy is the chairman of the Institute for Development and Endogenous Exchange (*Institut pour le développement et les échanges endogènes*, IDEE), and is a former international official. Respected by his fellow academics, political actors and civil society, his election was uncontested.

Another individual from civil society, a woman, was elected vice-chair: Mrs Léontine Idohou, a member of the National Coalition of Civil Society Organisations against Corruption (*Front des organisations de la société civile contre la corruption*, FONAC).<sup>4</sup>

### *Technical committees*

Aside from the executive committee, all 97 members of the Commission were divided up into four specialised technical committees according to their skills and qualifications. These specialised technical committees were organised around the themes that were to be the subject of reports, namely:

- Democracy and Political Governance;

- Economic Management and Governance;
- Corporate Governance; and
- Socio-economic Development.

Their role was to define and monitor the implementation of the planned research methodologies as well as any other matter relevant to their respective area of competence within the framework of the review process. This required interaction with technical research institutions.

### *Technical research institutions*

It was clear that technical and fieldwork could not be conducted by the specialised technical committees, but rather should be carried out by technical research institutions (TRIs). These TRIs were charged with collecting and analysing the data collected on the basis of the self-assessment questionnaire, and with contributing to the drafting of the self-assessment report and the programme of action resulting from the self-assessment's recommendations. The TRIs were independent firms or specialists in the area to which they were assigned. Four TRIs were selected by the CNIM-MAEP, following limited consultations, on the basis of their abilities, experience and expertise in the field. They were:

- *Afrique Conseil* (Africa Advice) for democracy and political governance;
- *Centre d'Education à Distance* (Centre for Distance Learning, CED) for economic management;
- *Homo Consultio* for corporate governance; and
- *Geca Prospectives* for socio-economic development.

These TRIs all have extensive consultation and research experience on a range of subject areas (political, economic and social), and in general have demonstrated skills in the field. Their expertise in their assigned areas was not subject to question.

### *National Focal Point*

To ensure that work proceeded well and to monitor ongoing activities without needing to be involved in operational issues, the government identified a National Focal Point to serve as an agency of the Independent National Commission.

This role was assigned to the Department for African Integration in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and African Integration. The appointee had a general supervisory role over the other APRM institutions, and was limited to serving as a facilitator and an interface between the various stakeholders. The appointee was directed not to intervene at all in the process itself so as not to influence or distort the results.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> In fact, she served as the only vice-chair, since the second vice-chair was never appointed, for unexplained administrative reasons.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with the Director of African Integration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and African Integration, Cotonou, 9 October 2007.

According to the decree creating the Commission, the role of the focal point is 'to monitor the review process and Benin's interactions with national organisations, international institutions and development partners on a daily basis'.<sup>6</sup> The role as facilitator thus enabled the focal point to maintain relationships with the various actors involved in the process: the Commission, the government, the technical and financial partners, the APRM Secretariat, and members of the panel of eminent persons.

### *Local focal points*

During the third quarter of 2006, the Independent National Commission established local-level focal points, as one National Focal Point could not independently take on the assigned tasks in all of the 22 central-level ministries, dispersed administrative entities (*administrations déconcentrées* – six departmental prefectures) and decentralised municipal structures (77 communes).

The thirteen *arrondissements* (sub-divisions) of Cotonou, the only commune of the Coastal Department (*Département Littoral*) and Benin's main city, were categorised with the country's other 76 communes.

In all, 116 focal points, (involving 339 people drawn from the public sector, the private sector and civil society) served as liaisons to the Commission in relation to the sector in which their ministry operated or in relation to the geographical area of their commune or department.

### *National Coordinator*

The Office of the National Coordinator of the APRM was the principal operational agency of the Independent National Commission. Under the decree creating the CNIM-MAEP, it was charged with 'the day-to-day management of the review process'.<sup>7</sup> The decree entrusted the Office of the National Coordinator of the APRM with the overall organisation and supervision of the CNIM-MAEP's efforts, as well as the coordination of the work of the specialised technical committees.<sup>8</sup> It also had to ensure that other agencies of the Commission were properly established and run efficiently.

In practice, the National Coordinator was running a UNDP project to assist Benin's government with the APRM process. He headed a small administrative team composed of an accounting secretary and a driver with a state-provided vehicle, all paid by UNDP as part of its 'project to assist good governance and the consolidation of democracy'.

6 Decree of 13 March 2006, Article 14.

7 Decree of 13 March 2006, Article 13.

8 Decree of 13 March 2006, Article 18.

Problems were quickly uncovered within the administrative chain of command in the CNIM-MAEP. The National Coordinator, who served as national executive secretary and rapporteur of the Commission, reported to the UNDP on administrative and financial management. He was concurrently under the supervision of the national APRM Secretariat, based in the Department for African Integration in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and African Integration. This double reporting system invited difficulties in the relations between the National Coordinator and the chairman of the CNIM-MAEP. In fact, it wasn't long before there was friction between the two individuals. After only five months as National Coordinator, Cyprien Gagnon abruptly resigned following conflicts with the chair of the National Commission. He was replaced in April 2006 by Roger Kouessi.

### *Advisory committee*

An advisory committee (*comité consultatif*) was also created to assist the executive committee of the National Commission. Its purpose was to ensure that all directives and decisions originating from the executive committee were properly executed. It was composed of the executive committee members, the chairs of the specialised technical committees, the National Focal Point and the National Coordinator.

## **APRM Secretariat Country Support Mission**

The entire APRM process in Benin really got under way with the Country Support Mission of 14–17 November 2005, led by Mrs Marie Angélique Savané, the member of the panel of eminent persons assigned to be in charge of the process in Benin. The mission, whose main objective was to launch the process of self-assessment in Benin, consisted of seven other people as well as Mrs Savané: one representative of the UNDP (Mrs Edith Gasana, Resident Representative of the UNDP in Benin), and two each from the APRM Secretariat, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the African Development Bank (AfDB).<sup>9</sup>

During its visit, the Country Support Mission held meetings and working sessions with various individuals and institutions in order to explain the principles, organisation and process of the APRM. Among the institutions, mention should be made of: the APRM National Focal Point in Benin within

9 This information is taken from the Joint Communiqué following the Support mission for the African Peer View Mechanism (APRM) in Benin, 14–17 November 2005, made public on 16 November 2005 by Mrs Marie-Angélique Savané, member of the Panel of Eminent Persons of the APRM, and by H.E. Mr Rogatien Biaou, Minister of Foreign Affairs and African Integration of Benin. The text of the communiqué is available at: <http://www.issafrica.org/AF/RegOrg/nepad/aprm/benin05.pdf>

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and African Integration, the members of the CNIM-MAEP, representatives of civil society and the private sector, the Committee on Public Ethics and the technical research institutions.

The support mission held an information and orientation seminar on the APRM process for the CNIM-MAEP members. At working sessions with the focal point and Commission members, the mission insisted on the need for the composition of the National Commission to be equitable and representative of all stakeholders from the various layers of Beninese society and the different geographical regions, to ensure that the self-assessment process would be transparent and inclusive. The support mission also encouraged private sector and civil society representatives to become better organised in choosing their representatives on the National Commission, and to come up with a strategy for stronger engagement with the self-assessment process.

These work sessions made it possible to establish a roadmap of the APRM process, including the following steps:

- the creation of the four thematic groups (or technical committees) of the CNIM-APRM, following the four themes of the APRM self-assessment questionnaire;
- identification of the four technical research institutions (TRIs) to run nationwide workshops and other working sessions on the four APRM themes, under the supervision of the National Commission;
- the development of terms of reference for these TRIs;
- the establishment of a calendar of activities, including awareness and information seminars and self-assessment workshops, as well as the proposal of a preliminary budget and submission of the self-assessment report and preliminary programme of action to the continental APRM Secretariat.

One of the important outcomes of the support mission was the signing on 14 November 2005 of the Technical Memorandum on the Peer Review Mechanism in Benin. Mrs Savané signed on behalf of the Forum of Heads of State and Government participating in the APRM. Mr Rogatian Biaou, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and African Integration, signed on behalf of the government of Benin. This memorandum expresses the government's commitment to the implementation of the self-assessment process and welcomes the panel's next review mission.

The signing of this technical memorandum, and the official inauguration of the CNIM-MAEP on 11 November 2005, marked the formal initiation of the APRM process in Benin.

## Preparation for APRM implementation

### *Training of participants*

The different structures responsible for implementing the APRM process were trained in various ways during 2006 to enable them to perform their duties effectively.

A number of activities were undertaken to bring APRM actors up to speed and ensure their ownership of the process. These activities consisted of meetings to internalise the APRM principles, discussions about the methodology for APRM implementation, National Commission plenary meetings on the status of the roadmap implementation, and thematic workshops monitoring the self-assessment activities.

In all, more than 40 training and follow-up workshops were organised for capacity building of the structures for APRM implementation. The participants at these workshops were TRI researchers; members of the National Commission meeting either in plenary or in workshops for each theme of the self-assessment; the focal points in ministries, prefectures and communes; and journalists. A total of 1 064 people (851 men and 213 women) participated in these training sessions, conducted by 129 trainers and facilitators.<sup>10</sup>

### *Social mobilisation*

Some sixty press agencies were contacted to send journalists to the training sessions on the APRM process, principles and methods, with the aim of building the media's capacity for social mobilisation. The objective was to identify subjects to be covered and to create a schedule of programmes for broadcasting and for articles in the press.<sup>11</sup>

During July and August 2006, a communication plan was developed, identifying strategic entry points for each of the stakeholders. This plan proposed a series of information activities for all actors to increase awareness of the APRM process, its objectives, different stages and methodologies. Its goal was to encourage the effective and broad-based involvement of the country's political, administrative and socio-economic actors.<sup>12</sup>

The National Commission executive committee toured all twelve departments in Benin during 2006 to present the project and encourage the participation of the government

10 See National APRM Secretariat, Report of Activities for the Government of Benin and the UNDP for the period of January 1 to September 30 2007, Cotonou, 2007 and APRM National Secretariat, General Report for the Government of Benin and the UNDP, Cotonou, 2007.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

and local authorities (prefects, mayors, local elected officials). This resulted in a significant level of participation by the administrative authorities that were themselves part of the process.<sup>13</sup>

### *Exchange visits*

Exchange visits were organised to enable participants in the Beninese APRM process to learn about the experiences of their colleagues from countries that had carried out the same process. In February 2006, National Commission members in Benin welcomed colleagues from Ghana who visited to share their experiences. As part of this visit, the two sides agreed to establish an African network of support and methodological orientation for countries engaged in the self-assessment process. A delegation from the German development assistance agency based in South Africa (GTZ South Africa) visited in April 2006 in order to assess the type of logistical or technical assistance that it could provide to the Beninese Commission.<sup>14</sup>

Members of the Commission were also asked to present or participate at various meetings outside of Benin, in Togo, Belgium and Nigeria.

## **Self-Assessment: research methodology and national consultations**

### *Interim studies and reports from the technical research institutions*

During 2006, and especially between May and July 2006, the TRIs began to research and develop their thematic reports about the four APRM sectors.

*Afrique Conseil*, the firm designated as the TRI for Democracy and Political Governance, used documentary research, focus groups and survey studies to gather data.

During the exploratory phase in May and June of 2006, *Afrique Conseil* organised focus groups with academic, political and media elites in order to collect their opinions and to prepare for the survey phase. The following were targeted in this way: media professionals, political players, private sector operators, teachers of political science, law, and economics, civil society representatives and local elected

officials. A total of 51 persons, categorised by profession, were consulted.

For the public opinion survey, three questionnaire modules were extracted from the standard APRM questionnaire and adapted for Benin. There were modules for: civil society and households; governance and local elected officials; and business actors. The sample selected was of 598 individuals, representing approximately 1/10 000 of Benin's 6.8 million residents (based on the last population census held in 2002). Socio-demographic factors such as residential area, sex, age, ethnicity, religion and educational qualifications were used to determine the sample.

The TRI firm CED, in charge of the subject of Economic Management, used a similar approach to collect data. A desktop research phase was followed by a phase of focus groups and panels, which then led into the opinion survey phase.

The CED organised two panels: the first brought together 23 senior individuals (university professors, researchers, senior civil servants, business people, trade union representatives, etc.); the second grouped senior executives with extensive knowledge of management and economic governance.

Again, the APRM master questionnaire was adapted for the study, and a public opinion poll sampling technique was used. The selection made it possible to separate both the dignitaries and local authorities from the general public, as well as rural from urban areas. In each district, 25 individuals were interviewed, representing all social strata and socio-economic categories. The collected data were organised according to the socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the public and the various APRM objectives as described in the guidelines.

*Homo Consultio*, the TRI firm assigned to the area of Corporate Governance, also conducted a desktop review. A panel was then organised consisting of 60 specialists identified by subject, geographic origin, level of education, profession and ethnic group. An in-depth study was conducted on a representative sample of private and public sector representatives, individual actors (members of corporate boards of directors, customers and clients of businesses, oversight authorities and corporate management authorities, consumer associations, foreign and national investors, etc.).

The sample ultimately included 36 public enterprises, 110 private businesses in the formal sector, and 100 private businesses in the informal sector (involved in food, arts, design, buildings, electronics, electricity and refrigeration, hygiene and personal care, metals and mechanical construction, textiles and clothing); and 120 customers and

13 Interviews in Cotonou, October–December 2007 with individuals cited at end of report.

14 National APRM Secretariat, Report of Activities for the Government of Benin and the UNDP for the period of January 1 to September 30 2007, Cotonou, 2007 and National APRM Secretariat, Activity Report for the Government of Benin and the UNDP, Cotonou, 2007.

corporate clients were also interviewed. In total, the field studies involved 366 units. The prepared questionnaire contained four modules: i) public and semi-public enterprises and state agencies; ii) clients and customers of companies; iii) large and mid-size private companies in the formal sector; and iv) companies in the informal sector.

The firm *Geca Prospectives*, responsible for Socio-Economic Development, also carried out documentary research and preliminary interviews based on 12 thematic areas: education, health, environment, hygiene and sanitation, water and energy, rural development and food safety, transport, land management, housing and territorial integrity, communications (ICT), employment and commerce, microfinance, family protection, gender and justice, culture, leisure and traditions).

Twenty-four communes were selected for field work, including Benin's six major towns at the national level and both the least developed and the most populous commune in each department. Empirical data were gathered from national state structures, civil society actors, and local government authorities at departmental and commune level. This information was later analysed on both a qualitative and quantitative basis.

#### *Preparation for national consultations*

In addition to the desktop research, studies and opinion surveys carried out by the technical research institutions, the Independent National Commission also decided to set up national consultations to pin down all aspects of the Beninese people's opinions about how they are governed and their vision of the immediate future of the country. This was done so that Benin's self-assessment report and preliminary programme of action would be consistent with the aspirations of the public.

Beyond raising public awareness of the APRM, these national consultations were intended to deepen the analysis of the state of governance in Benin within the four thematic areas. Conceived as the final stage of the self-assessment process, these consultations were an opportunity to involve all stakeholders in the process (dispersed and decentralised public authorities, the private sector and civil society). They took place in all districts and in all ministries as well as in the private sector, this time with employers' organisations.

Before the national consultations took place, advance support missions were organised for the focal points to help them organise the process. The National Commission prepared guidelines for the preparation and organisation of the consultation meetings. Twelve National Commission members were sent on support missions to the local focal

points at commune and prefecture level in the country's twelve departments. Three other members were sent to the ministries. One Commission member was dispatched to the private sector. These individuals were to: i) inform people of the date scheduled for the consultation; ii) go over the guidelines for the preparation and organisation of the consultations with the focal point; iii) increase awareness among mayors or ministers and/or their chiefs of staff so that they become personally involved in social mobilisation and in chairing consultation meetings; and iv) address any concerns raised. In all, 16 members of the Independent National Commission for the Implementation of the APRM were sent to talk to 104 focal points. These various missions made it possible to prepare properly for the national consultations.

In addition to sending the support teams to train the focal points on the national consultations, the National Commission created supervisory teams in order to ensure compliance with the self-assessment standards and principles of the APRM; and also to ensure that the Commission could follow the progress of the various activities. These teams were made up of Independent National Commission members. Whereas members of the support team each worked with two communes, the members of the supervisory teams, composed of advisory committee members and an accountant responsible for logistics, oversaw the proper progress of consultations in all of the communes for which they were responsible.

#### *National consultations*

For the ministries, employers' organisations and communes, the national consultations took place in the following stages:

- Welcoming speeches presented by a focal point member of the socio-economic unit (communes, ministries, employers' organisations);
- Statement by the representative of the National Commission presenting the APRM, its goals, principles, content and methodologies, and an explanation of the national consultation and the awareness-raising meeting itself;
- Opening speeches by the mayor, minister or president of employers' organisation to specifically invite the participants to give their opinions and points of view about the state of governance in the four thematic areas;
- Introduction to the discussion and to the presentation of the summary of questionnaire responses by the head of the socio-economic unit or a member of the commune focal point;
- Discussion with the floor given to the participants;
- Detailed recording of the public's ideas and points of view.

Focal point members and the support team collected and carefully documented the various opinions expressed by the public during these national consultations. These opinions then served as the basis for preparing reports on the national consultation process.

The key ideas originating from the various socio-economic units were compiled and reorganised around the four APRM areas. An expert analysed these ideas, and then submitted them to the National Commission for validation.<sup>15</sup>

#### *Analysis of interim TRI thematic reports and national consultation reports*

To facilitate the task of validating the self-assessment report, the National Commission invited resource people from outside the Commission to read the self-assessment results, including both the TRI thematic reports and the analytical summary of the national consultations. These individuals were also asked to critique the results, both in their own right and with regard to other national and international documents on development strategies. These experts worked theme by theme and prepared their reports accordingly.

The experts were: Dr Michel Dedehouanou, a lecturer and researcher in economics at the University of Abomey-Calavi, for Economic Governance and Management; Dr Ismael Tadde, a professor in management sciences, for Corporate Governance; Mr Mouftaou Laleye, expert in political governance, for Democracy and Political Governance; and Mr Marcellin Adechina, development expert, for Socio-Economic Development. Their observations were integrated into the interim reports and the results of national consultations before these documents were submitted to the validation seminar.

#### *Seminar to validate the interim TRI thematic reports and the results of national consultations*

From 31 May to 2 June 2007, National Commission members, resource persons and TRIs held a validation seminar to approve the interim TRI reports in the four thematic areas, and the results of national consultations. The objectives of this seminar were:

- To evaluate the thematic reports and programmes of action proposed by the TRIs in all four areas;
- To make critical observations and positive contributions about the methodology, form and content of the interim reports to be integrated into the final reports; and
- To contribute to the improvement of the thematic reports

in order to facilitate the preparation of the overall report and the national programme of action.

The validation seminar brought together some 60 persons from the private and public sectors, civil society, TRI representatives, resource persons and National Commission members, all of whom were taken outside of Cotonou and accommodated locally (in Ouidah) during the entire validation seminar. After the plenary opening session, working sessions were held for each of the four thematic areas, and within each session break-out workshops could also be held. At each session the appropriate TRI representative presented his/her interim report. The National Coordinator of the Commission then presented the results of the national consultations for the thematic area in question. The workshop participants were then required to:

- Internalise the content of the thematic reports so as to be able to readily present the results to the public;
- Amend the TRI thematic reports in light of the conclusions drawn from national consultations; and
- Highlight for each theme first the efforts or best practices in governance, then the defects or shortcomings of governance, and finally, the proposed solutions or improvements in governance.

Report-back sessions from the workshop discussions were held for each of the four themes before the closing plenary.

The validation seminar thus allowed the collection of a large number of concerns and suggestions from the participants.

#### *Releasing the self-assessment report to the public and public validation*

Following the validation seminar in Ouidah, the results of the self-assessment were prepared and presented to the general public by way of a report-back of the concerns that had been collected a few months earlier. In this way they could see if the published results were what they had actually expressed.

For this purpose, three sessions were organised on 3 and 7 July 2007 to present and validate the draft report for the benefit of the public at large (focal points, local authorities, staff of the local representatives of national administrative services, private sector actors, civil society actors, etc.). One meeting was held in Parakou to benefit people from the country's four northern departments (Borgou, Alibori, Atacora, and Donga) and brought together some 60 participants on 3 July 2007. On the same day, in Lokossa, more than one hundred people from the departments of Zou, Collines, Mono and Couffo met for the same purpose. In Cotonou, approximately 150 people from Littoral, Atlantique,

<sup>15</sup> The expert's identity was not disclosed despite repeated requests to leading APRM organisations.

Ouémé and Plateau departments met on 7 July 2007.

At all of these report-back and validation workshops, the TRIs presented their reports and programmes of action as they stood after integrating the comments of specialists, the results of national consultations and the observations and recommendations of the validation workshops. The participants then responded with their criticism and suggestions.

*Results of the self-assessment: publicly-raised issues about governance*

The concerns and recommendations raised by the public during the national consultations for the validation of the self-assessment report included the following:

*On democracy and political governance*

The people of Benin are aware of the progress that has been and continues to be made to uphold the ideal of democracy in their country. In practice, however, the systems of governance are defective and threaten to undermine the democratic process. Therefore, the public forthrightly condemned the political opportunism and Benin's politicians' lack of ethics, the marginalisation of vulnerable groups, and the violation of women and children's rights.<sup>16</sup>

*On economic governance*

Numerous shortcomings were criticised in this area. The Benin people denounced amateurism in the management of the economy, the politicisation of administration, substandard performance of public enterprises, general corruption in the public and private sectors, as well as poor management of public finances.<sup>17</sup>

*On corporate governance*

The same issues reported for economic governance were revisited here: corruption, cronyism, the burden of taxation that leads to fraud or tax evasion, the poor state of infrastructure, and the lack of professionalism.<sup>18</sup>

*On socio-economic development*

Participants censured the poor conceptual basis and lack of funding for socio-economic development programmes, persistent poverty, the quasi non-existence of basic social services, and the under-representation of women.<sup>19</sup>

*Finalising the self-assessment report and its submission to the APRM Secretariat*

During August and September 2007, two academic experts, sociologist Albert Tingbe Azalou and economist Pasteur Akpo, were mandated to draft the general self-assessment report for Benin. More specifically, they were asked to base the report on the TRI thematic reports and their various programmes of action, the most important contributions from the validation seminar, the recorded opinions of the public from the report-back meetings, the analytic summary of the results of the national consultations, and the criticisms and suggestions of the resource persons.<sup>20</sup>

These two experts had already participated in various internal or public validation meetings and were well-informed about problems that had been raised. The report they drafted was subsequently submitted to the APRM Secretariat to plan the review mission in Benin.

## Review missions to Benin

*First review mission*

Mr Gaston Bushayija, an expert in socio-economic development from the continental APRM Secretariat, visited the Beninese authorities in June 2007, before the Country Review Mission to Benin was conducted. Working in close cooperation with the advisory committee, the goal of his visit was to organise and plan the implementation of the review mission with the Beninese authorities. During his visit, Mr Bushayija noted, with the members of the National Commission, the problems that marked the self-assessment phase as well as the planning of the review mission.

Led by APRM panel member Mrs Marie-Angélique Savané, the mission visited Benin from Monday 16 July 2007 to Wednesday 4 August 2007. The delegation was composed of African specialists recognised as experts in the four key areas. The goal of this first review was to verify the data contained in the self-assessment report and to set out the basis of the peer review report. This exercise consisted of meeting all stakeholders in the process, that is, all actors met by the National Commission during the national consultations. Thus, the mission was able to meet, discuss and work with all parties involved in the APRM process and the self-assessment phase. Work sessions were held with

<sup>16</sup> Global Report of the Validation Seminar for the TRI thematic reports, June 2007, p. 82.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p.20.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p.54.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p.106.

<sup>20</sup> National APRM Secretariat, Activity Report to the Government and UNDP for the period of January 1 to September 30, 2007, Cotonou, 2007, and National APRM Secretariat, General Report to the Government of Benin and UNDP, Cotonou, 2007.

public authorities and institutions, ministries, civil society, the general public, etc.<sup>21</sup>

The review mission team visited all the departments and a sample of communes in Benin in order to have a first-hand account of the work that had been done.<sup>22</sup> Certain members of the National Commission accompanied the mission into the field. During a period of three weeks, the delegation met all actors representing Beninese society, and was thus able to compare the data collected during their tour with the data contained in the self-assessment report and the various documents about governance in Benin.

The Benin government was, however, also asked to supply additional information.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, the delegation noted that certain groups were not sufficiently taken into account, and therefore made the effort to meet with groups exclusively composed of women and young people. Announcements appeared on national television to invite women's and youth associations, political parties, private businesses and various other social actors to meet the review committee members according to a specified schedule.

### *Second review mission*

A second APRM Secretariat review mission took place in October 2007 with the principal objective of presenting the draft peer review report to the head of state, President Boni Yayi. Prior to the review team's arrival, Beninese authorities had submitted the supplementary information requested at the end of the first review mission.<sup>24</sup> This two-week-long work visit enabled the APRM eminent persons to conduct meetings and unannounced field visits. In this way, for example, the mission paid unannounced visits both to female vendors at the Dantokpa market, the largest of its kind in Cotonou and Benin, as well as to the executive director of the Benin National Water Company (SONEB), and each agreed to reply to additional questions posed by members of the evaluation mission.<sup>25</sup> The mission also held several meetings with the head of state to present him with the findings of the report.

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21 Interview with the Director of African Integration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and African Integration, Cotonou, 9 October 2007.

22 Interview with the Director of Communications and Territory Planning and the General Secretary of the Trade Union of the Prefecture of Parakou, 27 September 2007.

23 Interviews with the Director of Monitoring/Review of the Nex Committee and with the Director of African Integration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and African Integration, Cotonou, 9 October 2007.

24 Ibid.

25 Interview with the Director of African Integration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and African Integration, Cotonou, 9 October 2007.

# Review report for Benin

## Presentation of the peer report

Mrs Marie Angélique Savané presented the Benin country review report prepared by the APRM Secretariat and eminent persons to the 8<sup>th</sup> APR Forum – the real peer review by heads of state – held in Addis Ababa on 30 January 2008.

With regard to democracy and political governance, this report highlighted progress in the area of the adoption of standards,<sup>26</sup> the maintenance of social peace, respect for human rights and electoral schedules, democratic change of government, and respect for the rule of law, the constitution and the separation of powers. However it also highlighted concerns about the low level of women's participation in politics and administration, the heavily politicised and unprofessional nature of public administration, worrying levels of corruption and the fragility of electoral mechanisms.<sup>27</sup>

With regard to economic governance and management, the report observed that Benin has adopted most of the standards, codes and principles related to economic governance and management. Benin has also adopted strategic plans for development, even if their implementation in sector programmes has suffered from some shortcomings. With regard to public finance, progress has been made in results-based management, but many shortcomings still remain in terms of oversight of public spending. The panel recommended the implementation of sound, transparent and predictable economic policies, sound public finance management, a greater effort against corruption and money

laundering, and accelerated regional integration through harmonised monetary, trade and investment policies.<sup>28</sup>

With regard to corporate governance, although Benin has adopted most of the standards and principles, many challenges are yet to be met, including the informal sector's unfair competition practices against the formal sector, the tax burden, the ineffective legal system, and a lack of effort in the face of corruption.<sup>29</sup>

As far as socio-economic development is concerned, there too Benin has adopted the fundamental regional and international principles and standards. The over-dependence of Benin's economy on international assistance was noted. Efforts have been undertaken to improve access to basic social services, but much remains to be done in the areas of health, education and potable water. Access to agricultural land and urban property rights also constitute a major concern throughout the country.<sup>30</sup>

As cross-cutting themes, the report emphasised the struggle against corruption, the need to accelerate the transfer of resources to grassroots communities, the involvement of traditional authorities in local development, more effective integration of issues of gender and equality of the sexes, training and increased value placed on the role of young people, special attention to the informal sector, reform of public administration, encouragement of active citizenship, and the rule of law.<sup>31</sup>

After the report was presented to the APR Forum, President Boni Yayi spoke about the programme of action annexed

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26 The report was nonetheless concerned about the non-ratification of certain AU standards, notably the fact that Benin has yet to promulgate a law to ratify the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption, adopted in July 2003 in Maputo.

27 African Union and APRM, Review Report on Governance, Republic of Benin, January 2008, p. 6.

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28 Ibid., p.12–17.

29 Ibid., p.18–21.

30 Ibid., p.22–26.

31 Ibid., p.27–31.

to the report, highlighting in particular the struggle against corruption. President Yayi spoke in front of his peers about the efforts made since he took power on 6 April 2006.

His peers offered both encouragement and advice. The heads of state welcomed the report and congratulated the Beninese people not only for the exercise itself, but also for the free pre-school and primary education programmes already in place, and for the plans for free healthcare for pregnant mothers and for children under five years of age. They also commended the efforts undertaken for Benin's economic development and the promotion of sub-regional and regional integration. President Yayi was particularly concerned with the socio-economic impact of multiple political parties, the financing of NGOs by external forces that could turn them away from their normal activities, corruption, the large size of the informal sector, and the exploitation of children. Thus, a particular emphasis was placed on the sectors to be strengthened: the need for infrastructure, energy, agriculture and job creation for youth and women, as well as the place of women in decision-making positions.

The national programme of action annexed to the report, which defined the policies and practices needed to implement its priorities, identifies a set of actions to be taken during the period 2008–2015 in the four areas of governance. It estimates the cost of implementation at US\$ 2.6 billion.

## National inauguration of the report

On 12 February 2008, twelve days after his return from Addis Ababa where the Benin report had been adopted, President Yayi organised a public launch event. Mrs Marie-Angélique Savané, chair of the APR panel, presented the 462-page printed report to Dr Yayi in his role as head of state, before members of the government, various public institutions, the diplomatic corps and other individuals including Professor Ashante of Ghana.

In her speech, Mrs Savané mentioned the significance of the APRM and the great hope it represented for the African continent. She praised the patriotism of President Yayi and his personal commitment both to the APRM process and to the development of his country and the African continent. After discussing the content of the report, she expressed the hope that it would be a defining text for all Beninese citizens. She said that for her, Benin was unique in the history of the APRM for the level of seriousness with which it had approached the process. It was also the first time that the speeches made following Dr Boni Yayi's presentation to his peers in Addis Ababa had been marked with such personal appreciation of his role. Usually, the heads of state gave their

opinion only about the report itself. She quoted President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, who said of President Yayi that 'you have before you a man who is a true African patriot, who knows what he wants, and who is prepared to commit himself to its achievement, for the sake of his country'.<sup>32</sup>

In turn, President Yayi thanked his predecessor, President Mathieu Kerekou, for launching the APRM process. He highlighted the Beninese people's strong wish for change. After recalling the challenges noted in the report, he appealed to all Beninese to commit themselves, with their government, to rise to the challenge. According to the head of state, the government would set up a National Commission on Governance. He stated that this would be an autonomous entity, composed of senior Beninese dignitaries of exemplary ethical standards and proven professional experience. Since Benin will not be able to meet these challenges alone, the head of state announced that a roundtable of development partners would be immediately organised to ensure Benin's continued access to the assistance of technical and financial partners.<sup>33</sup>

The inaugural ceremony for the national report also served as the occasion for the President of the Republic to decorate Mrs Savané and Professor Honorat Aguessy, chair of the Independent National Commission for the Implementation of the APRM in Benin, as members of the National Order of Benin.<sup>34</sup>

32 Charles Yansunu, 'Boni Yayi, la fierté d'un continent', *Fraternité* (Cotonou), 13 February 2008, p. 3.

33 Ibid.

34 Edgard Coua-Ozotti, 'Pour services rendus à la nation béninoise, Savané et Aguessy admis dans l'ordre national du Bénin', *La Nation* (Cotonou), 13 February 2008, p.3.

# Financing the process

The budget for the implementation of the APRM has not been made public. Thus, data about APRM funding in Benin primarily comes from meetings with the main participants in the process. The total budget for the implementation of the APRM in Benin was initially estimated at CFA 225 million, or about US\$450 000 broken down with contributions as follows:

- Government of Benin: CFA 25 million, or \$50 000;
- UNDP: CFA 75 million, or \$150 000;
- African Development Bank: CFA 100 million, or \$200 000;
- African Capacity Building Foundation: CFA 25 million, or \$50 000.

From the start of the process, the UNDP was asked to manage all of the finances, and therefore set up a joint fund financed from a number of sources. This mechanism provided a total final budget of approaching \$350 000.<sup>35</sup> To this the Benin government contributed upwards of \$50 000, the UNDP \$100 000, and the African Development Bank \$150 000.

We should also mention the role played by the German Hans Seidel Foundation during the implementation of the process. This foundation supported and followed the process during its entire implementation, including a financial contribution of \$50 000. The foundation directly managed this money without going through the UNDP joint fund, because it believed that the APRM mechanism fell within the activities it undertakes as part of its general mandate.<sup>36</sup> The foundation specialises in public education and in organising training sessions and seminars in the field. The foundation

participated effectively in the national consultations, and financed training seminars both for the general public and for the focal points. In addition, it was in contact with the public when the foundation accompanied the National Commission and the international experts during their various missions to Benin.

Finally, President Yayi's government provided additional financial contributions for the two review missions; though these cannot be exactly quantified because they covered a wide range of expenses including lodging, travel, security, etc.<sup>37</sup>

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35 Interview with the Director for African Integration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and African Integration, Cotonou, 9 October 2007.

36 Interview with the APRM Focal Point of Hans Seidel Foundation.

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37 Interview with the Director for African Integration of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and African Integration, Cotonou, 9 October 2007.

# Evaluation, problems and shortcomings of the process

Panel members emphasised President Boni Yayi's personal involvement in the implementation of the review in Benin. Nevertheless, the self-assessment process encountered problems and failures, primarily due to administrative inadequacies, insufficient financial resources, inadequate public awareness activities, and difficulties administering the questionnaire. The process did, however, benefit from the significant involvement of non-governmental actors, even if representatives of civil society were appointed under the authority of the government.

## Personal involvement of President Boni Yayi

The country review report notes that Mrs Marie Angélique Savané's review mission highlighted the personal involvement of the Beninese president. As far as the panel members were concerned, 'the results obtained by the review mission were to a great extent made possible by the personal involvement of His Excellency Dr Boni Yayi, President of the Republic of Benin, and his entire government'.<sup>38</sup> Thus, 'the Benin evaluation process took place under excellent working conditions, seen both in the quality of the commitment of all of the stakeholders to the success of process, and in the quality of the material and logistical assistance made available to the evaluation mission in the field'.<sup>39</sup>

The mission prepared a non-exhaustive list of evidence of the President of the Republic's personal involvement. It included:

- Repeated expressions of encouragement to APRM panel members by the head of state to carry out the process in Benin as soon as possible;
- The official inauguration of the country review mission during a televised ceremony in the presence of representatives of state institutions;
- No fewer than seven audiences granted by the president to Mrs Savané;
- The audience granted to the country review mission on 18 July 2007, during which the president gave advice and orientation for the mission's success, and urged the team to work with full transparency and with no topic off-limits;
- The broad-based report-back session for the presentation of the preliminary results of the mission during a working dinner that brought together the President of the Republic, the entire government and many public institutions;
- The invitation of review mission members, during their second visit to the country, to a meeting of the Council of Ministers presided over by the head of state himself, at which they could communicate directly with members of the government.<sup>40</sup>

## Administrative problems

The self-assessment process began in some confusion due to numerous administrative problems within the structures responsible for running it. The national Secretariat under the direction of the National Coordinator had only one accounting secretary and one driver. A communications consultant provided temporary assistance, but it was obvious that this

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<sup>38</sup> African Union and APRM, Review Report on Governance, Republic of Benin, January 2008, p. 46.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

small staff had many difficulties in handling efficiently the large number of tasks and requests assigned to them.

Furthermore, the Secretariat did not have its own office, and was housed in two offices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and African Integration, which did not offer sufficient visibility to the activities of the Secretariat.

The Secretariat also complained about the lack of teaching materials (video projectors, flip charts, projection screens, etc.) needed to arrange presentations, workshops and seminars.<sup>41</sup>

Finally, the delay in releasing funds and the cooperation problems between the National Coordinator, chosen by a public recruitment process, and the chair of the National Commission, led to the resignation of the former and his replacement by another coordinator in April 2006.

These administrative problems had a negative impact on the rolling out of the various activities, especially during the start-up period. For example, the TRIs began their work before signing a contract with the National Commission and before the funds were made available.

Similarly, questions arose concerning the appointment, powers or capacities of the focal points. In practice, their appointment was not made on the basis of clearly defined criteria. In addition, no administrative regulation had officially appointed them as focal points. No focal point interviewed for this report was capable of explaining the basis upon which they had been chosen, nor had they received an official document notifying them of their selection. Criteria were in fact developed, but lack of time and oversight of the process meant that they were not followed everywhere, and individuals were in effect appointed at the discretion of the directors of their socio-economic unit. Certain focal points were completely uninformed of the content and duration of their mandate.<sup>42</sup>

## Poor public awareness

When the TRIs began their field studies, many of their contacts knew nothing about the APRM or the status of the ongoing self-assessment process. These people sometimes challenged the legitimacy of the TRIs' information-gathering visits. Certain respondents, including administrative authorities, refused to cooperate with the TRI interviewers.

The TRI studies thus took place before the awareness raising sessions for the public and dispersed and decentralised administrative authorities, or before they had really benefited from their effect. Public awareness was only really developed during the national consultations, when the National Commission teams arrived to gather information and explain the APRM process, just before distributing the questionnaires and collecting the resulting data, opinions, concerns, and recommendations.

## Problems administering the questionnaire

In addition, despite efforts to reformulate certain questions, the respondents complained that they did not understand some aspects of the questionnaire, or that other questions did not interest them because they did not directly touch on their concerns. This was the case for questions relating to regional and sub-regional economic integration. The lack of questionnaires translated into national languages was also considered to be a major problem.<sup>43</sup>

Since that time it appears that attempts to reformulate the questions have not successfully reduced the gap between the concerns of some members of the grassroots public, and those of the National Commission and the review mission. Some participants in the process reported that certain groups found that a number of questions asked in the self-assessment process and by the review missions did not take their true concerns into account. They did not hesitate to inform the members of the National Commission and panel members about these concerns.<sup>44</sup>

## Insufficient financial resources

The lack of financial resources was also criticised. As mentioned earlier in this report, several pledges of funds were not delivered. Consequently, of the \$450 000 provided for in the advance budget, only \$350 000 was received in cash contributions. As a consequence National Commission members were forced to serve in a volunteer capacity, which negatively impacted on the quality of their participation. Several National Commission members who realised that there was no remuneration for serving on the Commission left abruptly and their work had to be carried out by others. In fact, it was the hope of remuneration that inflated the number of Commission members to 97 in the

41 National APRM Secretariat, General Report to the Government of Benin and the UNDP, Cotonou, 2007, p. 25.

42 Interview with the secretary-general of the trade union of the Prefecture of Natitingou, 29–30 October 2007.

43 National APRM Secretariat, General Report to the Government of Benin and the UNDP, Cotonou, 2007, p. 112.

44 Interview with the director of the planning department of the Prefecture of Parakou, 27 September 2007.

first place. There was also a high turnover of focal points with their constant resignations and replacements, resulting in administrative instability.

Those leading the process also generally believed that the lack of sufficient financial resources negatively impacted on the quality of fieldwork.<sup>45</sup> For example, they often had trouble travelling to certain locations. In practice, each commune received only CFA 2 000 (US\$4) for focal point travel. In general such a sum is insufficient; in geographically remote departments, especially those in northern Benin, this amount of money would be considered insulting, even ridiculous.<sup>46</sup>

Some focal points realised that the work could not be properly accomplished given the lack of travel or communication resources. Other focal points, especially those of prefectures, criticised the fact that priority was given to communes (*mairies*) for field visits. Even though this was provided for from the start, they could not always make the planned field visits to follow up the process. The role of focal points based in prefectures was thus mostly limited to transmitting or collating information and documents. In general, those interviewed believed that field visits should not be attempted if not properly funded.

### Appointment of civil society members and the quality of their involvement

We must examine the central role that civil society should play in the APRM process. In fact, the novelty that the APRM introduced into people's thinking is the fact that African leaders are subject to the scrutiny of their peers. The real revolution lies in the fact that those who are governed offer their opinion and that the governors must consider this feedback. Given this starting point, who can better serve in the role of representative of the people than civil society? Thus observers of the APRM process reflected on whether civil society had fulfilled its duties and obligations by representing the people in the right way.

Civil society was broadly represented within the Independent National Commission. However, the decree creating the National Commission gave the state the authority to appoint which organisations could send members to the Commission. This official selection took place despite the existence of a consultation framework among civil society organisations that could have made the desired appointments and transmitted the list to the government, just as is done in the appointment

45 Ibid.

46 Interview with the secretary general of the trade union of the Prefecture of Parakou, 27 September 2007.

of civil society representatives on the National Electoral Commission at its national headquarters and its local offices.

It is true that certain key civil society networks appear on the list prepared by the government. This is true of FONAC, an anti-corruption coalition, and Social Watch, which monitors government activities.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, we can say that certain well-known associations working throughout the country were not included, despite the relevance of their activities. It's not possible to say that this was done intentionally, because it is hard to integrate everyone in a single process; but, for example, certain very representative associations or networks working in the area of gender were not included.

Gender-specific considerations were not properly taken into account, despite the presence of women's associations on the National Commission. In this respect, it is surprising that well-known and very active networks such as WILDFAF (Women in Law and Development in Africa, Benin branch) and RIFONGA (Network of African NGOs and Associations for the Integration of Women/*Réseau pour l'intégration des Femmes des ONG et Associations Africaines*) were not directly involved in the process. The president of WILDFAF criticised this situation.<sup>48</sup> However, the government considered WILDFAF to be a member of the Social Watch network. Moreover, in addition to her role as a FONAC member, the deputy chair of the National Commission is also the chair of RIFONGA; she stated that she did her utmost to ensure that gender was taken into consideration.<sup>49</sup>

Shortcomings were also found at the local level. The Union of Cotton Producers of the Department of Borgou was not approached, even though cotton production is the main activity in that department and cotton exports are one of the main sources of income of Benin.<sup>50</sup>

47 Interviews with the president of Social Watch and president of Rifonga, Cotonou, 8 and 11 October 2007. Social Watch is an initiative of civil society organisations involved in the follow-up processes for the resolutions of the World Social Summit for Development (Copenhagen) and the Fourth World Conference on Women's Rights (Beijing). Social Watch aims to develop participatory approaches to create spaces for dialogue and exchanges between CSOs and the public on the one hand, and the state, local governments and development partners on the other; for the purpose of influencing social development policies based on poverty reduction strategies, and to encourage positive change to benefit marginalised communities of localities in Benin. Social Watch is involved in various areas of activity linked to 12 priority targets for the Millennium Development Goals established by Benin. Information from Governance in Africa, a site of the Alliance to Reform Governance in Africa at <http://www.afrique-gouvernance.net/fiches/bipint/fiche-bipint-242.html> (accessed on 18 April 2008).

48 Interviews with the president of WILDFAF and the president of RIFONGA, Cotonou, 8 and 11 October 2007.

49 Interview with the president of RIFONGA, Cotonou, 8 October 2007.

50 Interview with the coordinator of the Union of Cotton Producers of the Department of Borgou, 27 September 2007.

Despite these failures or oversights, the strong representation of civil society within the National Commission enabled it to make a contribution at all levels of the process. Civil society was heavily represented at both national and local meetings. Thus it was involved and actively participated in the implementation of the self-assessment process.

### **Problems accessing the results of the self-assessment and the review**

While the process is regarded as participatory, the results of the self-assessment were not made available to the public. No information or documentation centre was provided about the APRM process; although UNDP-Benin dedicated an issue of its magazine to the review mission. The various documents relating to the process could only be obtained for inclusion in this study through personal contacts and on the basis of anonymity.

This confidentiality fits poorly with the desire for a participatory approach to the work. Fortunately, a public launch for the country review report was arranged, and the report was distributed to the guests. However, efforts still need to be undertaken to publicise the report. The Social Watch network called on the government to involve all those who participated in the self-assessment process and the country review in the establishment of a collective follow-up mechanism.

# Final comments and recommendations

In conclusion, the self-assessment and review processes were implemented in a generally positive way. Despite limited resources, the campaign to raise awareness of the APRM was generally successful. Those interviewed for this report had a general understanding of what the APRM is.

In addition, those who had only heard about the APRM were generally attracted to the idea. Nevertheless, there were some differing or even contrary opinions. In fact, some believed that the APRM constituted interference in the internal affairs of Benin. Others who were less sceptical suggested that the APRM was an irrelevant utopia.<sup>51</sup> Still others criticised the fact that the assessment was conducted by foreigners who for that reason could not know the realities of Benin.<sup>52</sup> Those with this view believed that the APRM risked taking very general decisions, not adapted to the idiosyncrasies of each country.<sup>53</sup>

However, most people interviewed were enthusiastic about the APRM.<sup>54</sup> They approved of the opportunity for the public to voice its opinion. Those involved were able to express themselves about the problems facing Beninese society without fear. Peer review was viewed positively.

The following failures were nonetheless mentioned during the entire evaluation period: the media's lack of involvement as a major player in the mechanism; the lack of a popular version of the APRM written in simple, accessible, everyday language; the lack of preparation due to the rush to begin the process; the lack of adequate financial resources; the problems of administration and leadership, even if minor,

among the CNIM-MAEP's structures; the general public's lack of awareness of the APRM; and the fact that the APRM would have been better accepted had local languages been used.

No study in living memory had ever been conducted so exhaustively, or had ever given Beninese society the chance to speak out to the same extent.<sup>55</sup> It is for this reason that the APRM was such a powerful tool for evaluating governance. Public authorities therefore have a real obligation to take steps to improve governance and meet the needs of the people that were identified by the self-assessment report.

This obligation is all the more important because the President of the Republic solemnly promised his peers to comply scrupulously with the recommendations given to him during the review process. This puts the credibility of both the head of state and of the Beninese nation in general at stake. Great hope and real expectations have been brought to life because of the efforts to consult the public and make them aware of the process.

The High Commission on Concerted Governance established early in 2008 with the assistance of the UNDP could also play an important role in monitoring the implementation of the recommendations. It could serve as an interface between grassroots communities and civil society organisations and the government. In general, the decision to create a National Commission on Governance to monitor the implementation of the review report and its recommendations was seen as a good omen.<sup>56</sup>

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51 Interview with the secretary-general of the union of civil servants of the Prefecture of Natitingou, 29–20 October 2007.

52 Interview with the 2nd deputy mayor of Parakou, 27 September 2007.

53 Interview with the secretary-general of the union of civil servants of the Prefecture of Natitingou, 29–20 October 2007.

54 See list of interviews at end of report.

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55 Excluding the National Conference of February 1990. But that conference differed from the APRM process in that it was held during a period of crisis and was not based on such broad studies and consultations.

56 Interviews with the Director of Monitoring/Review of the Nex Committee and with the Director of African Integration, Cotonou, October 9, 2007.

During the implementation phase, public authorities must put into effect the recommendations made by the peers in the final review report with the utmost transparency. In addition, they must ensure the widest possible participation and involvement of Beninese society in this task.

Civil society must realise fully its citizen monitor role by overseeing the activities of public authorities in implementing the report, and especially the recommendations of the APRM. The current drive to implement citizen monitoring, originating in certain civil society organisations within the Social Watch network, should be taken into consideration.<sup>57</sup>

The linked activities of these various organisations should lead to increased public awareness and provide information about the process, for the purpose of enabling real ownership of the APRM; and thus also to lead to an effective and permanent national dialogue about governance in Benin. Civil society organisations, to rise to this challenge, should thus integrate follow-up to the APRM into their ongoing programmes.

Finally, the public should not be left on the margins of this process. If their role in a modern democracy is to question the authorities on how they manage their town, the APRM project should be supportive of their rights and obligations. The success of the APRM in Benin requires a significant mind shift for all of Beninese society.<sup>58</sup>

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57 Meeting with the Chairman of Social Watch, Cotonou, October 11, 2007.

58 Interview with the Coordinator of the Union of Cotton Producers of the Department of Borgou (UDPC), Parakou, September 27, 2007.

# Annexes

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## List of interviews

### Atlantique / Littoral

Mr Isidore Agbokou, Head of TRI Mission on Corporate Governance

Mr Médard Padonou, NEX Committee, Ministry of Development.

Mrs Joseph Djogbenou, Chairman of the Board of the NGO, HPD

Mr Séraphin Lissassi, Director of African Integration at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and African Integration

Mrs Léontine Idohou, Chairman of RIFONGA (Network for Integration of Women into Decision-Making Authorities)

Mrs Huguette Akplogan-Dossa, National Coordinator of the NGO, Social Watch.

Mrs Boko Nadjo, Chairman of the NGO, WILDAF Benin

Hans Seidel Foundation, APRM Focal Point

### Borgou / Alibori

Mr Sanrigui Chabi Iranin, 2nd Deputy Mayor of Parakou

Mr Yagui, Director of the Mayor's Office of Parakou

Mr Jean-Claude Kouagou, Regional Director of *Le Matinal* Press Group

Mrs Loukyath Zato Dangou, Senior Director, Public Press Office of Radio and Television of Benin (ORTB)

Mrs Akpamoli Tollo Adrienne, Director of Communication and Land Planning of Borgou

Mr Bio Dadji Oro Bourke, Secretary of Prefecture Trade Union

Mr Semè Ourou Ganni, Coordinator, Departmental Union of Cotton Producers of Borgou

### **Atacora / Donga**

Mr Sébastien Paatcha, CA/TAMPEGBE, Delegated Civil Status Official (Toucououtouna)

Mr Léopold Tinguinin, Council of Township Cotton Producers of Cotton, UCR/TNA (Toucououtouna)

Mr Sika Bombouté Konto, 2nd Deputy Mayor of Toucououtouna

Mr Kassa, Mampo Nagnini, Professors Serving at Departmental Center of INFREA Atacora

Mr Antoine Sama, Retired Administrator, Resource Person, Elders Representative/Natitingou.

Mr Abdoulaye Boni Kogui, Director of CCIB Annex, Atacora-Donga-Member of focal point of the Natitingou district

Bernard Becoude, representative of NGO, Raoul Follereau (Natitingou)

Mr Raoul Steve Gounoukon, Director of Regional Office, Atacora-Donga, of Fraternité Press Group

Mr Issahou Touré Sidi, APRM Focal Unit member of Djougou.

Mr Moussa Adamou, Director, Public Relations (Radio Solidarité FM Djougou).

Mrs Catherine Paul, Executive Director of AFDD (Donga's Women's Association for Development), Djougou

Mr Nourémi Aboudou, Director of General Administration of Djougou's City Hall