

# Statement at the conclusion of the 3rd Annual EISA Symposium



**Symposium theme: Strengthening Democratic Governance through the APRM: A civil society dialogue**

Maputo, Mozambique 21-22 October 2008

EISA held its third Annual Symposium with the theme **Strengthening Democratic Governance through the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM): A Civil Society Dialogue**. The Symposium was held at the Polana Hotel in Maputo, Mozambique on 21-22 October 2008. This continental dialogue forum was convened just prior to the Extraordinary African Union Summit in Cotonou, Benin (24-25 October), at which institutional changes within the APRM and the country reports of Nigeria and Burkina Faso were discussed.

The Symposium drew together 94 representatives from key stakeholders in APRM National Focal Points, National Governing Councils, the continental APRM Secretariat, Technical Research Institutions and civil society organisations to discuss the importance and value of the APRM to the African continent. Additionally, the symposium reflected inputs from numerous APRM participant states from all five of Africa's geographic regions, the APRM Secretariat and government officials. The EISA Symposium was convened at an important moment in the history of the APRM, and recognises that the Extraordinary African Union Summit marks a critical juncture for the APRM and the continent's quest for improved governance practices.

The Symposium drew upon the expertise of the pioneer states such as Ghana, Kenya and South Africa, as well as the second generation states such as Nigeria, Algeria, Uganda and Mozambique. Delegates examined the issue of civil society engagement in the APRM and how this can be strengthened to support the APRM process at the national and continental level. Even countries which had not made considerable progress in implementing the APRM, such as Mauritius, were placed in the spotlight. In the context of the Extraordinary Summit in Benin, and the decisions taken at that gathering, EISA noted the following issues arising out of the discussions:

1. The APRM has had a significant and positive impact on the state of governance in participating APRM states, through the 4 thematic areas of political, economic, corporate governance and socio economic development. 29 African states have acceded to the mechanism, collectively representing more than 60% of the population of Africa.
2. The APRM has created a valuable opportunity for fruitful engagement between national governments and their civil society, both through the process of national self assessment and a national review of the country's governance practices by its peers. This is an opportunity which both civil society and national governments need to value and defend.
3. The APRM structures and institutions are presently undergoing challenging transformation following 5 years since inception. The delegates noted that there is a need to deepen the institutional effectiveness and sustainability of both national and continental structures as they relate to the APRM. The Symposium noted the excellent oversight role played by the

APRM Panel of Eminent Persons in protecting and defending the integrity of the APRM process at the national and continental level. The Panel is ably supported by the APRM Secretariat, which is also undergoing a transition of its internal governance, which needs to be expedited to ensure the smooth progress of countries waiting to receive a peer review, including Mozambique and Lesotho.

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