The African Regional Consultative Meeting on Key Elements for the Post-2015 Accountability Framework
Addis Ababa, 21-23 August 2014

Position Paper

1. Introduction

A consultative meeting was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 21-23 August to deliberate and define the key elements for an accountability framework for the Post-2015 Development Agenda. This meeting organized by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) was as a result of a request from the Secretary-General to convene a meeting to discuss regional perspectives on accountability for the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Furthermore, African leaders during the African Union Heads of State Summit, held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea from 26-27 June 2014, urged the AU High Level Committee (HLC)\(^1\) on the Post-2015 Agenda to explore the “emerging issue of accountability” as well as the data revolution and how these two issues can be aligned with the Common African Position (CAP) (Doc. Assembly/AU/12(XXIII)). The meeting was also organized in collaboration with the AU/ High Level Committee (HLC), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and UNDP Africa. African stakeholders, including academia, CSOs, government representatives (planners/statisticians), media, private sector and women and youth groups and the international community attended the meeting which was opened by the Deputy Executive Secretary of ECA, Mr Abdalla Hamdok, Ms Amina Mohamed, Mr Eugene Owusu, UNDP Resident Coordinator and Mr Anthony Maruping, AU Commissioner for Economic Affairs.

This summary serves as a position paper from the discussions and deliberations emerging from the African consultative meeting.

2. Some key principles for Accountability

The participants noted that a successful accountability mechanism must have the following elements:

- **Build on existing frameworks**, utilizing existing mechanisms in African countries to avoid duplication. This is particularly important for Africa as there are several accountability mechanisms already in place.

- **Citizen participation**, where there is an inherent responsibility of people to be fully engaged in, and be informed of all interventions in support of the goals and objectives the Post-2015 Agenda.

- **Inclusiveness**, the principle of leave no one behind has to be adhered to so that stakeholders including, NGOs, CSOs, CBOs, non-state actors, the media, donors and private sector operators are involved in the processes that make for a sound system of monitoring of actions and greater accountability.

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\(^1\) The High Level Committee of Heads of State and Government (HLC) was established by AU Decision (Doc. Assembly/AU/10(XXI) May 2013 with the aim of sensitizing and coordinating the activities of African Leaders and members of the High Level Panel, and building regional and inter-continental alliances on the African Common Position on the post 2015 Development Agenda.
- **Extensive consultation**, accountability has to be based on extensive consultation among all stakeholders in society, engaging the citizenry through dialogue within their community and grassroots organizations, their municipalities and local government institutions and through their elected representatives in Parliament.

- **Strong buy-in and ownership**, there should be a strong buy-in and ownership on the part of all stakeholders in an accountability process and mechanism.

- **Regular Reviews**, an accountability framework for the Post-2015 Agenda should be based on regular reviews of actions undertaken at all levels: the community, the sub-national, the national, the sub-regional, the regional, the international and the global levels. The reviews will have to be strongly evidence-based, to be convincing and credible.

### 3. Proposed Accountability Architecture

At each level of the system, are to be found important agents and stakeholders from whom accountability is to be expected or to whom accountability is to be rendered. At each of these levels, there must be established structures that would ensure accountability.

At the **sub-national level**, existing structures such as village development committees or any one of the various municipal committees could provide the venue for the conduct of periodic review of actions and for the reporting requirements on implementation action at that level. In many cases, this could be the most important level in that this is where CAP Post-2015 could find expression in its transformational agenda. Strong structures at this level therefore, are important for assuring solid, impactful programme delivery.

The backbone of an accountability framework is to be found at the **national level**. It is at this level that all accounts of implementation actions converge to show a pattern and create a picture of performance. It is therefore important to have established at this level, an independent, autonomous structure to ensure continuous monitoring of actions and regular delivery on a country’s reporting obligations. A National CAP Post-2015 Governing Council, an adaptation of the APRM Governing Council, which has worked well in furtherance of the APRM ideals and objectives, may be considered for the needs of the CAP Post-2015 AF. All stakeholders should be represented in such a Council: think tanks, academia, NGOs, CSOs and CBOs, faith-based organizations, workers’ and trade unions, students, women’s groups, the media, etc.

At the **regional level**, consideration may be given to an adaptation of the APRM’s Eminent Persons’ Group, which receives reports from peer-reviewed countries for vetting, analysis and onward transmittal to the APRM Heads of State and Government Committee and through this Committee to the AU Summit. It is at this level that all national and sub-regional reports are collated, processed and analysed to derive a regional pattern in order to arrive at a realistic and informed assessment of the overall performance of the continent in fulfilling the commitments made by all stakeholders – including the African Governments themselves. Such a grouping may be assisted by a permanent expert working group, whose responsibility would be to undertake the analytic work required for guiding policy decisions on CAP Post-2015. It is worth considering that the High Level Committee (HLC) be adapted to assume this role.
It is envisaged that at the international level, arrangements will be made for the setting up of an appropriate structure to ensure accountability of all stakeholders on their Post 2015 commitments. It is to be expected that this decision will be taken by the UN at the appropriate time. Perhaps the High Level Political Forum will be called upon to continue to play a role in monitoring the workings of a global accountability mechanism that would have been put in place, and present regular reports thereon to ECOSOC and the General Assembly. Hopefully, the concerns of the Africa region as expressed in its CAP Post-2015 will be taken into consideration in any decision on the creation of an international structure for a Post 2015 accountability framework.

4. Data and Information requirements for accountability

Realizing the data revolution in Africa will require the support of the international community. It needs to build strong statistical systems which would serve as a platform for realistically identifying those national and continental development indicators required to guide the social and economic development effort. This is also necessary for the pursuit of the region’s development objectives and goals as enunciated in the CAP and in Vision 2063.

For one to be accountable, one requires information on the matter being accounted for. The first requirement therefore is:

a) A strong system for the generation, processing, analysis and dissemination of information in a transparent and enabling manner. Supply-side information i.e. information from official sources is what invariably, most systems rely on. This type of information is necessary, but not sufficient to give a true and accurate picture of how the economic and social interventions envisaged in CAP Post-2015 have been carried out. It should be supplemented by demand-side information – the type that can only be provided by users, and which often, give more information on the qualitative aspects of implementation. This information would come out in the form of reports.

b) The integrity of any accountability mechanism depends on the quality of the information available. Invariably, the information required emanates from a body of data and statistics on the performance of certain indicators. These indicators have to be identified and agreed upon by all concerned, as to their relevance to the information being sought.

c) The specialized task of data collection, analysis and reporting has to be embarked upon. This is a most critical phase in the accountability process. It therefore requires the skills and expertise of well qualified technical experts. Invariably, it is to Country Statistical Offices that one has to turn for the provision of this service.

d) Many national Statistical Offices are seriously wanting in capacity and calling upon them to take on additional responsibilities as per the requirements of the Post-2015 accountability framework, would amount to overloading them with a burden many of them would be ill-equipped to carry. It would therefore be necessary for some provisions to be built into the framework to allow for serious capacity building activities to be undertaken.

e) Demand-side data is also important in the accountability processes. It would certainly enrich the process if beneficiaries were also required to share information about their experiences with programme delivery and for this information to be taken fully into account in any analysis or reporting exercise.
To the extent possible, stakeholders should be encouraged to use as much technology as possible in driving accountability processes. ICT in particular, is a strong tool that can help widen coverage and increase stakeholder participation.

The frequency of reporting at each level should be determined by stakeholders operating at a particular level.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

It is most important that a system of continuous monitoring of actions and the conduct of formative evaluation be built into the reporting systems at each level. Reporting on results is an important tool for assessing issues such as aid effectiveness. But undertaking formative and summative evaluation exercises is equally important, because through them information could be obtained not only on what is, but also on what should be. Evaluation also helps identify viable alternatives, provides pointers as to the best directions to follow, or whether the right things are being done as well as what impacts they have had on results. A robust system of evaluation will help strengthen this aspect of the accountability architecture.

6. Communicating on Accountability

A robust communications strategy and mechanism will be important for an accountability mechanism on the Post-2015. Information on reports, findings, conclusions, decisions and recommendations should be widely disseminated to all stakeholders and other interested parties. This should involve both traditional and modern media, including social media. But in addition, civic modes of communication such the holding of town hall meetings, the use of village communications methods such as theatre, story-telling, etc. should also be relied upon to get the message out. In the process, the people at the grassroots become sensitized and empowered, and so are better placed to demand greater accountability from those who are supposed to serve them. In all cases, the message should be made to reach key target audiences such as government officials, politicians, community groups, faith-based organisations, students, workers, the media, donors and the international community at large.

7. Financing Accountability

Operationalizing an accountability framework requires substantial resource allocations at all levels. It is resources – both financial and human – that will make the structures and institutions work. Committees, Working Groups, Expert Groups, Ministerial meetings, etc. have to be funded. Data and information have to be collected processed and analysed. Reports have to be prepared. And information has to be disseminated. All of this requires huge resource outlays, which would certainly be beyond the capacity of most public institutions and non-state actors to provide. It will be the primary responsibility of Governments to make the necessary provisions for all that is required for the efficient operation of an accountability mechanism.