OUTCOME DOCUMENT
A REGIONAL DIALOGUE ON
THE KEY ELEMENTS OF
AN ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK FOR
THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

August 2014
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Background: The Regional Context

1. What ought to happen post-2015 when the MDGs come to an end, is what all stakeholders in the international system are currently in the process of unraveling. Africa is very actively engaged in this global effort, since its development interests are paramount in the global development agenda. It will be recalled that as early as 2011, African Governments initiated action to define Africa’s own priorities in any new framework that would be agreed upon as a successor to the MDGs, post 2015. This proactive stance was necessary because one of the lessons in the formulation and implementation of the MDGs, was that Africa was a passive partner in the design of the goals and of their implementation requirements and mechanisms. Consequently, buy-in and ownership by all stakeholders on the African continent suffered somewhat. As is to be expected, this did impact negatively on implementation. African Governments have thus resolved that going forward, they would, to the extent possible drive those processes and order those decisions that ultimately will determine their own development prospects and patterns.

2. Furthermore, the Africa of the year 2000 is not the Africa of today. Today, Africa is a continent on the rise, with greater maturity and self-confidence, and demonstrably, fully capable of defining its development aspirations and priorities. This is why as far back as 2010, African Governments decided to initiate action to begin the reflection on its needs and priorities in the post 2015 development agenda. This reflection was taken to all major stakeholders on the African continent, at the national, sub-regional and regional levels. This intensive regime of consultation and the participatory approach involved culminated in the formulation of a Common African Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (CAP Post 2015) which was adopted by African Heads of State and Government at their Summit Meeting in Addis Ababa in January 2014.

3. CAP Post-2015 is based not only on the imperatives for a new development framework post 2015, but also on global commitments such as those of Rio+20 on the sustainable development goals.

4. In a bid to sustain the momentum and to ensure that Africa’s concerns as articulated in the CAP Post-2015, are embraced at the highest levels of Government, the AU established a High Level Committee of Heads of State and Government (HLC). The HLC is
entrusted with the responsibility of sensitizing all stakeholders in the international system on Africa’s priorities as expressed in the CAP-2015 and to oversee the negotiations on behalf of the African continent on a new global development agenda that fully accommodates these concerns and priorities.

5. In addition to all these proactive initiatives, the Heads of State and Government also called for the issue of accountability to be provided for within the CAP-2015. This is an important move, because its absence in the MDGs mechanisms and processes encouraged commitment and delivery failures. In this, Africa was the net loser. It is for this reason that the African Heads of State and Government, in adopting CAP Post-2015 called for

“a new spirit of solidarity, cooperation and mutual accountability to underpin the post 2015 Development Agenda, namely, mutual accountability between the State and its citizens, and between the State and development partners.” (CAP 2014)

6. The present AF is in response to that call.

The International Context

7. Meanwhile at the General Assembly, res. 67/290 decided that the High Level Political Forum which had been established in pursuance of the Post-2015 agenda, shall, under the auspices of ECOSOC, “… conduct regular reviews, starting in 2016, on the follow-up and implementation of sustainable commitments and objectives, including those related to the means of implementation within the context of the post 2015 development agenda”. Furthermore, the President of the General Assembly, conscious of the need for accountability to be strongly built into any new development framework that will have been agreed upon, convened an interactive dialogue in May 2014 on the “Elements for a Monitoring and Accountability Framework for the Post-2015 Development Agenda”. The Dialogue underscored the need for each regional grouping to design its own accountability framework that would be consistent with its own peculiar circumstances, priorities and needs.

8. Discussions on a global accountability mechanism are underway, accountability being the fourth segment of the global agenda. This document is Africa’s contribution to, and perspective into the reflection on this global framework. It is informed by the aspirations and priorities of the African people and Governments as expressed in the CAP Post-2015, and is buttressed by a recently-convened regional multi-stakeholder consultation on those key elements of accountability that should underpin CAP-2015.
9. This Accountability Framework (AF) is based on the commitments of African Governments made on behalf of the African people, as expressed in the challenges, priorities and aspirations set forth in the Common African Position (CAP) on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The AF is meant to ensure that all stakeholders – African Governments, African people and their CSOs and CBOs, non-state actors, the donor and the international community – are not only committed to working towards the attainment of the goals and objectives of the CAP Post-2015, but also stand ready to account for their actions in this regard, to one another and on a regular basis.

10. This means that African Governments and their official representatives, who are the custodians and dispensers of all resources committed by the international and donor community in support of CAP Post-2015’s objectives and priorities, will be accountable for their actions to the African people as well as to the donor and international community. Individually, they will also account to one another at the sub-regional and regional levels. The donor and international community will also be expected to render account of their actions in fulfillment of any commitments they may have made towards their support of CAP Post-2015. This includes the major international and regional development financing institutions, whose policies and decisions often influence the volume and flow of resources to African countries within the context of international initiatives such as the MDGs. The need for accountability extends to other non-state actors such as private foundations, transnational corporations, etc. whose actions have an influence in shaping the course of events in the international development environment.

11. At the country level where ultimately implementation will take place, officials in positions of power and responsibility, who are entrusted with public resources in furtherance of the goals and objectives of CAP Post-2015 in their respective countries, will be accountable to their Governments and people for the use of those resources. Other stakeholders at the country level who may also bear some responsibility for the implementation of CAP Post-2015, will also be held to account for their actions. CSOs and CBOs with responsibility for the implementation of certain elements of the CAP Post-2015, will have to be answerable to the people for their actions. Even private sector operators who may be playing a part in the implementation processes will have to render an account of their services, in addition to providing where applicable, decent wages and working conditions for their workers, while being mindful of the need for environmental sustainability.
12. For the purpose of CAP Post-2015, *accountability* denotes the obligation of those entrusted with the responsibility of delivering public goods, resources and services, to account for their actions to those for whom these public goods, resources and services are meant. They are also under obligation to render account to those who may have provided the wherewithal to secure these public goods, resources and services on how well they have delivered these resources, goods and services.

13. Since CAP Post-2015 is to provide the framework for an international compact of support to Africa, those partners in the donor and international community who may have stepped forward to commit themselves voluntarily, in support of CAP Post-2015, are also expected to render an account to each other as well as to the African Governments and people, on what they may have done in fulfillment of their commitments to Africa’s development.

14. The goals and objectives of CAP Post-2015 are meant to lead to structural transformation of the African economy as well as the transformation of the lives of the African people, leading to the eradication of poverty on the continent. Ultimately therefore, CAP Post-2015 is a people-focused development initiative. As such, all stakeholders responsible for its implementation and for the utilization of resources deployed towards that end, should be fully accountable to the ultimate beneficiaries – the people. A strong citizens’ involvement in the accountability processes will therefore have to be well assured.

15. It is envisaged that if properly developed and implemented, this framework will serve as a useful tool to guide delivery actions towards greater impact and cost-effectiveness. It should also help strengthen the quality of the partnerships forged around CAP Post-2015. And to the extent that it can secure the critical involvement of the people at the grassroots through a strong system of regular consultation with them, to that extent will it engender greater trust and confidence between government and the governed.

16. Above all, this AF will help all concerned chart a path towards bringing improvements in the actions they are required to undertake, and to ensuring that quality is enhanced in the delivery of products and services.
17. This AF is based on incentives. There are hardly any sanctions-based provisions for enforcement of compliance, especially at the sub-regional, regional and international levels. Over the years, the many Compacts for, and Programmes of support to Africa have floundered because of the failure with impunity, of Africa’s development partners to deliver on their commitments. This accountability deficit has never had to face any sanctions regimes. So also will it be with this AF. But whatever commitments are made by Africa’s development partners, should be made in good faith and in a spirit of genuine partnership, trust and mutual self-interest. Each public report on implementation should contain sufficient information to show how well each major stakeholder has lived up the public commitments it made to the African people and the entire international system. This might also help to encourage greater compliance on the part of Africa’s international partners.

18. However, at the national level, accountability mechanisms that are sanctions-based should be strongly encouraged and supported. Public institutions, and officials who may be entrusted with the responsibility of delivering public goods and services to the people, should be held fully accountable to their Governments as well as to the people they are meant to serve. A strong system of accountability will ensure that delivery failure is severely sanctioned in the context of existing administrative, legislative and juridical provisions. It must be said that African countries could do with much assistance to have their present accountability mechanisms and processes significantly strengthened. In this regard, capacity building and institutional strengthening interventions from their development partners would be most welcome.

How Will Accountability Be Assured?

19. CAP Post-2015 is in effect, a set of priorities identified by African Governments and non-government stakeholders as key to the transformation and development of the African continent. The priorities outlined in the document will form the basis of Africa’s engagement in the upcoming intergovernmental negotiations on the post 2015 development agenda. To the extent that the CAP is integrated in the global agenda, it is expected that it will be supported morally, materially and financially by Africa’s development partners, through concrete pledges and commitments. In turn, African stakeholders will be expected to publicly account for their actions in fulfilling their development obligations.

20. To ascertain compliance, indicators of delivery on commitments made would have to be developed and agreed upon by all stakeholders. It is also important for timelines and
where possible, deadlines for the implementation of commitments to be set and agreed upon, for ease of monitoring and reporting.

The Principles

21. The AF stands on the six Pillars of the CAP Post-2015. These are:

- Structural transformation and inclusive growth
- Science, technology and innovation
- People-centred development
- Environmental sustainability & natural resources and disaster risk management
- Peace and security
- Finance and partnership

22. These pillars and the AF itself should be undergirded by the following principles:

Building on existing frameworks

23. It is important to utilize existing mechanisms that are in operation in African countries. This will avoid duplication of effort, while helping strengthen the workings of those mechanisms.

Citizen participation

24. If Governments’ actions are undertaken on behalf of the people, then it behoves the people to expect and demand that those actions are undertaken in their best interest and towards improving their standard of living. It is not only a right, but also a responsibility of the people to be fully engaged in, and be informed of all interventions in support of the goals and objectives of CAP Post-2015.

Inclusiveness

25. All CAP Post-2015 stakeholders including, NGOs, CSOs, CBOs, non-state actors, the media, donors and private sector operators should be involved in the processes that make for a sound system of monitoring of actions and the rendering of account. In many cases they would act as both agents and beneficiaries in the implementation process, and as both service providers and service users. The AF should also be mindful of the need to mainstream gender, youth, the disabled as well as human rights and climate change issues in its operations. Representatives of the people such as Parliamentarians at the national level, or ward or district Councilors at the local government level, should also be made to be actively involved in all the accountability processes.

Extensive consultation
26. The AF is to be based on extensive consultation among all stakeholders in society. It will engage the citizenry through dialogue within their community and grassroots organizations, their municipalities and local government institutions and through their elected representatives in Parliament. The dialogue should culminate in the establishment of a strong relationship between the legislature, the peoples’ representatives – parliamentarians, councilors, etc. – the executive and the judiciary.

**Strong buy-in and ownership**

27. CAP Post-2015 and all its mechanisms and processes should ensure a strong buy-in and ownership on the part of all concerned. If the African Governments and people embrace CAP Post-2015 as their own then its ancillary provisions, including the AF will also be taken over as theirs, and be made to operate as effective instruments for the attainment of CAP Post-2015’s goals and objectives.

**Regular Reviews**

28. The AF is also to 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.

**The Architecture**

29. At each level of the system, are to be found important agents and stakeholders from whom account is to be expected or to whom account is to be rendered. At each of these levels, there must be established structures that would ensure that accounts are given and received. At the continental level, action is required at the sub-national, the national, the sub-regional and the regional levels. It must be said that in many instances and all levels, there already exist structures that could be used, adapted or strengthened to fit the needs of the AF.

30. 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 AF structures at this level therefore, are important for assuring solid, impactful programme delivery.

31. The backbone of the AF 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 on the CAP Post-2015 goals and objectives. It is therefore important to have established at this level, an independent, autonomous structure to ensure continuous monitoring of actions and regular delivery on the 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. The Council should exercise oversight responsibility on all CAP-2015 actions and activities at all levels and by all stakeholders including Government, the private sector, NGOs, CSOs, faith-based organizations, and community and grass roots organizations. Reports emanating from all stakeholders should be channeled through this Council for vetting, analysis and evaluation.

32. At the sub-regional level, arrangements should be made for regular country reports to be submitted to each of the RECs, showing each country’s performance in the implementation of the CAP Post-2015. The country reports are then compiled in order to derive a sub-regional pattern which is then analysed in a sub-regional report on the CAP Post-2015 for submission to a meeting of Ministers of the respective REC. After consideration of this report by the Ministers, a consolidated report capturing the regional perspective on implementation of CAP Post-2015 is then submitted to the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union.

33. 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.

34. It must be noted that this requirement may already have been met in the existence of the High Level Committee (HLC). The HLC is the highest policy level body entrusted with the Post 2015 agenda. It should be required to take on the responsibility for the implementation of the AF, for receiving and vetting all regional reviews and reports for submission to the Summit of Heads of State and Government.
35. 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 presenting regular reports thereon to ECOSOC and the General Assembly. Hopefully, the concerns of the Africa region as expressed in its CAP Post-2015 as well as the present AF, will be taken into consideration in any decision on the creation of an international structure for a Post 2015 AF.

36. The implementation of CAP Post-2015 requires monitoring on a daily basis. Equally, the management of the structures established for its operations, monitoring and accountability, has to be assured in the existence of well-resourced, professionally-managed institutions.

37. At the country level, a Ministry will be designated to coordinate all CAP Post-2015 activities, including responsibility for all supply-side data and information and strong liaison with National Statistical Bureaus. It will also be responsible for coordinating the
preparation of all national reports and for ensuring that all stakeholders honour their obligations under the present AF. Traditionally, Ministries of Economic Planning and/or Finance have been assigned overall responsibility for programmes such as the MDGs. It is to be expected that such an arrangement will be retained in respect of government responsibility over CAP Post-2015.

38. Some RECs have within their administrative structures, an arrangement for monitoring the MDGs at the sub-regional level, for preparing sub-regional reports on their implementation for submission to their meeting of Ministers for their consideration. Such an arrangement should be required of all RECs with certain Departments assigned the responsibility of monitoring implementation of CAP Post-2015 as well as for implementing the AF at the sub-regional level. Provisions should be made for the full involvement and participation of CSOs and non-state actors operating at the sub-regional level and with a stake in the CAP Post-2015.

39. At the regional level a CAP Post-2015 Secretariat will be established with responsibility for: coordination and monitoring all actions being undertaken at all levels in implementation of CAP Post-2015, including the operations of the AF; receiving, vetting and analysing reports from country and sub-regional sources; and preparing comprehensive annual regional reports for submission to the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union. The composition and location of the Secretariat remain at the discretion of African governments. However, in line with the principle of building on existing institutions and structures, one option is to strengthen the existing Secretariat established in support of the HLC. This Secretariat should establish strong working relations with the Office of the UN Secretary-General’s Special Adviser on Post-2015 Development Agenda.
40. Reports are expected to be addressed to various sets of stakeholders. At the country level, reports would move upwards from one level to another. At the grassroots level, there may be elements of CSO or CBO responsibility for the CAP Post-2015 which should be reported to the people whom they serve. The people themselves should make inputs into those reports in addition to receiving them comprehensively. Government oversight of the process would be a requirement in a bid to provide official protection of the interests of the people.

41. Some countries may require the establishment of a mechanism at the sub-national level, in accordance with their decentralization and local government policy priorities.
Therefore in those cases where municipalities and other such local government institutions are involved in certain aspects of CAP Post-2015 implementation, there would be need for those institutions and their public officials to be answerable, through the submission of reports, to the people of that municipality or local government area, as well as to the Central Government.

42. At the national level, reports will be prepared by the CAP Post-2015 National Governing Council, for submission through the Parliament for consideration, debate and endorsement to Central Government. As required, Government periodic reports on implementation of CAP Post-2015, will be prepared for submission to several levels: the RECs at the sub-regional level and to the AU at the regional level. It is to be envisaged that at the international level member states of the UN including African Governments will be under some obligation to provide periodic reports on their implementation of the post-2015 agenda that is expected to be adopted at the global level.

43. In all cases, reports should be put out for public scrutiny and debate. The multi-stakeholder National Governing Council should operate in an open environment. Accounts of its deliberations as well as its outcome statements should be disseminated as widely as possible.

Means of Implementation

44. The African Union Commission, in its capacity as the main Secretariat for the implementation of CAP Post-2015, will hold primary responsibility for ensuring that appropriate action is taken in the relevant quarters and by the concerned authorities, towards the implementation of the AF. The structures and institutions have to be set up and made operational. Resource support has to be assured. And the requisite partnerships have to be forged.

45. While much of what is required in terms of implementation lies in the hands of African Governments and people, the support of the international community is vital even at this stage. Here, the principle of shared but differentiated responsibility very much applies. It is therefore important for the donor and international communities to also play their part in the context of a genuine partnership that refrains from violating Africa’s policy space.
Data and Information Requirements

46. Africa has to be enabled to better manage the data revolution. 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.

47. For one to be accountable, one requires information on the matter being accounted for. The first requirement therefore in the AF is for 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 ordained and 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. Reporting obligations would be fundamental in the accountability architecture of CAP Post-2015.

48. The integrity of any accountability mechanism depends on the quality of the information available to it. 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.

49. Having agreed on the indicators, then the specialized task of data collection, analysis and reporting is 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.

50. It is no secret that many national Statistical Offices are seriously wanting in capacity. And calling upon them to take on additional responsibilities as per the requirements of the CAP Post-2015 AF, 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 AF to allow for serious capacity building actions to be undertaken on a systematic basis. The idea would be to build capacity where it does not exist, and strengthen it where it does. And the concern is not just for data collection. Equally important is the need to
hone skills in analysis and reporting. In Africa, there are serious gaps in these important areas, which need to be filled.

51. 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. Insisting on soliciting this information ensures that communities and citizens not only participate in, and contribute to the accountability process, but also learn from it.

52. 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.

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

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

54. 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, and also build and reinforce evaluation into the culture of governance in Africa.

55. Priority should be given to formative evaluation which allows for constant monitoring of actions. In many cases, evaluation has been undertaken at the end of programmes, projects or processes, when little could be done to correct mistakes. With the emphasis on the formative, it becomes much easier to spot shortcomings with a view to instituting corrective measures in a timely manner.
56. The evaluation function will therefore be an integral part of the mandate of the National Governing Councils, with the requisite support from the National Statistics Offices. At the regional level, it will be the responsibility of the HLC and its Secretariat. And at the international level, the Secretariat of the High Level Political Forum will take on this important role. There will be need for capacity building actions to be carried out to invest all concerned with the appropriate skills and tools to enable them carry out this vital accountability function.

A Communications Strategy for the AF

57. An important necessity of the AF is the existence of a robust communications strategy and mechanism. 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.

58. A well-designed communications strategy is to be built into the AF.

Financing the AF

59. Operationalizing the AF would require substantial resource allocations at all levels of the system. It is resources – both financial and human – that will make the structures and institutions of the AF work. Committees, Working Groups, Expert Groups, Ministers, etc. have to meet. 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.
60. It is the primary responsibility of Governments to make the necessary provisions for all that is required for the efficient operation of an accountability mechanism. While they have endeavoured to carry out this responsibility by making the appropriate budgetary provisions to support Ministries, National Statistics Offices, and other key public institutions, in virtually all cases, these efforts have not be sufficient to meet the need. Although they should be urged to continue and even increase their support for the provision of these critical services, the fact is that it is not likely they will be in a position to meet the additional resource requirements that the implementation of CAP Post-2015 and its AF would impose. Therefore, these additional requirements in support of the AF should be factored into the resource requirement for the implementation of CAP-2015 that is certain to be eventually negotiated and agreed upon.