

Inquiry into rising inequality, unemployment and corruption in South Africa

By  Katja Hamilton

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Over the past weekend, at the 35th African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government, South Africa's two-year chairship of the African Peer Review Forum came to an end.



Source: Supplied

This was announced Wednesday by President, Cyril Ramaphosa together with the results of South Africa's most recent African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) assessment.

"The review cites several areas of concern: rising inequality and unemployment, corruption, incidents of xenophobia and poor service delivery," Ramaphosa said.

The Africa Governance Report 2021, which South Africa presented to the AU Assembly over the weekend, recommended that leaders take urgent steps to address drivers of instability, such as growing youth unemployment, extremism, mass migration and deepening inequality.

It recommended that government develop a barometer to measure inequality and tools to measure the efficacy of transformative programmes such as broad-based black economic empowerment, employment equity and land reform.

"As a country, we are taking these recommendations on board and exploring areas of alignment between the APRM National Programme of Action and the work of our National Planning Commission," Ramaphosa said.

South Africa's progress

Ahead of his 2022 State of the Nation address tonight Ramaphosa presented the highlights of The Africa Governance Report 2021. He noted South Africa's progress in consolidating democracy and moving towards economic integration through the African Continental Free Trade Area.

The assessment commended South Africa's strong corporate governance, open budget processes and proliferation of corporate social responsibility initiatives.

"We were praised for the evolution of our electoral system through the introduction of independent candidature for last year's local government elections. With regards to management of the Covid-19 pandemic, South Africa was congratulated for demonstrating resilience and global leadership. The APRM Review Mission further commended South Africa for publicising its detection of the Omicron variant late last year, "despite the risks to its economy".

"South Africa received favourable reviews for, among others, the rule of law, oversight bodies like our Chapter 9 institutions, the advancement of women's rights, strong refugee protection and our extensive social welfare net.

"It is greatly encouraging that despite pockets of instability, we have come a long way in consolidating democracy and good governance on the continent."

AU a measure of accountability

The Forum is one of the structures of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), which aims to promote and protect human rights, consolidate democracy and advance good governance and the rule of law among African countries. The APRM encourages best practice for political, social and economic stability, while helping to address governance deficiencies by providing a National Programme of Action for each state concerned.

Ramaphosa stressed that while the APRM is not punitive, the African Union has itself taken decisive positions on states whose actions undermine the principles of the AU Charter and the AU's Agenda 2063.



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"Following coups last year, Mali, Guinea and Sudan's membership of the AU were suspended. Last week, the AU also suspended Burkina Faso's membership following a coup in the West African nation," he said.

"At the founding of the Organisation of African Unity, the precursor to the AU, in 1963, Ghana's President Kwame Nkrumah issued a clear warning to Africa's leaders: "Our people supported us in our fight for independence because they believed that African governments could cure the ills of the past... if now that we are independent we allow the same conditions to exist that existed in colonial days, all the resentment which overthrew colonialism will be mobilised against us."

Good governance a priority in Africa

"The APRM is one of the most important responses of Africa's leaders to this danger. Just as South Africa's fortunes are inextricably tied to those of the continent, we are also inevitably affected by political, economic and other forms of instability in Africa. This makes our participation in the African Peer Review Mechanism all the more critical.

"We share a responsibility, alongside our sister countries, to strengthen good governance in Africa. After all, good governance brings investment, development, peace, progress and, ultimately, shared prosperity."

South Africa was one of the first countries to join the APRM in 2003

Of the African Union's 55 member states, 42 are now members of the APRM. In the last two months, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi became the most recent countries to join the mechanism.

Efforts are underway to encourage all remaining AU member states to join by the end of this decade.

ABOUT KATJA HAMILTON

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