APRM Baseline Study on the implementation of CEPA Principles in Africa

Executive Summary

The quest for Africa's development as envisioned and defined in Agenda 2063, *"the Africa we want"* and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will come to naught in the absence of developing engagement tools for efficient governance, investment in human and capital resources besides and societal mobilisation. In this context, the United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) came up with the principles known as the UNCEPA principles for effective governance of SDGs, with identified sixty-two strategies to assist countries in domestication and monitoring of both agendas. Therefore, successful planning and implementation depend on how a politically mobilising philosophy, a socially effective and desirable development plan, embraces these engagement tools as lenses through which these two agendas are understood and addressed at all society levels.

Under the expanded mandate of the Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), the continental mechanism has a dual mandate of monitoring and evaluating Agenda 2063 and the United Nations SDGs- particularly SDG 16 -effective, strong, and efficient institutions and peaceful societies which encounters aspirations three and four of Agenda 2063: aspiration three - An Africa of Good Governance, Democracy, Respect for Human Rights, Justice and the Rule of Law and aspiration four- A Peaceful and Secure Africa. With all the persistent challenges to report on both agendas across the continent and in light of the APRM eagerness to assist the African Union (AU) member states to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063, the APRM took the lead to conduct this baseline study on CEPA principles of effective governance of SDGs aligned with Agenda 2063.

The captioned study's development derives from the APRM Africa Regional Workshop's recommendations on Effective Governance for Sustainable Development, which was held from October 30th to November 1st, 2019 in Pretoria, South Africa. As an outcome of this workshop, the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) resolved to undertake a baseline study on the status of implementation of the eleven (11) UN Committee of Experts on Public Administration (CEPA) principles - of effective governance for sustainable development in Africa.

The study's significance is assured with the current global health crisis created by COVID-19. A health crisis on a global scale has transformed into an economic, social, and political challenge for which the world is seeking answers to resolve the menacing pandemic, which is now a year-old in Africa. Some critical pointers towards what questions to ask to derive from Agenda 2063 and the UN SDGs' programmes. However, this would not have been brought into sharper foci, short of the strategic and practical import and application of the UNCEPA Principles. The baseline study on awareness, knowledge, and understanding of the UNCEPA principles was envisaged in a period that precedes COVID-19. But how the world approaches and addresses a COVID-19 and post COVID-19 environment from a good governance perspective? And how governments shall proceed to achieve or otherwise, Agenda 2063 and the SDGs will benefit from the serendipitous alignment calibration of the UNCEPA principles study and these two agendas?

What are the UNCEPA Principles?

The UNCEPA principles revamp societal, political, and economic strategies and guidelines for SDGs' effective governance. It frames the long-term global goals of sustainability along with eleven principles that address three key contexts. The first is the context of **effectiveness,** and this is described and expatiated upon by three areas of *competence, sound policymaking, and collaboration.* The second is about **accountability.** The descriptors of this aspect are *integrity, transparency, and independent oversight.* Finally, the third context is of **Inclusiveness,** which includes leaving no one behind, non-discrimination, participation, Subsidiarity, and integrational equity. Given the complex and interlinked nature of SDGs and Agenda 2063 aspirations, it is incredibly challenging to have a clear picture of the understanding, implementation, and knowledge of citizens and even experts on CEPA principles and how they are incorporated at the national level.

To explore this complexity, UNCEPA for each set of principles has come up with 62 commonly used strategies based on their amenability to deploy for explicating and addressing complexities in public administration settings. In this regard, the principles are being tested in the context of the APRM. Further, a selected number of African countries have been willingly active in figuring out whether national executives and practitioners can understand these principles. The purpose is to deploy appropriate ways to ensure that the officers in charge are empowered to deploy these tools to

achieve service effectiveness through accountability and Inclusiveness in public administration.

Effectiveness	Accountability	Inclusinvess,
• Competence • Sound policy making • Collaboration	• Integrity • Transparency • Independent oversight	• Leaving no one behind • Non-discrimination • Participation • Subsidiarity • Integrational equity

The structure and rationale of the Report

The Report covers five chapters. Chapter One highlights the study's rationale and main objectives, outcomes alongside methodology and strategic partners. Chapter Two reflects on the "*Progress of SDGs and Agenda 2063 in* Africa," with a particular focus on SDG 16 and how COVID-19 affected the implementation of SDGs in 2020. Chapter Three, entitled "*Understanding the CEPA Principles,*" provides the framework within which these principles were constructed and advocated for. It also explains the challenges of measurability of the captioned principles and some recommendations in this regard.

Chapter Four introduces the APRM Instrument, which is developed to assess the level of "*Awareness, Knowledge, Understanding, and Implementation of CEPA Principles in Africa.*" It also presents a quantitative analysis on the level of awareness, knowledge, understanding, and implementation of the CEPA principles in the African context as per the responses of national bureaucrats, civil society, and academia representatives from thirteen African countries. It also reports on how the pandemic influences or derail the implementation of CEPA principles. Finally, Chapter Five offers a brief on the "*African Countries Experiences with CEPA Principles; Putting Principles into practice,*" draws on case studies of policy design and implementation in countries. From these, it draws lessons on how in the different contexts the principles are applied. The case studies have been written for a few countries.

The study followed a mixture of methods; first, a desk review on implementing CEPA principles and strategies in selected African countries. Second, a survey questionnaire testing awareness, knowledge, understanding, and implementation of the principles in the context of COVID-19 along with side consultations with national executives. The results of the survey are divided into four areas: 1) respondents' demographics; 2) their level of awareness, knowledge, understanding of the principles; 3) application of the UNCEPA principles in policy work; 4) COVID-19 impact on the 62 CEPA strategies amongst the governments various protective and recovery measures and emerging opportunities.

Seventeen countries were selected to answer the APRM-CEPA e-questionnaire based on different criteria, including geographical balance, progress on SDGs and agenda 2063, engagement in APRM governance assessment reviews the country's responsiveness to submit voluntary national reviews (VNRs). However, the APRM got responses from the following countries: Egypt, Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritius, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sudan, South Africa, Senegal, Tunisia, and Uganda.

The study was based on key informant interviews. The study had the ambition to reach about a minimum of a hundred respondents across all seventeen selected countries. The study only got 26 respondents across 13 countries which provided less than half the number of respondents per country. Regardless, the study has yielded instructive results based on its crucial informant approach. The baseline study is viewed as reasonably covered the necessary work scope as anticipated. The key informants were experienced public officials with appreciable experience and significant exposure to education, as a number were professors at universities or public management training institutions.

Key findings of the Report

- The Report recognizes the significance of the UNCEPA principles in the context of the expanded mandate of the APRM, namely of monitoring and evaluating the implementation of Agenda 2063, "*the Africa we want*" and UN SDGs Agenda 2030. The principles come in at the right time and should empower the APRM in executing its task.
- CEPA principles assures the solid and positive linkages between the institution-building objectives of the 2030 Agenda and all the SDGs. For example, the

ability to explore innovative sources of financing, manage public-private partnerships, adopt new approaches to biodiversity preservation, improve wastewater treatment, strengthen social protection, and expand access to health care all require adequate capacity institutions.

- In the context of COVID-19, the UNCEPA principles offer essential recommendations, including strengthening institutions' competence by leveraging digital Government calls for greatly accelerated action to address digital divides within and across countries. The impact of digital Government on achieving the goals, in general, is determined by social and economic circumstances, for example, relating to the learning environment or access to water and sanitation in combating disease. Also, artificial intelligence and other technologies are expected to significantly shift and disrupt labour markets, which may have important implications for occupational groups involved in public service delivery. Investment in digital Government and related infrastructure, knowledge, and capabilities should thus be considered within the context of national sustainable development strategies and priorities.

- The global SDG index 2020 infers that Africa continues to make marginal progress on SDGs with the score increasing by a point annually. However, no African country is in the top 55 countries. North Africa is the best-performing region on average. The best-ranked Algeria only appears 56th with a score of 72.3, meaning that the country respectively on average 72.3% of the way to the best possible outcome across the 17 SDGs. The best possible outcome being 100%. The Sub-Saharan Africa average score is lower at 53.1, and the region is stagnating towards SDG 2030 targets on goals (1-7), 11, 16, and 17. Performance gaps remain wide-ranging, especially on poverty and education.

- A glance at SDG 16 shows that reporting on the goal is improving compared to the last three years. Yet, African countries face various critical statistical gaps to capture most of the indicators pertinent to this goal. Further, institutional aspects of SDG 16 – mainly Inclusiveness, effectiveness, and government integrity, are challenged by the pandemic effects in 2020.

- SDGs Financing in Africa in the context of COVID-19 is another challenge listed by many African countries. The decline of Official Development Assistance (ODA), Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and remittances to the continent will derail most SDGs' overall progress. Thus, CEPA principles and its strategies which include tackling Africa's long-lasting financial fatigues, i.e., external debt and illicit financial flows, shall be necessary addressed.

- The pandemic has underscored the central role of effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels that are capable of coping with complex and urgent governance challenges. This includes local authorities and communities working in partnership with civil society and the private sector in crisis response and ongoing contextualized implementation of the SDGs.

- The level of awareness and knowledge of CEPA principles varies across the continent amongst national executives. The discrepancy from awareness, knowledge, and understanding of the principles is severely vast. Further, the way of implementation of most of the principles and strategies is not standardized. For instance, the claim on knowledge of principles is about 80%, but this can be contrasted with the ability to classify the principles correctly, which shows profound disparities.

- Therefore, raising awareness on CEPA principles among national experts concerned about the SDGs domestication and implementation is necessary. Out of the twenty-six experts and key informants who responded to the questionnaire, five were unable to venture an opinion on awareness of UNCEPA principles; this begs how non-expert practitioners in public administration cope with the familiarity with will and demands of UNCEPA principles.

- African countries have different pressures and triggers to adopt, implement and nurture some of CEPA principles based on their domestic specificities. In a nutshell, social and political repressions, lack of inclusiveness, and empowering

women besides other structural weakness and constitutional reforms urged African countries to develop strategies pertinent to CEPA principles.
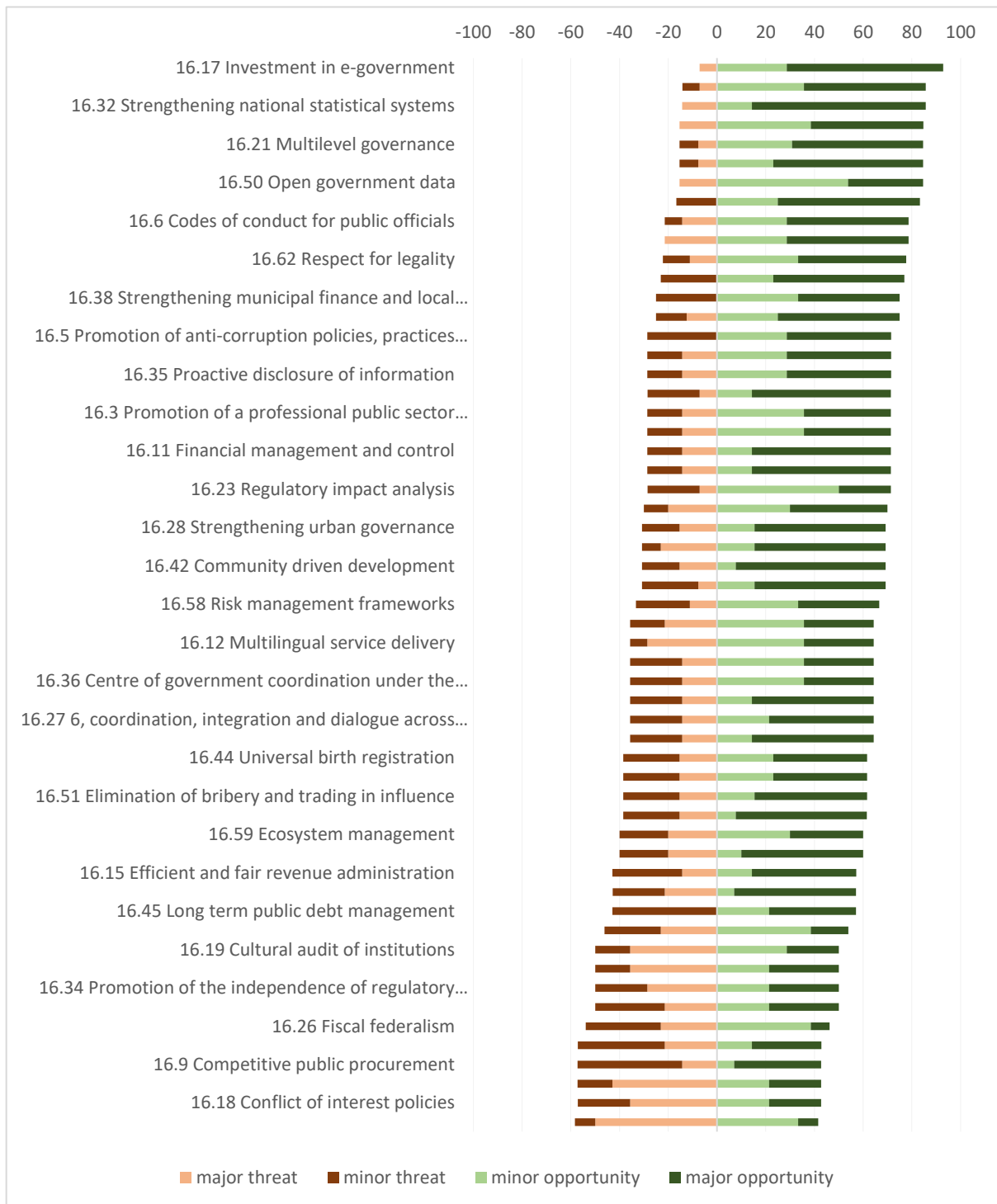

Figure 1 perceived COVID-19 impact on CEPA Principles

✓ **African countries' experiences in putting CEPA principles into practice**

Egypt: The Government of Egypt has been adopting various administrative and economic reforms since 2011. The revolution of January 2011 remains the primary trigger of these reforms. Egypt has made progress in some of CEPA principles and strategies, including effectiveness- competence promotion of a professional public sector workforce, developing promising 2030 vision for development, alongside collaboration among government bodies, and integrity and transparency. Efforts on strengthening anti-corruption policies shall also be recognized. Yet, the Government is encouraged to address strategies of the principle of Subsidiarity. It shall also enact new laws which influence Sound Policy-Making principle.

Botswana: the country has been keeping good record o institutional reforms and development planning since independence. The Sound Policy-Making principle has been a lodestar for Botswana. The Government extended the five-year plans and added a long-term planning layer starting with 1996 when they developed Vision 2016. At the end of that period, Botswana came with a new Vision 2036. From this perspective, Botswana embraced the UNCEPA principles almost fifteen years before they were pronounced. Botswana worked on their public administration's competence through the Human Resources (HR) Development Council as a deliberate strategy for training senior civil servants. While Botswana sustained a remarkable trajectory of five decades, Botswana has been found wanting on Budget Transparency. It had scored lower from 51 in 2010 to 47 in 2015. Furthermore, Botswana struggles with food insecurity with 22% as the average but shows rural urban disparities that leave the rural areas behind by 11 % more than the national average.

Ghana: there is reasonable progress in ineffectiveness, accountability, and inclusiveness principles at the national level. These principles are embraced by the government strategies, particularly the decentralized planning systems, and under the 1994 Act of National Planning Systems, Ghana drives a linked coordinated network and system. Ghana shall also be commended for applying various integrity and transparency strategies as it is one of the few African countries that offer a robust anti-corruption coalition at a broader scope. However, it is noted that although Ghana made significant progress during the Millennium Development Goals period, this was

undermined by intra-sectoral coordination defects. In addition to this, data deficiencies hampered the ability to appreciate the extent of looming challenges in time.

Kenya: Political leadership in Kenya galvanizes the adoption and implementation of most of CEPA Principles. Kenya undertook a self-assessment on how far they fare on implementing the UNCEPA principles in December 2020. Since the promulgation of the 2010 Constitution, Kenya has focused on the notion of a capable state. The necessary legislative instruments have been enacted, particularly those that affect the subsidiarity principle and transparency and anti-corruption efforts led by President Uhuru Kenyatta. Inclusiveness and decentralized governance approach are also visible as the Counties have been assigned fourteen key responsibilities and mandates. However, there is a persistent observation which is the lack of financial resources allocated for counties. Furthermore, the assessment found the UNCEPA framework invaluable as it also revealed the uneven capacity that persists in the public service.

Sudan: Sudan's current political transition offers an excellent opportunity to build up CEPA principles at national development planning and among national executives. The country has a long way to strengthen the knowledge, implementation, and application of the referred principles. Among the most stressing demands among executives are providing tailor-made capacity building training on good governance practices, of which some are CEPA principles, i.e., integrity, transparency, Inclusiveness (gender-sensitive budgeting), Strengthening the National Statistics System, revision of the civil service laws, and practices, establishing a national anti-corruption strategy and authority, and investment in information technology and digitalization.

South Africa: the country was given more focus on COVID-19 impact on applying CEPA principles. South Africa's response to COVID-19 was hailed to be relatively comprehensive and inclusive. The national strategy aimed at saving lives and livelihoods through various restrictive and protective measures. South Africa's Constitution is well aligned with the UNCEPA principles. In the planning of interventions, there is a greater alignment to the UNCEPA principles. As the pandemic hit the country, a strong sense of collaboration among government bodies was visibly recognized. South Africa set up a Command Structure led by the President himself and ministers to provide regular updates to the nation on the government

measures to respond to the pandemic. The policy frame aimed at leaving no one behind. Temporary COVID relief packages, including cash transfer to the unemployed and those not qualifying for any social grants being made available. Furthermore, health measures were also implemented by way of tracking and tracing with 28000 Community Health Workers' assistance. Thus, the principle of Inclusiveness drove the agenda.

The major problem has been though emanated from the accountability framework. Several unscrupulous businesspeople looted the funds directed to the pandemic. The business loan scheme of Rand 200 billion has only disbursed R 17 billion, and the President lamented this underwhelming extension of credit by the banks.

Key Recommendations:

CEPA principles' importance is unquestionable within the current political and severe economic challenges countries face beyond the covid-19 pandemic. The APRM should incorporate the principles into governance assessment reviews conducted on African states. In the light of the above evidence, it is recommended to consider the following:

- Whatever the national triggers were to apply CEPA principles, the principles are vital for translating policies and legislative frameworks into practical implementation tools. The UNCEPA principles have furthermore been shown to be amenable and valuable for deployment in periods of pandemics. Country case studies have elevated this evidence. With better awareness, knowledge, and understanding of these principles, it is possible to deploy them in times of pandemics effectively.

- UNCEPA principles need to be systematically introduced to the planning systems of governments. Accordingly, the APRM is encouraged to develop a manual, and a set of guidelines on CEPA Principles and strategies shall be designed to raise awareness and understanding of the principles alongside executive training for African national executives. This shall be aligned with APRM activities on strengthening good governance through its national governance structures.

- Given African countries' specificities and various triggers for adopting and applying CEPA principles and strategies, further detailed country-specific studies shall emerge from this APRM baseline study. This shall raise awareness of the principles among national executives and increase the potential number of national respondents. A close working relationship between APRM and country national statistics offices is a non-negotiable for the principles to pass essential muster of quality.

- For the proposed manual to be helpful, it is highly recommended that APRM collaborates with the Praia City Group on Governance Statistics alongside African statistical organs, i.e., AFROSAI-E. This will assist greatly when the principles and their attendant indicators ripen towards recognized indicator set for the SDGs at the United Nations Statistics Commission; and

- A pilot training program on training public administrators on these principles should be initiated without delay. The APRM will partner with the African Association for Public Administration and Management (APAAM) and other regional centres concerned about CEPA principles in Africa to develop such programs.

- Synergies with other AU organ, particularly the AU Commission and the African Governance Architecture, are encouraged to cascade the CEPA principles at national levels.

- The role of development and strategic partners of the AU, including the United Nations, GIZ, SIDA, and the European Union, is imperative to provide financial and technical support to member states in relevance to putting CEPA principles in to practice in Africa.