

PROTEST NOTE BY AFRICAN PROMOTERS OF DEMOCRACY

Formal Protest Against the Assumption of the Chairmanship of the Africa Peer Review (APR) Heads of States Forum by H.E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni of Uganda

I. Introduction

We, the undersigned promoters of democracy, human rights, and constitutionalism from across the African continent, submit this formal protest letter regarding the planned handover of the Chairmanship of the African Peer Review (APR) Heads of States Forum. Scheduled to take place on February 13, 2026, at the African Union Commission in Addis Ababa, this transition from President **Abdelmadjid Tebboune** of Algeria to President **Yoweri Museveni** of Uganda represents a severe moral and institutional crisis for the African Union. Rewarding a leader whose four-decade reign is defined by the systematic dismantling of democratic institutions is a betrayal of the millions of Africans who look to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) as a beacon of hope for good governance.

II. The Spirit of the APRM

Established in 2003, the APRM was conceived as a novel instrument for self-monitoring, intended to ensure that policies and practices of participating Member States conform to agreed values of democracy and political governance. Its spiritual foundation is in Articles 3 and 4 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union of 2000, which binds African states to promote the rule of law, the supremacy of the constitution, and regular free and fair elections. The *citizenry-driven mechanism*, is designed to foster a continent-wide culture of transparency, accountability, dialogue and popular participation—principles that Gen. Museveni has spent his rule and undermining and eventually dismantling in his country, and by extension the region.

III. Why President Museveni's Chairmanship is a Misstep for Africa

Entrusting the leadership of Africa's premier governance body to President Museveni is an affront to the mechanism for two primary reasons:

1. **Contempt for the APRM Process:** Since Uganda's accession in March 2003, Museveni has demonstrated a "thinly veiled disdain" for the process. While the APRM mandate seeks to institutionalize legitimate authority, Museveni has overseen the dismantling of Uganda's 1995 Constitution, removing presidential term limits in 2005 through bribery and intimidation, and scrapping age caps in 2017 following a military siege of Parliament. His style of governance is the antithesis of the "peer review" spirit; it is a model of monarchical entrenchment through patronage and executive overreach.
2. **Crushing of Democracy and Human Rights:** Under Museveni, Uganda has become a canvass of democratic reversal and decay. His regime is defined by:

Transnational Repression: The abduction of political opponents from foreign soil, including the recent cases of Dr. Kizza Besigye and 36 Ugandan activists in Kenya.

Impunity and Violence: The 2021 and 2026 elections saw state-sanctioned killings, while his son, the Chief of Defence Forces, has openly bragged about torturing opponents and threatened to invade neighbouring countries, including Kenya and South Sudan. Such inflammatory rhetoric and condoning of abuse are diametrically opposed to the APRM's goals of peace and security. Most recently, the **January 2026 General Election** served as a death knell for democratic standards. Independent observer reports reveal the usurping power by the security forces, under the command of his son, bypassed the Electoral Commission, taking over the issuance of electoral guidelines, threatening violence on citizens, orchestrating fraudulent tallying of results, and intimidation of polling officials into making wrong declarations for different positions, effectively turning what is ideally a civil process into a military operation. As well as institutional intimidation by uniformed personnel obstructed opposition agents and created an environment of fear at polling stations, rendering the results neither credible nor transparent.

3. **Total Institutional Capture and the Normalization of Corruption:** The Judiciary and Parliament have been captured. This is evidence by:

The Decimation of Oversight: The Judiciary and Parliament are no longer independent branches of government but have been reduced to appendages of the Executive through a mix of open bribery, patronage, and military intimidation. The 2017 invasion of Parliament by the Special Forces remains a chilling testament to this capture.

Weaponization of Law: The regime has captured the courts to ensure that corruption charges against loyalists are consistently dropped, while political opponents face trumped-up charges in military tribunals. The judiciary has been filled with so called cadre judges loyal to Gen. Museveni and his son, and unable to dispense justice to the standards commanded by the Constitution. This environment is the absolute antithesis of the APRM's pillars of Corporate and Economic Governance.

IV. Systematic Failure to domesticate the APRM Process

To further illustrate Gen. Museveni's unfitness for the APR Forum Chairmanship, this section integrates the 2008 APRM Country Review Report (CRR) findings, demonstrating a total lack of progress over nearly two decades.

1. Disregard for the APRM Recommendations (2008–2026)

When Uganda underwent its first APRM Country Review in 2008, ten "cross-cutting critical areas" were identified as essential for the nation's progress. Today, an assessment of these areas reveals a regime that has not only ignored these recommendations but has actively regressed, earning a "Failing" grade across the board:

Critical Area (2008 CRR)	Status - 2026	Reason for Failure
Managing Political Transition	REGRESSED	The 2005 removal of presidential term limits and 2017 removal of age limits at gun point—followed by the militarized 2026 election—have replaced constitutionalism with monarchical entrenchment.
Corruption	REGRESSED	Corruption has moved from being "endemic" to the <i>modus operandi</i> of the NRM. Uganda loses more to corruption than it receives in aid, with members of the First Family often implicated in the plunder. According to the Inspector General of Government reports, Uganda loses USD 2.7 billion on an annual basis, equivalent to 44% of the country's annual domestic revenue.
Decentralization	REGRESSED	Gains have been eroded by "district proliferation" used for patronage and gerrymandering. Re-centralization of power has hollowed out local government service delivery.
Policy Implementation	STAGNANT	Uganda remains a "country of good policies" (e.g., UP/E/USE) that collapse due to a lack of political will and institutional building. According to the Ministry of education data, approximately 45% of pupils who start Primary One drop out before completing Primary Seven. Around 30% of students drop out before completing their secondary education. While on average, 3,100 pupils drop out of school daily across the country.
The Land Question	REGRESSED	Land grabbing by state-connected actors is a growing phenomenon; 75% of national conflicts remain land-related.
Managing Diversity	REGRESSED	Regional and ethnic inequalities have deepened. Governance is defined by narrow patronage rather than inclusive management of diversity.

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Conflict in the North	STAGNANT	While guns are silent, the conflict in Northern Uganda lives on through the socio-economic realities. The region remains in a state of economic abandonment, characterized by extreme poverty rates of 66%–68% in the Acholi and Karamoja sub-regions respectively. This creates a staggering inequality compared to the central (9-12%) and Western (14%) regions, making a child in the North six times more likely to live in poverty. This disparity suggests that the promised post-war investments have been diverted, leaving the North trapped in systemic neglect.
International Standards	FAILING	Uganda continues to lag in ratifying and domesticating key international codes, ensuring that global human rights protections remain unenforceable "paper promises" locally. This "legal vacuum" is characterized by; failure to ratify the Malabo Protocol and fully domesticate the Rome Statute, shielding shields high-ranking officials from prosecution for corruption. While the Prevention and Prohibition of Torture Act exists, the government has failed to domesticate the Optional Protocol to UNCAT (OPCAT), preventing independent inspections of notorious "safe houses." The disregard for ACDEG standards allows the state to bypass term limits and use military force to dictate electoral outcomes.
Population Growth	UNADDRESS ED	With a 3.2% growth rate and 56% of the population under 18, economic gains are negated by a lack of sustainable social planning.
Aid Overdependence	STAGNANT	Uganda's fiscal priorities have shifted toward a "debt-and-defense" model, with public debt reaching UGX 124.1 trillion (approx. \$ 34.5 billion) and debt servicing now consuming nearly 75% of domestic revenue. For FY 225/2026, interest payments alone (UGX 11.3 trillion) exceed

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		the combined budgets for Health (UGX 5.7 trillion) and Education (UGX 5.4 trillion), leaving these social sectors dangerously dependent on donor funding.

2. The "Oil Curse" and Regional Integration:

Since the 2009–2012 addenda, the management of natural resources has become a tool for further patronage rather than national development. Furthermore, Gen. Museveni's son and Chief of Defence Forces has actively undermined "Regional Integration" by issuing military threats against EAC Partner States like Kenya.

V. Call to Action: A Plea to Citizens and the African Union

The failure of the Museveni government to give sufficient attention to these critical governance areas is the direct cause of the continuing degradation of the quality of life of Ugandans. It is a fundamental contradiction to appoint a leader to chair the APRM Heads of State Forum when his own country stands as a primary example of APRM recommendations being systematically ignored, discarded, and regressed upon.

To the Citizens of Africa:

We must reject the normalization of authoritarianism. We call upon all civil society organizations, the media, and pro-democracy actors to mobilize against this "reward to an arsonist." We must demand that our continental institutions reflect the values they purport to protect and refuse to stay silent as the APRM's quest for a just continent is traded for political expediency.

To the African Union:

We demand an immediate suspension of this handover. We reiterate our call: **Do not reward the abandonment of the APRM spirit.** To allow Gen. Museveni to lead this forum—a leader who views democracy as a nuisance and has just overseen a militarized electoral process—is to declare the APRM process dead.

We urge the AU Assembly to appoint a chairperson whose record actually aligns with the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG). Failure to do so will signal to the world that the African Union has become an "Old Boys Club" for dictators, rather than a guardian of the rights and aspirations of the African people.

Signed,

Promoters of Democracy across Africa

NAME	COUNTRY	ORGANIZATION
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IVAN KIBANGOU NGOY	Congo Brazzaville	Global Participe
Biro Embaló	Guiné-Bissau	Associação Juvenil para Promoção e Defesa dos Direitos Humanos - AJPDH
ERICK	Tanzania	ERM
Marcel MANI EPEE	Cameroun	REDHAC
Abdifatah Youssouf Farid	Djibouti	Hygiene Pour Tous Organisation
MOHAMED MANSOUR CAMARA	GUINÉ/ CONAKRY	LEADER RELIGIEUX
DONZO	Vayanga	Association of Young Dynamics for Sustainable Development
JANO FACE TÉ	GUINÉ-BISSAU	Associação dos Jovens para Proteção do Ambiente na Guiné-Bissau (AJPA-GB)
Vayanga DONZO Vayanga	Guinea, Conakry	Association of Young Dynamics for Sustainable Development
Bintu Foday	Sierra Leone	First Fruits Sierra Leone
Oluwatosin Adegun	Nigeria	ISH-61 Human Rights & Social Justice Initiative
George Ocen	Uganda	LWF
Dauda Ahmid Koroma	Sierra Leone	The Needy Today
Thomas A. Tokpah	Liberia	Geo-Environmental Research Agency For Development (GERAD-LIBERIA)
Solomon Mulolo	The Gambia	Child Protection Alliance (CPA) The Gambia
Zelmar Gomes	Guiné Bissau	AJPDH
Iaia Candé	Guiné-Bissau	Associação Juvenil para Promoção e defesa dos direitos humanos (AJPDH)
Akello Jacky Ruth	Uganda	Borderless Advocacy Group (BAG)
Deolano Cardoso	Guiné-Bissau	AJPDH
Fatumata Alzira Bangurá	Guiné-Bissau	AJPDH
Melanie SONHAYE KOMBATE	Togo	ROADDH/WAHRDN
Mamadi nhamadjo embalo	Guiné Bissau	AJPDH
Zilke Claudia Fernandes de Pina	Guinea-Bissau	AJPDH
Eliana Leão Carlos	Guiné Bissau	FONAS

TOLNO Tamba Fodé	Conakry	Réseau des Organisations de la Société Civile pour l'Observation et le Suivi des Elections en Guinée - ROSE
Soraia Rosângela Molé	Guinea-Bissau	Young Women Of Africa
Njoroge Waithera	Kenya	Individual
Ussumane seidi	Cuntum Madina	AJPDH
Benazir Mário da Silva	Guiné-Bissau	Associação juvenil de promoção para Direitos Humano
Benazir Mário da Silva	Guiné-Bissau	Associação juvenil de promoção para Defesa dos Direção Humanos
Iscardete Djedjo	África	AJPA
Nana Grey-Johnson	The Gambia	Personal
Tonecas Ussumane Baldé	Guinea-Bissau	Movimento Jovem "Nó Pensa Guiné"
Namubiru Barbara	Uganda	FHR
NAJI MOULAY LAHSEN	Morocco	Network of the independent Commission for Human rights in North Africa CIDH AFRICA
Okezie Kelechukwu	Nigeria	Neighbourhood Environment Watch Foundation
Raouf Mellal	Algeria	Confédération Syndicale des Forces Productives - COSYFOP
Jorge Gomes Da Silva Júnior	Guiné-Bissau	Associação juvenil para a promoção e defesa dos direitos humanos AJPDH
Emílio José Manuel	Angola	PLUDH - Associação Lusófona dos Direitos Humanos
Aminata Haidara	Guiné-Bissau	AJPDH
Yves RUGONDERA, (Directeur Exécutif)	Burundi	Association de Lutte Contre les Violences Sexuelles et Appui à la Promotion du Développement Durable "ALUCOVIS-APDD"
Alcides Rodrigues	Guine Bissau	AJPDH
Anthony	Uganda	Makerere University
Christopher Isingoma	Uganda	Hoima
James BIDAL	South Sudan	South Sudan Human Rights Defenders Network (SSH RDN)
Mwanase Ahmed	Kenya	Coordinator, Pan African Solidarity Network
David Djumbe	Tanzania	CHADEMA
Amka Singida	Tanzania	AMKA
Zahid Rajan	Kenya	Solidarity Network Kenya

N'TAKPE BERNARD	BOKA	COTE D'IVOIRE	Afrique Démocratie Conseils (ADC)
N'TAKPE BERNARD	BOKA	COTE D'IVOIRE	Fédération des Associations et ONG de la Société Civile de Cote d'ivoire (FEDAOSC.CI)