

Comments on the Report of the Internal Review Committee on Membership and Governance

February 2015

The Executive Committee of CODESRIA (EC) is grateful to the Internal Review Committee for Membership and Governance (IRC/M&G) for its constructive report, received on February 27, 2015, which provides a thorough review of CODESRIA's history and a useful framing of the current challenges it is facing. The EC is, therefore, circulating the full report of the IRC/M&G to the entire membership of CODESRIA to promote deliberation and debate on its contents.

Accompanying this report are the EC's following observations:

1. The EC attaches a lot of importance to the examination of the relationship between the EC and the Secretariat. It believes that it was an omission not to take up this issue in the report. The EC's mission of oversight needs to be explained and detailed and the processes and mechanisms for its exercise elaborated for the sake of both the EC and the Secretariat, notwithstanding who is in the EC or in the Secretariat. The EC is convinced that what is admittedly a "recurring" complaint on the part of both EC and Secretariat cannot be reduced to a question of personalities. It is precisely to avoid

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challenges of personality that clear rules must be set and mechanisms created in order to regulate the oversight function and uphold mutual accountability.

2. The Executive Committee believes that one of CODESRIA's strengths is the diverse character of its membership (generation, gender, geography, language, discipline, ideology...). To the organisation's credit, CODESRIA has tried – and succeeded – in managing this diversity and ensuring balance and inclusivity in both its programmes and governance. The EC does not believe that this diversity in anyway undermines CODESRIA's "scientific standing and credibility".
3. On CODESRIA's character as a social science research institution, the EC is of the view that CODESRIA's trajectory has been to affirm the value of the social sciences in their broadest definition and the impor-

tance of transdisciplinarity as an approach. This is done in keeping with the very evolution of the social sciences.

4. The report has a detailed consideration for the question of membership and significant recommendations for Charter amendments, which are most welcome and which will be tabled at the GA for adoption.
5. While the EC agrees with the report's observation that participants and beneficiaries of the Council's work do not have to be members of CODESRIA, it invites more reflection on the benefits that individual and institutional members of CODESRIA should have beyond their participation in governance. In addition to belonging to a unique pan- African community of scholars, there are benefits which already exist which could be made more explicit in the areas of publication, representation, hosting, networking, collaborations and partnerships. The EC believes that this would strengthen the case for membership and support the building of a healthy membership base.
6. The IRC/M&G report sees CODESRIA's evolution in terms of strengthening its institutional mem-



bership base, and several of its recommendations for governance reform derive from this premise. The EC believes that the case for moving in this direction still needs to be made, and whether and how this can be done requires further reflection. Therefore, the EC plans to table this item for deliberation during the General Assembly.

Therefore, whether and how to implement the weighting of votes and representation, proposed in the report, will only be decided after further consideration of the case for strengthening institutional membership.

7. The EC considers that that the IRC/M&G report did not make the case

for the abolition of the Scientific Committee and its replacement by an enlarged EC that will take up its function. The EC, therefore, will invite further deliberation on this issue at the GA.

8. On implementing the amendments which are carried by the General Assembly the EC agrees with the IRC/M&G report that some transitional arrangements may be necessary if the proposed Charter amendments (and bye-laws) on elections are accepted. In this regard the EC believes that three scenarios are possible:
 - a. The amended Charter comes into force immediately, but is implemented only partially by

holding elections using the provisions which can be feasibly activated.

- b. The amended Charter comes into force immediately and is fully implemented by not holding elections at the 14th GA, but instead establishing the electoral panel to implement its provisions fully in accordance with the bye-laws. Therefore a special GA will be held within 12 months during which the new EC assumes office.
- c. The amended charter comes into force the day after the GA and therefore elections in the 14th GA are held under the old rules (regional caucuses etc.)