

**Meeting between the Government of Azerbaijan the Open Government Partnership
Criteria and Standards Subcommittee in Tbilisi Georgia**

Summary

Date and place:

- 18 July 2018, Tbilisi, Georgia

Participants:

- Kamal Jafarov, Executive Secretary, Anti-Corruption Commission - Government of Azerbaijan
- Stefano Pizzicannella Director for International Relations, Simplification Unit, Department for Public Administration - Government of Italy and Criteria and Standards Co-chair
- Alonso Cerdan and Jaime Mercado - OGP Support Unit

Summary

On 18 July 2018, representatives of the Criteria and Standards (C&S) subcommittee and Support Unit (SU) met with the government point of contact of Azerbaijan, Kamal Jafarov. The meeting was held to obtain an update on the progress made by the government of Azerbaijan regarding the recommendations set forth by the OGP Steering Committee (SC) to ameliorate the civic space constraints in the country, which originally triggered a [Response Policy](#) case in 2016.

The [two overarching recommendations](#) -simplifying registration process of CSOs and simplifying the regulations to access funding- are part of the inactivity decision reached by the SC on 25 September 2017. As per the terms of the inactivity decision, the government of Azerbaijan has until 25 September 2018 to implement these recommendations. Since the 2017 inactivity decision, the SU has held periodic check-in calls with the government of Azerbaijan, focusing on concrete efforts to address the recommendations.

At the request of Mr. Jafarov, the SU and the C&S thoroughly walked through each of the recommendations in order to address any questions and requests for clarification. In response, Mr. Jafarov requested the SU to provide concrete examples and good practices to implement the proposed recommendations, such what would constitute clear grounds under international law to legitimately deny CSO registrations, and inquired about Italy's experience in registering foreign grants.

In addition, the following timeline and process for the SC to reach a decision on Azerbaijan's participation status in OGP was reviewed at the meeting:

- By 25 September 2018, the government on Azerbaijan must provide a final report on the progress made on the recommendations of the inactivity decisions, and any comments for the C&S to consider when drafting its report.

- The SU will draft a report based on reports and comments from government and civil society, as well as updates provided by international partners and experts working on Azerbaijan.
- Based on the report, the C&S will provide a recommendation on Azerbaijan's participation in OGP for the full SC to adopt at its December 2018 meeting. The SC will then opt to adopt, reject, or amend such recommendation.

Mr. Jafarov indicated that the Azeri government is aware of the upcoming deadline. However, additional time beyond the 25 September 2018 deadline could be necessary to implement changes that require parliamentary approval. The Azeri Parliament is set to reconvene in September 2018. Mr. Jafarov also reiterated the willingness and desire of the government of Azerbaijan continue working in OGP, and that the national OGP Platform remains very active. Furthermore, the Anti-Corruption Commission of Azerbaijan, which heads the OGP process in the country, is very motivated to continue working with the platform, regardless of the decision that the SC takes in its December 2018 meeting.

The SU indicated that the proposals to address the recommendations were developed based on an open call in which government, civil society, and third-party experts participated. While the government may not be able to fully implement each proposal, the SU encouraged the government to include as much information as possible in the final report regarding what steps have been taken to address them.

The SU and the C&S reiterated that it stands ready to provide any necessary support to the government and Azeri civil society throughout this process.