



Cabinet Office

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Dear colleagues,

Three years ago the UK joined seven other countries and interested civil society organisations to found and launch the Open Government Partnership (OGP). Since then the energy, ambition and tenacity we have seen invested by OGP participants, and the progress that has been made, has been humbling. It is gratifying to see that the expectations we invested in this partnership at the beginning are being realised, but we are still in the foothills of our climb and significant challenges remain.

I often talk to people who ask why the OGP is different to other international initiatives and agreements that they are part of and why I have so much faith in its potential to catalyse significant reform. It is because it has at its core the factors that are so crucial to its success and it seeks to institutionalise them in a constructive and measurable way. It does this without creating a burdensome bureaucratic superstructure.

Within the OGP, politicians, civil servants and civil society are brought together; tangible commitments are made, and are typically as ambitious as the breadth of engagement that went into their creation; and, crucially, the Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) assesses countries' progress and provides the means for us to be held accountable. The OGP ensures there is no place for us just to pay lip service to transparency. This is why I believe the OGP is the ideal vehicle to accelerate progress on open government reform.

I am proud that the UK has played a leading role in the OGP's development but there is still more to be done. Our ongoing desire to challenge ourselves domestically, and incentivise ambition internationally, is why I submit our application to re-run for a place on the Steering Committee. In so doing I restate our commitment to the OGP and to the Open Government Declaration, and to using our acknowledged leadership in this field to continue to support existing and new members in a 'race to the top'.

The UK was support, then lead co-chair of the OGP from April 2012 - October 2013. In September 2012 we organised a high-level event in the margins of the UN General Assembly and in October 2013 we organised a global summit in London attended by over 1,500 delegates from over 80 countries. These events gave us a greater understanding of the momentum there is in this movement, as well as the challenges inherent in supporting such a diverse agenda. Working with, supporting, and learning from other countries, which are at different stages in their efforts to promote openness in government, has been hugely inspiring and has provoked greater ambition in the UK.

During our chairmanship we focused on: expanding the OGP's influence and raising its profile internationally; championing the idea that transparency is the crucial vehicle for achieving significant government reform; using our international leadership as a catalyst for making ambitious commitments domestically and encouraging others to do likewise; expanding membership of the partnership and supporting existing members with implementation of commitments; and protecting and promoting the space for civil society that is at the core of the OGP, both internationally and in the UK.

Since handing over chairmanship our vision for the OGP is: to continue to provide support to countries which are new to the OGP or where we can provide targeted assistance; to create useful networks of reformers across the world; promoting and championing the OGP internationally and identifying opportunities to strengthen our collective voice on important global issues; to continue to ensure that space for civil society is at the centre of all that we do; and to progress our domestic work and implement our national action plan in an innovative way.

Track record

- To meet the objectives of our co-chairmanship the UK hosted two peer exchange events, in the margins of Steering Committee meetings, and a global summit. Each of these brought together reformers from around the world, to learn from each other. During our chairmanship we oversaw: the establishment of the IRM - the most substantial means we have to ensure open government commitments are fulfilled and the best way of enhancing the value of participation in the OGP; the agreement of partnerships with four multilateral organisations; and the establishment of an independent media council. Six new countries joined during our co-chairmanship and at all levels we ensure that we use the opportunity of meetings with other governments, and public events, to champion the partnership. We also supported other countries – at particularly difficult stages of their domestic political reforms – on a path towards membership.
- I have taken part in all Ministerial level Steering Committee meetings over the last three years. We have a dedicated team in the Cabinet Office which leads our transparency work at all levels across government, with a core group focused on international work and OGP. The international transparency team is supported by colleagues from other government departments, in particular the Foreign & Commonwealth Office. They participate in subcommittee meetings and Steering Committee discussions and ensure I am regularly informed about OGP activity.
- I have personally led the UK's transparency agenda for four years, championing it at a domestic and international level and working hard to build it into the very core of our public services. This is also a priority that has been continually and firmly expressed by the Prime Minister since he came to office in 2010. David Cameron has driven this agenda through his public letters on transparency, which set the UK off on its journey towards greater openness.
- I chair the UK Transparency Board which brings together other ministers, senior officials and senior experts, including Sir Tim Berners-Lee, leading academics and business representatives to advise us on our transparency agenda. Our data portal, data.gov.uk is one of the largest of its kind in the world and has around 13,000 published datasets. In October 2013 we made open source software for our data portal available, which is free for anyone wishing to use it. This illustrates our commitment to sharing our experience with others.
- We have met all deadlines for the publication of our action plan self-assessment report and second national action plan. Following feedback from the IRM on our first OGP national action plan, which said that we had not done enough to engage civil society in its creation, we co-created our second national action plan with a group of civil society partners and are currently implementing it in the same fashion. We have been happy to share our experience with others and also to learn from them. This helps ensure we remain ambitious and at the forefront of this developing agenda.
- The co-creation of our national action plan led to a set of commitments that demonstrate how much we want to achieve. At the OGP Summit in London our Prime Minister built on a hugely successful year for the UK's international leadership on transparency. As part of our Presidency of the G8 we sought to get our own house in order and demonstrate meaningful commitment and progress but also to promote transparency across the globe. David Cameron chose to make our headline commitment a publicly accessible register of beneficial ownership, which he announced in the opening session of the London Summit.
- We used the London Summit as a huge incentive for demonstrating ambition and progress across the OGP. We invited other political figures to attend and announce stretching new commitments to open government – in total there were 37 new announcements made at the Summit and we provided a significant platform for governments and their civil society partners to come together to discuss progress and what still needed to happen.

OGP leadership

- The role I have played in championing the OGP internationally has been supplemented by significant effort across the UK's diplomatic network. It is through our extensive and well-established Embassies and High Commissions, with officials drawn from both our Foreign & Commonwealth Office, as well as our Department for International Development, that we are able to provide support and technical assistance to other OGP members and reach out to countries which are close to eligibility or are interested in membership. These efforts have seen a significant number of new countries joining the partnership and have also seen the OGP reflected in broader discussions, as we seek to identify opportunities to bring transparency and open government to the forefront in other international fora. We have also supported several countries on a path to membership, using OGP membership as a long-

term goal to support domestic reformers and continue to use our diplomatic network for the benefit of the partnership.

- We have made sure our financial contributions are made on time so that the effective operation of the Support Unit can be guaranteed. Last year we contributed more than the minimum core contribution and supplemented this with a grant to the IRM.
- We will continue to lead by example, to espouse the principles of open government in our international engagement and advance the ideals of open and participatory government. We have a strong track record of incentivising change and encouraging more radical action amongst OGP members. A lot of our outreach work has also focused on countries undergoing significant political change, for example in those North African countries affected by the Arab Spring and in Burma. We have firmly positioned open government as the vehicle necessary to build trust and effect meaningful change and have been open about the challenges we have faced, in the hope that others will learn from this and that we can continue to benefit from their experience as well.
- Having spent 18 months as OGP co-chair, we are well aware of the commitment needed to play an active role on the Steering Committee and support the ongoing work of the OGP. The Cabinet Office will continue to lead this work and would be able to dedicate the time and resource expected of Steering Committee members. They will be supported by my active involvement.

I hope that I have been able to demonstrate the passion and experience the UK would continue to bring to the Steering Committee. I am always struck, at events and forums of the OGP, by the energy and enthusiasm of the people who participate. It is truly one of the most exciting and innovative things I have had the chance to be involved in during my years in government and I hope the UK can continue to play an important role in supporting future co-chairs to realise their own ambitions and working with other members to discover the even greater potential there still is in this partnership.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Francis Maude." The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

FRANCIS MAUDE

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