

Open Government Partnership
Ministerial Steering Committee Meeting
September 5, 2023

Welcome and Opening

The Lead Co-Chairs of the Open Government Partnership (OGP), represented by the Government of Estonia and Anabel Cruz, convened a ministerial-level Steering Committee (SC) meeting during the 8th OGP Global Summit held in Tallinn on September 6-7, 2023. Taimar Peterkop, the Secretary of State for Estonia and Lead Government Co-Chair, inaugurated the session by emphasizing the pivotal role of the Steering Committee in implementing the 2023-2028 OGP Strategy. He introduced Anabel Cruz, Founder & Director of ICD from Uruguay, as the Civil Society Co-Chair, who delivered welcoming remarks and underscored the meeting's objective: identifying collective actions that the SC can undertake to effectively exercise its leadership role.

Session 1: Open government approaches to strengthen democracy and the opportunity for the Steering Committee to lead and inspire an open government movement.

Secretary of State Peterkop welcomed Jon Alexander, author of CITIZENS book and Co-Founder of the New Citizenship Project, as the guest moderator. Jon provided context for the meeting by addressing the current geopolitical climate and the state of democracy. He stressed the need to rebuild trust between governments and citizens and posed the framing question for the discussion: How can the SC lead and inspire an open government movement beyond submitting action plans to a platform?

OGP CEO Sanjay Pradhan reinforced Jon's remarks emphasizing that OGP has facilitated the co-creation of over 5000 reforms by governments and civil society over the past 12 years. While these reforms have improved transparency, participation, and accountability, they remain insufficient to realize OGP's full potential. Sanjay outlined four areas where the SC could play a pivotal role: 1) Enhancing global partnerships and leveraging OGP as the implementation mechanism for global initiatives; 2) Addressing thematic challenges; 3) Mainstreaming open government at the country level; 4) Fostering collective leadership, with a shared purpose and esprit de corps among SC members.

Secretary of State Peterkop acknowledged the evolving role of the SC and emphasized the need for concrete actions to showcase open government's potential in addressing global challenges. He highlighted the importance of political leadership, and urged the SC to lead by example, invest political capital and engage in diplomatic outreach to inspire a stronger open government movement.

The moderator invited the SC to share comments and suggested actions to ensure political leadership for the implementation of OGP's new strategy. These included:

- Investing more in strategic outreach carried out by the SC, including hosting sessions and convening regional leadership meetings focused on OGP issues. Leverage the SC political influence to inspire other countries to join OGP.
- Sharing good practices for involving international development actors in OGP activities, and exploring the potential for OGP to be included in cooperation agreements with African countries to coordinate regional OGP activities and promote peer learning.
- Investing in emerging democracies in Asia and engaging in dialogue with all countries, including dissenting voices, recognizing growth opportunities in the region.
- Seeking opportunities to enhance regional integration, emphasizing the role of the Steering Committee in representing OGP as a whole, beyond individual governments and organizations.
- Hosting retreats to engage ministers and others in new and innovative ways, and leverage traditional space such as the UN General Assembly and related events. Streamline and integrate international commitments into OGP action plans to make them more inclusive and effective.
- Promoting synergies between the open government and other agendas, leveraging partnerships with organizations like the Organization of American States (OAS).
- Showcasing the tangible benefits of open government to the public, including improved economic outcomes and human rights protection. Develop tools to build resiliency within OGP, especially in the face of challenges such as coups in African countries.

The moderator acknowledged the potential of these incremental shifts and encouraged future SC discussions to take stock of progress made.

Session 2: Building high-level political support for the Open Government Challenge

Anabel Cruz introduced the Open Government Challenge, a key component of OGP's strategy to accelerate collective progress on open government reforms. She emphasized that as a partnership-wide approach, the Support Unit will facilitate its implementation while the Steering Committee will play a crucial political role in encouraging all OGP members to drive tangible reforms, as well as to lead by example.

Anabel invited Tonu Basu, Deputy Director of Thematic Policy Areas, to provide additional context to guide the discussion. She emphasized that the Challenge will act as the overarching structure for OGP's thematic work, uniting various activities and incentives to boost ambition across thematic areas - bringing together awards, technical guidance, financial support, thematic coalitions, events, peer exchange opportunities, campaigns and other communications efforts under one comprehensive approach.

Anabel invited SC comments and suggested actions for the SC to lift the Challenge, which included:

- OGP needs to tap into its network of champions, integrate thematic challenges into the national agenda, and scale up efforts to institutionalize OGP domestically.
- There is a need to collaborate closer across the SC in order to secure political buy-in from other OGP members at the highest government levels, including with OGP Local members, recognizing their prominence in SC member countries.
- Identify areas with existing momentum that can align with the Challenge. Seek opportunities with embedded momentum in areas such as justice, and consider collaboration with social justice action groups. Emphasize the connection of Challenge areas with major international platforms and events focused on those thematic areas.
- Each government in the Steering Committee should take on one of the Challenge areas to ensure representation within the Partnership and showcase efforts bilaterally to encourage greater uptake.
- Civic space should be an area of focus for all SC members, given the global backsliding. There is also a need for governments to relate other Challenge areas with civic space and to collaborate within the SC to address this issue.
- Amplify existing reform examples more broadly, particularly in light of upcoming UN-related opportunities to elevate the Challenge.

Session 3: Endorsement of the “Tallinn Commitment”

Taimar Peterkop presented the “Tallinn Commitment”, a high-level statement outlining collective leadership actions by the SC to advance the new OGP Strategy. The Co-Chairs noted that all SC members had an opportunity to provide input on the Commitment's draft text, which was finalized and endorsed at working-level before the meeting. The Co-Chairs called for unanimous support from the SC to demonstrate a strong and unified message to the wider Partnership. The Commitment received unanimous support, with the Government of Nigeria and the Government of Morocco abstaining from paragraph nine related to support for Ukraine. The Tallinn Commitment was [published](#) shortly after the meeting.

Session 4: Future Leadership of OGP

Anabel summarized earlier SC decisions, including the endorsement of Kenya as the next government co-chair and Blair Glencorse, Co-CEO of Accountability Lab, as the civil society co-chair. Kenya and Blair presented an overview of their agenda for the co-chair year which starts on October 1, 2023.

The SC was reminded of the September 5th deadline for candidates from both government and civil society to serve as the next Co-Chairs of OGP after Kenya and Blair Glencorse. The Government of Spain submitted its candidacy for the 2024-25 co-chair term, with no other candidates emerging. There was no candidate for the incoming civil society co-chair role, and an update from the civil society group of the SC is expected in October. Following a presentation of their co-chair candidacy, the Government of Spain was endorsed as the next government co-chair of OGP. Spain will serve as the Incoming Co-Chair from October 1, 2023, until taking over the Lead Co-Chair role from Kenya on October 1, 2024.

List of Participants

Governments (Heads of Delegation):

Canada: Stephen Burt, Chief Data Officer

Chile: Claudia Montero Meza, Advisor, Commission for Public Integrity and Transparency, Ministry General Secretariat of the Presidency

Estonia: Taimar Peterkop, Secretary Of State

Germany: Sebastian Haselbeck, Policy advisor, Modern Government Division, Federal Chancellery

Indonesia: Bogat Widyatmoko, Deputy Minister for Politics, Law, Defense, and Security, Ministry of National Development Planning

Italy: Paolo Zangrillo, Minister for Public Administration [virtual]; Sabina Bellotti, National Point of Contact for OGP, Department for Public Administration

Kenya: Philip Thigo, Senior Advisor, Data and Innovation, Legislative and Intergovernmental Liaison Office

Morocco: Sarah Lamrani, Secretary General, Ministry of Digital Transition and Administrative Reform

Nigeria: Alhaji Abubakar Garba, Acting Government Co-Chair, Registrar General, Corporate Affairs Commission

Korea: Joohyun Seo, Director General for Government Innovation, Ministry of the Interior and Safety

United Kingdom: Sue Bateman, Interim Chief Data Officer

Spain: Lidia Sanchez, Secretary of State for Public Function [SC term begins October 1, 2023]

United States: Robin Carnahan, Administrator, GSA [SC term begins October 1, 2023]

Civil Society

Natalia Carfi, Executive Director, Open Data Charter

Anabel Cruz, Founder and Director, ICD Uruguay

Aidan Eyakuze, Executive Director, Twaweza

Eka Gigauri, Executive Director, Transparency International Georgia

Blair Glencorse, Co-CEO, Accountability Lab

Lysa John, Secretary-General, CIVICUS

Lucy McTernan, Chair, Scottish Open Gov Network

Stephanie Muchai, Program Director, International Lawyers Project

Luben Panov, Senior Program Advisor, European Center for Not-for-Profit Law

Douglas Rutzen, President and CEO, International Center for Not-for-Profit Law

Barbara Schreiner, Executive Director, Water Integrity Network

Juan Carlos Fernandez Andrade, Open government and Public Innovation Coordinator, Fundación Corona [SC term begins October 1, 2023]

Zukiswa Kota, Programme Head - South Africa, Public Service Accountability Monitor [SC term begins October 1, 2023]