



**IBP Executive Director Warren Krafchik's Remarks at Opening Plenary**  
Open Government Partnership Summit 2013  
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Prime Minister Cameron, Vice President Boediono, and distinguished guests, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

**Introduction**

I started working on budget transparency in South Africa as the African National Congress government replaced the apartheid government. I remember clearly a day early in the transition when the new parliamentary finance committee used the new constitution to ask the Department of State Expenditure to report on its progress in developing the next year's budget. In response to the request, long-time members of the department reluctantly appeared before the committee and a packed house of journalists and CSOs (civil society organizations).

Before speaking, the officials asked the chair to clear the room of journalists because they had *extremely* sensitive information to share. The chair agreed. And what *was* the extremely sensitive information? Only that national departments had asked for twice the funds available to the Treasury. That was hardly unusual, but it was much more than South Africa's government was used to revealing.

A good discussion ensued, until someone realized that the chair had forgotten to turn off the microphone to the media room. The next day, all major newspapers led with headlines that departments had requested twice the funds available to the Treasury.

What happened next? Nothing. The new government didn't fall and markets didn't crash. The South African transition advanced, with a debate that was more robust, with more access to facts. Citizens understood the information, the media reported more on budget issues, business incorporated the news into their projections, and government negotiations continued with a bit more pressure on civil servants to be realistic. Over time, the Department of State Expenditure worked with others in and out of government to help South Africa become a global leader in budget transparency.

As this story shows, opening government is a rollercoaster ride. But, the payoffs are immeasurable.

OGP's growth shows that the message of more open, responsive government resonates strongly not only in South Africa but all over the world. In just two years, we have achieved a remarkable amount:

61 countries, and over 1,000 commitments, are impressive headlines. The stories on the ground are even more compelling.

- In Mexico and the U.K., co-creation replaced consultation as civil society rejected the first OGP national action plan and, together with government, reimagined the process for developing and monitoring the plan.
- Tanzania, Liberia, Kenya, Jordan, Hungary, Ghana, and Croatia are all working to develop Citizens Budgets to enable citizens to participate in the traditionally closed budgeting system.
- The Philippines is implementing the “good housekeeping program” — a performance-based grant system to reward government units that meet standards of performance. Citizens and CSOs participate in the scheme by joining validation teams.

We're making good progress, but not in all countries — and even countries at the leading edge can do better.

We can't assume success. There is no invisible hand of accountability to ensure it. Government openness is fiercely contested, between those who favor openness and those who benefit from closed government. The role of OGP is to tip the balance of power in favor of openness.

To do that in many more countries, we need to intensify our efforts in four areas:

- fundamentally transform government-citizen engagement;
- aim higher to achieve more;
- protect civil society against growing threats; and
- trigger OGP's collective action potential.

## **1. Government-citizen dialogue**

In working for open government, we should all be humble. There are no easy answers to longstanding problems. No one in government, civil society, or the private sector has all of them. Working together, governments and citizens bring more and better information to the table. That information drives better policy choices and better implementation. That's why reinventing the government-citizen relationship is what OGP is all about.

So far, the quality of the OGP process has been mixed. There are inspiring examples in a number of OGP countries. But, while 40 percent of CSO respondents to a recent survey said the dialogue process was excellent, another 40 percent said it was very weak, and the remaining 20 percent were ambivalent. Many activists say their proposals aren't taken seriously, or they're not told why proposals are accepted or rejected, or their engagement is ad hoc and inconsistent.

The message is clear. We applaud the pioneering examples of real dialogue. But, we are troubled that so many of our colleagues remain deeply unhappy with the process. National conversations may

involve a steep learning curve, but there are good models for countries to adapt, forums to facilitate learning, and an engaged civil society.

Let's not waste the opportunity to do something *really powerful*. At this Summit, the most important discussion is how we make much more progress in advancing CSO participation in every country. To reach that goal, we should focus on real dialogue, consistent engagement throughout the process, and answerability.

## **2. Ambition**

OGP is really a race to the top. We want to drive good practices to a higher level of innovation and impact. *Many* national action plans *are* filled with creative and meaningful commitments that stretch current practices on participation and accountability.

But, too many of them just recycle previous government programs, or add small steps to unremarkable policies. Some focus only on easy wins, or on policies that won't make government any more open.

During these two days, we will talk about deepening participation and broadening civil society engagement to drive ambition. We rarely talk about how to support the civil service reformers who will deliver the commitments. *They* will ultimately determine our success. A skilled and enthusiastic layer of civil servants can drive reforms, maintain the commitment of top-level ministers, and create space for real creative engagement.

That's why the five working groups we will launch today are so critical. You all have an important role in helping to design them in ways that support active learning and ambition.

## **3. Protecting civil society**

We also need to protect civil society from government constraints. In an alarming range of countries, activists increasingly can't organize, speak openly, and receive funding. In many cases, outspoken critics are jailed, and even tortured and killed. Civil society faces troubling new restrictions all around the world. Even some governments that are committed to democracy and are promoting openness as part of OGP are simultaneously stifling civil society.

We must recognize that those government efforts could undermine everything we stand for. How can OGP respond? One option is to adjust the partnership's eligibility criteria to better capture civil society space. A second is to enable OGP to suspend countries that violate the basic conditions for civil society to operate. We can debate the option. We cannot delay this discussion.

## **4. Triggering collective action**

Our commitment to civil society and government collaboration and our global reach give us an exceptional opportunity for collective action. As the Prime Minister noted, OGP can make a big contribution to influencing the post-2015 development agenda.

Some question the political support for including governance in the post-MDG framework. Our diverse membership of 61 governments should make clear just how broad the political support is for putting transparency and accountability at the heart of the next MDGs.

Furthermore, OGP has an innovative design that balances an overarching thematic framework with country-led goal setting and independent review. OGP can support post-2015 architects who are struggling to balance an overarching framework with country ownership.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, we have a choice. We can continue to make incremental progress in some countries. That's fine. But, if that's all we do, we will have wasted an amazing opportunity.

Or, we can do something different. We can really stretch ourselves to revolutionize the government-citizen relationship.

That's the choice we will make today and in the years to come.

Thank you.