

Open Government Partnership
Full Steering Committee Meeting
Working Level
Tagaytay, Philippines
3-4 February 2025

MEETING MINUTES AND NEXT STEPS

Monday, February 3

Welcome and Opening

The OGP Steering Committee (SC) met in person (at working-level) in Tagaytay, Philippines from February 3-4 to take stock of the Partnership and key challenges and opportunities for OGP. The Lead Co-Chairs, the Government of Spain and Cielo Magno, called the meeting to order, emphasizing the importance of in-person engagement and thanking the Government of the Philippines for hosting. Following brief welcoming remarks from the Government of the Philippines, Aidan Eyakuze, incoming CEO of OGP, introduced himself and shared how his personal and professional background will guide his leadership of OGP.

Session 1: The Role of OGP in a Multipolar Geopolitical Landscape & the Imperative for Steering Committee Leadership

Aidan Eyakuze introduced guest speaker [Thomas Carothers](#), Director of Carnegie's Democracy, Conflict, and Governance Program. Thomas Carothers presented an overview of current geopolitical dynamics contributing to a trend towards global democratic recession, including key country trends. Four challenges to democracy were highlighted: authoritarian/illiberal solidarity; transnational repression; social media influence; and democratic country leaders' adoption and promotion of authoritarian tactics. The Support Unit then presented an update on the state of OGP, including recent trends and forward-looking perspectives, followed by an open discussion by the SC. Discussion highlights:

1. Illiberal trends have sprung up through democratic processes: voters have democratically elected leaders that have promoted illiberal causes. Democratic leaders committed to open government principles must more effectively tackle issues of importance to voters, notably, economic challenges if open government reforms are to make progress.
2. Transnational challenges and multilateralism: OGP functions primarily at a national and local level– but now the world's issues are increasingly transnational and will require OGP to adapt to more flexible, transnational approaches. Multilateralism may take on increased significance given these global challenges, and OGP can be a key forum for addressing them.

3. **Civil society as a counterforce:** Civil society leaders across OGP can share best practices for pushing back on democratic backsliding in countries facing unprecedented challenges to their democratic processes.

Session 2: Political Engagement Strategy for the Steering Committee: Defining Parameters

Steph Muchai, Incoming Civil Society Co-Chair, led the session on defining a political engagement strategy for the SC. Steph Muchai encouraged members to identify and prioritize specific actions the SC can take to advance OGP's strategic objectives, with an emphasis on fostering a stronger, more political global coalition for open government.

Six actions were proposed for SC consideration and discussion:

1. **Institutionalize Foreign Ministry Engagement:** Enhance the role of foreign ministries in OGP activities, starting with SC governments.
2. **Strengthen engagement of SC ministers:** Ensure active ministerial participation in national and global OGP efforts, including the 2025 OGP Global Summit, and conduct ministerial-level outreach to peers inside and outside the SC to advance OGP's objectives.
3. **Elevate Head of State/Government (HoS/G) participation in key OGP moments:** Host a high-level event during the UN General Assembly (UNGA) to commemorate OGP's 15th anniversary (September 2026); secure participation of SC HoS/G in key events (e.g. OGP Regional Meetings; OGP Global Summits); identify ways to leverage SC governments' participation in events where there are no OGP-led activities (such as in UNGA 2025).
4. **Future SC Membership Pipeline:** Develop a pipeline of potential government SC members. Coordinate ministerial-level outreach efforts to secure candidacies and identify an incoming co-chair candidate for 2025.
5. **OGP Ambassadors Recruitment:** Recruit up to three new OGP Ambassadors by the OGP Global Summit in October 2025, refining selection and onboarding processes.
6. **Informal advisory task-force on political engagement:** Engage high-level representatives (OGP Ambassadors, former/current SC members, and other key high-level partners) to rebuild political support for open government and OGP.

SC members shared perspectives on the proposed actions and on broader strategies for political engagement. Following the plenary discussion, SC members agreed to focus on discussing actions 1, 2, and 5 during the meeting, and return to the other actions in future SC and subcommittee meetings. Highlights of the plenary and breakout discussions include:

Institutionalize Foreign Ministry Engagement:

1. MFA engagement can be enhanced by aligning domestic OGP commitments with transnational priorities, such as anti-corruption efforts. However, given variations in MFA structures, a standardized engagement model may not be suitable. Each country should

determine its own approach. In some OGP countries, MFAs engage directly with multi-stakeholder forums, which has benefited the overall process. This could be replicated across other country contexts, where feasible.

2. Candidates for SC government membership should secure formal MFA sign-off and commitment to participate in OGP processes should they be elected to the SC.
3. Response policy cases and other accountability mechanisms should formally trigger MFA involvement with the OGP process.
4. Efforts to engage OGP ministers and MFA representatives should be intertwined given the linkages between the two. Ministerial level engagement within one ministry could also encourage engagement across other ministries.

Strengthen engagement of SC ministers:

1. Ministerial engagement should prioritize concrete engagement, and have actionable deliverables as outputs for each ministerial-level SC meeting and engagement. Roundtable format was also flagged as a successful option in the past.
2. Interagency support for OGP is useful for ministerial level engagement. Situating OGP as a permanent interagency program or institution can help insulate OGP from shifting political priorities of government leaders. SC members expressed interest in sharing best practices with each other on how to most effectively engage ministers in OGP.
3. OGP can be a race to the top. OGP platforms should be used to let ministers shine at the international level when they have brought about effective open government reforms. Ministers should also circulate the achievements of the OGP process through interagency networks to elevate their own success and the success of the OGP model at the domestic level. Open Gov Week can serve as an actionable moment for ministerial engagement and for amplifying achievements made through OGP.

OGP Ambassadors Recruitment:

1. As has proven the case in the past, political considerations among SC governments will make ambassador selection difficult if the whole selection process is handled by the SC.
2. It is important to consider possible reputational risks to OGP based on actions and profiles of potential ambassadors
3. There was overall agreement on the benefits of engaging OGP Ambassadors and the need to enhance OGP's engagement of these key actors. SC members also suggested streamlining the process for ambassador selection, which should include a process not only for onboarding ambassadors but also for off-ramping them.
4. The SC highlighted the importance of considering ambassadors from diverse sectors (e.g. private sector) and regions to enhance the ability of the CEO to leverage them more strategically.
5. The SC requested the SU to develop a resolution on streamlining ambassadors' terms of reference, criteria, and selection process, including delegating final decision for selection to the OGP CEO while still consulting the Steering Committee.

- a. Next steps: Circulate a resolution on terms of reference and selection process for ambassadors for SC consideration.

Additional general comments:

1. Building a long term pipeline for SC government leadership may be counterproductive. As elections occur and administration priorities change, the pipeline may be disrupted by governments' changing levels of commitment to OGP from one administration to the next.
2. Advocacy at the local level can serve as a strategy for bolstering political engagement. Local leaders may serve as effective ambassadors for OGP's mission.
3. When considering the role of political advocacy, it is important to consider and focus on open government as a broader mission rather than focusing narrowly on OGP's institutional strength.
4. COP in Brazil as well as the G20 & C20 should be leveraged to elevate OGP internationally.

Session 3: Harmonizing OGP Accountability Mechanisms

The Support Unit provided an overview of the evolution of OGP's accountability mechanisms and moderated a discussion on the scope and fitness for purpose of OGP's accountability mechanisms, including what gaps may exist within the current framework. Plenary discussion highlights included:

1. Intended purpose of accountability mechanisms and statements: It is important to clarify whether these mechanisms are intended to change actions of particular governments or if they are intended to signal OGP's stance on a given issue. In the past, even when OGP's intervention has not changed the outcomes of government actions, OGP has been able to provide much needed solidarity to civil society. Alternatively, OGP risks harming its relationships with stakeholders if it becomes a 'statements organization.' Some argued that direct and timely engagement with governments may ultimately be more effective than public-facing comments.
2. Members came to a consensus that OGP eligibility criteria/values check should matter for current OGP countries, not just countries seeking to join OGP. How to approach this should be revisited by an Accountability Review Task Force to be formed in the coming weeks.
3. Challenges to OGP core issues: SC members emphasized that OGP's accountability mechanisms should primarily deal with OGP's bread and butter issues rather than broader values issues. Several civil society members suggested that OGP should have faster and more systematic mechanisms to deal with challenges to civic space in particular. This could include introducing more automatic OGP responses to certain instances. e.g. to the introduction of foreign agent laws.
4. Better communication of OGP's accountability mechanisms is needed to inform OGP civil society and government representatives of tools at their disposal. Leveraging OGP Camp (convening of government POCs and civil society) during the Global Summit could help to better disseminate information to the right audiences about these mechanisms.
5. Considerations for the Accountability Review Task Force: 1. The Task Force must balance political vs. technical approaches – define when accountability and civic space issues

should be addressed through political advocacy vs. technical mechanisms, ensuring strategic and effective responses. 2.. It is important to distinguish between government capacity challenges versus malign/negligent noncompliance with OGP processes. Those that are unable to meet standards due to sheer capacity issues should not necessarily be held accountable in the same way that others are. 3. The Task Force must determine to what extent OGP's accountability mechanisms should apply just to how countries engage domestically versus how they engage with other countries, e.g. through international conflict.

Next steps:

1. Formally establish the Accountability Review Task Force (members to be confirmed).
2. Assess the 'values check' policy that determines OGP member eligibility.

Session 4: Open Gov Challenge & Benchmarking

1. The Support Unit presented an update on the Open Gov Challenge and moderated a discussion reflecting on 18 months of implementing the Challenge, including what approaches have worked, where progress has been made, and areas of opportunity.
2. Plenary discussion highlights included:
 - a. Government members expressed a commitment to participating in the challenge—several SC governments noted that they have already submitted challenge commitments. However, government members expressed a need for greater clarity as to what makes a commitment eligible to be a challenge commitment. Governments also expressed concerns that there are limited opportunities for Open Gov Challenge participation in countries that already have robust structural transparency systems, given the high-bar the challenge sets for structural reform.
 - b. Governments described how they have used key events as action-forcing moments on the challenge. Planning for regional meetings has served as a way to build the momentum to lead by example and submit a challenge commitment. SC governments expressed intentions to use the October Global Summit to this effect as well.
 - c. Civil society members reiterated a call for challenge commitments to facilitate explorative, innovative commitments compared to standard NAP commitments.
3. Benchmarking Presentation and Plenary Discussion
 - a. The Support Unit presented an update on benchmark conceptualisation being carried out by the Support Unit to track member progress across the ten policy areas of the Challenge (following from SC request around strategy) and gather SC feedback on the approach.
 - b. SC members requested further information on the data sources proposed, and how benchmarking is going to be used to improve challenge commitments. It was suggested to take this forward through the Programmatic Delivery Subcommittee. SC members also discussed the differences between what the benchmarking

exercise will measure versus what the IRM reports measure, highlighting that IRM reports also incorporate some of the benchmarking data into IRM products.

Next Steps: Provide an additional forum for SC members to discuss the benchmarking process.

Tuesday, February 4

Session 5: Funding Shifts and their Impact on Nonprofits and Open Government Efforts

1. Civil Society SC members and the Support Unit led the discussion to explore the immediate implications of the recent U.S. government funding directive, as well as other shifts in the funding landscape and their impact on the broader open government agenda.
2. Plenary discussion highlights included:
 - a. Strain on SC members and civil society at large: Civil society members described the direct impacts of USAID program cuts on their organizations both within the U.S. and globally.
 - b. Strain on OGP's mission: OGP's civil society partners across the world are facing existential funding challenges. If CSOs are unable to find alternative sources of funding or modes of operating, then civil society will not be able to effectively play its co-equal role in co-creating and implementing reforms through the OGP process. There is also evidence that in many countries the government's ability to organize, co-create and implement is also directly impacted by the funding freeze. Some SC members highlighted that Multistakeholder forums in the Latin American context may be in jeopardy given the heavy reliance of CSOs on US government funding. The same may apply to varying degrees across all regions. SC members stressed the need to try and fill the gap, financially and politically. While it may not be feasible to fill the gap financially, OGP mini-grants and other creative funding strategies will be needed. In responding to this funding crisis, there is a need to more closely collaborate across the development sector– consider tapping into networks of those that work on humanitarian, health, and economic development programs across the world. Politically, this is an opportunity for governments across the world to recommit themselves to open government values. Some may need to take up a leadership mantle within OGP and the open government movement.

Next Steps:

1. Follow up with the OGP community with practical information and best practices for responding to this crisis.
2. Formulate a response plan to include details of what next steps the SC may take to mobilize political support for open government at this time.

Session 6: Interactive Workshop for Crafting Targeted Value Propositions & Narratives

1. The Support Unit led the brainstorming session to identify and refine value propositions and narratives that resonate with diverse audiences while aligning with OGP's strategic priorities and regional contexts. The Support Unit first provided an overview of the current initiative to review and reframe OGP's value propositions.
2. Breakout Discussions: SC members collaborated in small groups to identify key components of value propositions to accelerate key components of OGP's strategy, considering regional nuances and diverse audiences. The breakout groups provided input on three use cases for communicating the value of OGP: 1. Global positioning of OGP as an implementation platform for commitments made in other international fora, 2. Accelerating collective progress on key themes that have limited traction;; Broadening Engagement, 3. Bringing in New Actors / Unlikely Networks. Highlights of the breakout discussions include:
 - a. Global positioning of OGP:
 - i. OGP should emphasize how open government reforms tangibly improve people's lives. Loftier narratives about democracy may be less effective.
 1. Emphasize how OGP is contributing to better societal outcomes, focusing on growth and development.
 - ii. It is important to consider that public perception matters just as much as real indicators do. There is a need for better storytelling to bridge the gap between perception and reality.
 - iii. Positioning OGP outside of traditional OGP spaces: Simplifying OGP's internal processes will make OGP easier to understand and therefore easier to sell its value to new stakeholders. When engaging at a country level, it is critical to bring in a diverse array of ministries that can help reinforce the value-add of OGP from various angles (human rights, climate, commerce, foreign affairs, etc).
 - iv. Support bilateral agreements on specific open government topics (e.g. government X and Y agreement to work on anti corruption together).
 - b. Accelerating progress on key themes (civic space/digital):
 - i. OGP Global Summit: The focus on digital open government reforms at past summits has not been enough to move the needle; further reflection is needed to consider how to best turn summit discussions on digital topics into concrete action. Additionally, narrowing down the themes covered at the summit could help to streamline narratives and action for key themes..
 - ii. There are cases and examples of strong OGP commitments for key themes—highlight these to present a concrete and coherent value proposition.
 - iii. Broaden thematic networks: The OECD should provide technical hands-on support on key themes to countries at the domestic level. For digital reform, there is a broader network OGP should tap into not only to find funding opportunities but also to bolster OGP's value proposition.

- iv. Digital Public infrastructure (DPI): Pitch OGP as an implementation mechanism to help scale DPI initiatives. Identify and focus on countries where DPI efforts can have the most impact.
- v. Civic Space narratives: Important to frame civic space as more than a theoretical discussion and instead make clear the real human stakes— there are public safety concerns to closing civic space, including physical threats to activists and organizations. Civic space issues also tie into broader development challenges; link civic space protection to other development indicators, such as education and poverty alleviation.
- c. Bringing in new actors/unlikely networks:
 - i. SC members discussed how to bring in diverse stakeholders, including: youth, the private sector, trade unions, labor networks, and women’s rights groups. Different value propositions are needed for each of these groups.
 - ii. Value propositions for the private sector: 1. Improving business environment and competitiveness, 2. Reducing bribery and corruption, 3. Enhancing efficiency
 - iii. OGP should leverage existing research and transparency experts to draw in open government skeptics. This will help to strengthen evidence-based arguments and case studies. This can include sharing research on the impacts of transparency, accountability, and open government.
 - iv. Systematic Outreach and follow-up is critical to engaging new stakeholders: OGP should find opportunities for sustained engagement rather than one-off projects and strengthen links between stakeholders’ existing practices and the framing of open government.

Next steps:

1. The Support Unit will use feedback from the SC to solidify new value proposition frameworks by June 2025.
2. Consider plans for youth leadership development trainings and coalition-building across networks

Session 7: Strategizing for a successful OGP Global Summit

1. The Government of Spain and the Support Unit moderated an interactive discussion focused on defining the political role of the SC in ensuring success of the OGP Global Summit in Spain this October. The Government of Spain also highlighted three key requests to all SC member governments to 1) secure their ministers participation; 2) secure their HoS/G participation; 3) secure their own participation.
2. Plenary Discussion highlights:
 - a. Securing high-level participation:

- i. There is an urgency to issue high-level invitations in order to secure participation from Heads of State/Government, ministers, and other non-government high-profile voices.
 - ii. Ministers should be given thematic speaking opportunities to ensure their attendance and their active contribution to the event. Opportunities for bilaterals should also be prioritized in order to incentivize high-level participation across member governments.
 - iii. Securing new OGP Ambassadors by the time of the Summit could also help secure other high level participants, including HoS, to attend the summit.
- b. The SC highlighted the importance of ensuring wide participation from civil society. Given the ongoing funding crisis, it may be challenging for civil society representatives to attend from all regions of the world. SC members suggested considering virtual opportunities for engagement, and other creative ways to support civil society funding to attend the Summit. It is crucial that Visas: It is important to work ahead of time with the government on visas and try for a visa waiver to ensure smooth travel processes.
- c. Strategic alignment and coordination across other platforms: Align the summit with global agendas (G20, Finance for Development), launch a community consultation for agenda co-creation, and integrate Open State perspectives.
- d. The Government of Spain encouraged SC members to participate in the co-creation of the summit agenda. Members suggested focusing on particular thematic areas, rather than tackling all 10 areas of the challenge, and that discussions are not overly scripted to prevent undynamic conversation.

Session 8: Action Plan Framework

1. The Support Unit provided an overview of the session focused on the evolution of the action framework and rules associated with the action plans to date, and initial plans for further updates in 2025
2. The Government of the United Kingdom presented a proposal to increase the flexibility of the action plan framework, focusing on ideas such as rolling action plans, streamlined commitment-making mechanisms, enabling more flexible timelines for commitment-making, joint commitments by two or more members, and evolutions in the roles of the OGP Multistakeholder Forums.
3. Plenary Discussion: SC members discussed the Government of the UK's proposal as well as ongoing challenges and benefits of the current NAP process. Discussion highlights included:
 - a. Common challenges related to timelines: 1. There can be a tension between the NAP cycle and mainstreaming open government reforms given different timelines of the interagency process; 2. The NAP process can be sidelined when the process does not fall into the timelines of reforms processes in other areas of government. 3. Government agencies cannot submit new commitments when they

want to– they have to do so based on timelines allowed within the current process, including timelines for amendments and mid-term refreshes, and adding emerging commitments or challenge commitments. This means the OGP process may lose out on positive commitments due to rigid timelines, especially when the existing mechanisms for flexibility may be overtly complex to understand/explain. Greater flexibility is needed to capitalize on political will in a given moment. 3. NAP reports are often too long/complicated to follow– reporting formats should be more condensed and readable.

- b. Usefulness of hard deadlines and common processes: Whilst agreeing with the need for ensuring political momentum for reform can be seized through a more flexible AP process, several SC members pointed out that sticking to a clear calendar/ structure and a common co-creation process and methodology has been essential for their processes to bring diverse stakeholders together to co-create NAPS from the outset. Without externally mandated deadlines, the process may not get off its feet or be sustained. Broad consensus that commitments and action plans do need some end dates, and some criteria should be met for action
- c. Recognition of reforms and contributions of different stakeholders: SC members pointed out that OGP has no clear mechanism for recognizing opengov efforts outside the AP commitments. Others pointed out that the co-implementation role of civil society is sometimes not recognized by the IRM, leading to civil society contributions not being captured adequately.
- d. The Standards are currently not the challenge - the rules, guidance, and communications need to be fit-for-purpose for the current moment.
- e. There are diverse OGP processes, resources, and capacities across members; this requires flexibility. As long as dialogue and collaboration, ambition, and accountability remain as foundations of the action plan process, there should be openness to revising the details of the action framework.
- f. Issues that touch upon IRM will also need to be raised in the IRM's International Experts' Panel.

Next steps:

1. The Support Unit and Government of the UK will follow up on establishing a process and a temporary taskforce on reviewing rules, communications, guidance.

Attendees:

Government Steering Committee Members

Government of Brazil [Incoming Co-Chair]

Flavia Schmidt, Director of Open Governance and Transparency

Office of the Comptroller General

Government of Estonia

Marten Lauri, Adviser & OGP Point of Contact, Government Office

Government of Kenya [Outgoing Co-Chair]

Viola Ochola, Director of Access to Information, Office of the Ombudsman

Government of the Philippines

Ericka Blas, Budget and Management Specialist, Department of Budget and Management

Government of Spain [Lead Co-Chair]

Lázaro Tuñón, Deputy Director of Open Government & OGP Point of Contact

Ministry of Digital Transformation

Government of the United Kingdom

Matt Donnelly, Open Data and Transparency Lead & OGP Point of Contact, Central Digital & Data Office;

Eva Corral, Democratic Governance Policy Advisor, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)

Government of the United States *(Virtual attendance of Session 1)*

Kiril Jakimovski, Anti-Corruption & Governance Policy Officer, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Department of State

Civil Society Steering Committee Members

Natalia Carfi, Open Data Charter

Anabel Cruz, ICD Uruguay

Eka Gigauri, Transparency International Georgia

Blair Glencorse, Accountability Lab [Outgoing Co-Chair] *(Virtual attendance of Sessions 1 and 5)*

Katerina Hadzi-Miceva Evans, European Center for Not-for-Profit Law

Zukiswa Kota, Public Service Accountability Monitor

Cielo Magno, Bantay Kita/Publish What You Pay Philippines [Lead Co-Chair]

Stephanie Muchai, [Incoming Co-Chair]

Laura Neuman, The Carter Center

Doug Rutzen, The International Center for Not-for-Profit Law *(Virtual attendance of Sessions 1 and 5)*

Barbara Schreiner, Water Integrity Network

Apologies

Government of Chile

Government of Germany

Government of Indonesia

Government of Morocco