



THE PRESIDENCY
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**South Africa's Statement at the High Level Side Event on the Fifth Anniversary
of the Open government Partnership, United Nations, New York**

20 September 2016

Your Excellency, the incoming Lead Chair, President Hollande

Your Excellency, the incoming Support Chair, the Prime Minister of Georgia

Honourable Civil Society Co-chairs,

Excellencies Heads of State and Government and or their representatives,

OGP Ambassadors, Dr. Mo Ibrahim and Madame Winnie Byanyima,

Senior representatives from Multilateral Bodies and Organizations

Distinguished Guests and Delegations

It is an honour to join you today as we celebrate five years since the founding of the Open Government Partnership.

We have opportunity today to reflect on a remarkable journey the Open Government Partnership has travelled since September 2011.

The journey we have travelled together, from a mere eight founding member countries to seventy, is clear testimony of the importance of Open Government in the progress of humanity and a reflection of your resolve to ensure that the future is brighter than the present.

Excellencies

In October 2015 during the OGP Global Summit held in Mexico, you bestowed upon South Africa the responsibility to lead the Partnership.

One of the most important tasks that came with this position was to ensure that we enhance the role of the OGP in support of Agenda 2030, the Social Development Goals.

Indeed we may all take pride in the fact that the OGP demonstrated remarkable foresight, innovation and sincere commitment to Good Governance through the Joint Declaration on Open Government for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Since then, up to fifty participating governments have signed the declaration.

In recognition of the mammoth task placed upon us by the fact that the year 2016 is the year of global implementation, the Steering Committee has made an undertaking

to drive a programme that will see participating countries mainstream SDGs into their National Action Plans.

It is indeed encouraging to note that some of our participating countries have heeded this call.

South Africa itself has ensured that we lead by example. Our own 3rd OGP National Action Plan has a commitment on Goal 16 of the SDGs on Access to Justice.

In the true spirit of co-creation and a partnership, this commitment is championed and led by a civil society network working in the area of Justice.

Excellencies,

When South Africa assumed the role of Chairperson, our Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa committed South Africa to a number of key priorities, I will briefly reflect on progress made against some of them.

We committed to increase effort in the renewal of high level political commitment to the OGP.

One of the initiatives we believe will ensure a sustained high level engagement of countries in the OGP is the hosting of a regular annual gathering of the Heads of State and Government on the side-lines of the United Nations General Assembly.

Today's gathering we hope is a step towards the establishment of a long-term tradition of the OGP.

Programme Director

We have addressed this point previously but feel we must yet again reiterate.

The OGP community has the responsibility to ensure that the Partnership remains true to its fundamental principles of voluntarism.

As such we must avoid the temptation of using this noble initiative as a tool for punishment that plays geo-politics and bloc interests of various participating countries particularly those in leadership.

When the OGP was founded, the founding members consciously opted to focus on promoting the Partnership as a platform for mutual learning and to share experiences in promoting people centred development.

During its tenure, South Africa has promoted the OGP to countries that have an interest in joining the OGP.

We have included the OGP in discussions during visits to sister countries in the continent and also other countries in general.

In May 2016, South Africa hosted the Africa Regional Conference under the theme “Open Government for Sustainable Development in Africa”, in the beautiful city of Cape Town, which was attended by 500 delegates.

The Conference provided a platform where African countries were able to engage on the OGP, have a conversation on strategies to deepen the Partnership, as well as sharing of best practise.

I am honoured at this point to extend a warm welcome to my brother, His Excellency President Buhari the President of Nigeria as the latest member of the OGP.

This is a demonstration that Africa values openness, anti-corruption, transparency and citizen participation as anchors for good governance.

Our interactions with various stakeholders participating in the OGP reveal that the OGP needs to improve its relationships with other multilateral initiatives globally.

Such collaboration will increase efficiency and also enhance and improve the results of our interventions. One such critical partnership is with the United Nations and its agencies.

To this end, in November 2015, South Africa convened an OGP event on the side-lines of the Conference of the State Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption, which took place in St. Petersburg.

We sincerely hope that the future OGP leadership will work on consolidating these efforts.

Distinguished guests

Today's event is not only about celebrating the remarkable five year journey we have traversed together.

We also wish to acknowledge and applaud the role played by His Excellency President Barack Obama as the initiator of the Partnership.

At this point, let me also congratulate His Excellency the President of France the incoming Leader Chair as well as His Excellency the Prime Minister of Georgia, the incoming Support Chair.

I also wish to congratulate the incoming civil society co-chairs Mr Manish Bapna and Mr Mukelani Dimba.

Looking into the future there is no doubt in my mind that the OGP community will all maintain unity of purpose and provide the same support to the incoming chairs as you gave to us, for which we are grateful.

I thank you!

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