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Philippines: OGP Asked to Act on RTI Law Failure

The 15th Philippine National Congress failed to pass a right to information (RTI) law, despite promises by the Aquino administration – to the Philippine people and in its Open Government Partnership (OGP) Action Plan – to ensure the adoption of this key democratic legislation. The Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD) and the Philippine based Institute for Freedom of Information have written to the OGP Steering Committee asking it to take action on this signal failure by the Philippine administration to live up to its promises and commitments. Efforts to adopt a right to information law, which continued until the very last minute, were ultimately unsuccessful, in circumstances reminiscent of the similar failure of the previous Congress.

“We have written to the OGP Steering Committee asking them to take action to signal to the Government of the Philippines that its actions are not in accordance with the norms and expectations of the OGP,” said Toby Mendel, Executive Director of CLD. *“We believe that all Participating States should be expected to move decisively towards the adoption and proper implementation of an RTI law.”*

The Philippine OGP Action Plan explicitly states that the FOI Act which the government had placed before Congress is a “critical component” of its Public Access to Information Initiative. Despite this, President Aquino failed to take the necessary steps to push for the enactment of the law by Congress, although this was well within his power. The situation is rendered even more unacceptable by the fact that the Philippines was an original OGP State and has been a member of the Steering Committee since the very beginning.

“We sincerely hope that the OGP Steering Committee takes decisive action in response to this fact that the Philippines still does not have an RTI law,” said Nepo Malaluan, Co-Director of the Institute for Freedom of Information. *“If it does not, we believe that the credibility of the OGP will be at risk.”*

The CLD/Institute for Freedom of Information letter includes as an annex a statement by the national campaign, *The Right to Know, Right now!* Coalition expressing deep disappointment about the failure of the Philippine authorities to adopt an RTI law.

The letter to the OGP is available at: <http://www.law-democracy.org/live/philippines-ogp-asked-to-act-on-rti-law-failure>.

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