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Only 30% of OGP Action Plans Include RTI Reform

Since its launch in September 2011, the Open Government Partnership (OGP) has become the most high profile international movement for greater government transparency in the world. However, according to a Report released today by the Centre for Law and Democracy (CLD), only 30% of OGP Participating States have pledged to substantially enhance their legal frameworks for the right to information (RTI), a core pillar of government openness.

44 of the 55 OGP Participating States have so far submitted their Action Plans. These Plans are at the heart of the OGP process, as they map out States' OGP commitments. Just 13 of the 44 Plans include a pledge to engage in serious RTI law reform. The remaining 31 either do not mention RTI or propose only minor improvements. This is problematical given that an assessment of the RTI frameworks in those 31 countries, done as part of the RTI Rating, suggests that many of these countries have serious shortcomings in their laws. Paraguay, which does not even have an RTI law, failed to make any commitment to adopt one.

"States cannot claim to be serious about open government if they do not have a strong framework for the right to information," said Toby Mendel, Executive Director of the Centre for Law and Democracy. *"The fact that so few OGP Participating States have pledged to make improvements to their RTI frameworks suggests that some governments may be taking advantage of the OGP to improve their image while doing little of the hard work needed to actually enhance transparency, accountability and citizen participation."*

CLD calls on the OGP to develop clear standards for what is expected from Participating States. While our Report focuses on RTI, we believe that the OGP should develop standards relating to all major issues covered by the core commitments States make when they join, as set out in the Declaration of Principles.

For RTI, we believe that every State which participates in the OGP should be expected to have an RTI law; if this is not the case when they join, they should be expected to adopt one shortly thereafter. There should be a clear expectation that States with unacceptably weak RTI frameworks will make commitments to improve them. While some flexibility is warranted here, States with poor frameworks which are not proposing to address this should be expected to explain why they have prioritised other measures.

The Report is available at: <http://www.law-democracy.org/?p=2267>. The latest RTI Rating results, which were used in the Report, are available at: http://www.law-democracy.org/?page_id=1114.

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