



Rt Hon Francis Maude MP
Minister of State
Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London SW1A 2AS

10 April 2011

Dear Minister,

We represent a wide range of UK-based civil society organisations involved in promoting access to information and government transparency in both the UK and internationally.

We welcome the UK's upcoming chairmanship of the Open Government Partnership. We believe that it is a tremendous opportunity for the UK to promote and encourage open government and governance, domestically and internationally. It is also an ideal opportunity for the UK to revisit its own OGP Action Plan.

We appreciate the UK's leading efforts to promote transparency through open data and other technical measures. The opening up of this information has been an important process and will likely lead to many benefits. We also recognise that the UK has taken a leading role internationally in promoting transparency in many areas including development assistance, budget processes, extractive industries, the construction industry, medicines and managing public records. It also has gained valuable lessons from the implementation of the Freedom of Information Act and Environmental Information Regulations that would be useful to many countries that are currently adopting and implementing similar laws.

We emphasise that we would like to see an expanded UK Action Plan based on broad and participative engagement with civil society as part of this process. The current UK agenda on OGP focusing on open data represents only a small portion of the openness and transparency agenda as the above efforts illustrate.

We welcome the proposal for a UK OGP “parallel summit” in April in conjunction with the Brasilia OGP meeting and look forward to working in partnership with other stakeholders to make this a successful and productive event. We note that the UK government has not yet engaged with the wider UK transparency community relating to OGP – a key part of the OGP process - and hope that this first step will lead to a useful partnership as the UK assumes the chairmanship.

In addition to using the OGP process to further develop domestic open government, we look forward to the UK government using its chairmanship to continue driving debate to maximise openness and transparency in the international arena as described in the OGP declaration.

Therefore, we urge the UK government to both expand its UK action commitments and to commit to promoting a wider agenda – on open data and open governance – as co-chair.

We welcome the opportunity to further discuss this with you and look forward to partnering with you over the next 18 months of the chairmanship and beyond. Please contact David Banisar, Banisar@article19.org, + 44 207 324 2500.

Yours Sincerely,

Agnes Callamard, Executive Director
ARTICLE 19

Alan Hudson, Europe Policy Director
ONE

Ben Jackson, Chief Executive
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Maurice Frankel, Director
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Capacity Global

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Global Witness

Vanessa Herringshaw
Director of Advocacy/European Office
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James Shaw-Hamilton, Director
The Humanitarian Forum

Fredrik Galtung, Chief Executive
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Dr. Anne Thurston, OBE, Director
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