

Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Delegates, Dear Colleagues, Ladies and gentlemen,

I am deeply honored to be here today to celebrate with you the 5th anniversary of the Open Government Partnership - one of the most unique partnerships of modern times.

I would like to begin by saying how thrilled I was to listen to our colleagues from fellow governments and civil society organizations reflecting on 5 years of Open Government Partnership (OGP). Indeed, since the establishment of the partnership we all have come a long way in addressing challenges. Together, we can truly say that we have made the partnership a success.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to briefly share some of Georgia's achievements over the past 5 years.

Under the OGP umbrella, we initiated a freedom of information reform with a special emphasis on open data and accessibility of National Archives – including making surveillance data publicly available. We fundamentally modified our civil service, put in place an effective asset declarations monitoring system, and encouraged our citizens to get involved in the process of improving public service delivery. Shortly after my return to Georgia from this forum, my cabinet will adopt a 3rd National Action Plan for Georgia – a result of intense cooperation between the government, civil society, business sector, international organizations and groups of citizens from all over the country.

We have also successfully implemented the **Open Government Georgia Forum**, a permanent dialogue mechanism which brings together the government and civil society to push forward open government reforms.

We are proud that Georgia can serve as an example of how all three branches of government can be efficiently involved in the OGP process. The OGP European Regional Conference held last year in June in Georgia's capital Tbilisi brought the prime minister of Georgia, the speaker of Parliament, and the president of the Supreme Court together, to share with participants of the event their perspectives and ideas about the further development of OGP. Recently Tbilisi has also joined the OGP process with its sub-nationals pilot program.

Thus, the roots of Georgia's success can be found in **co-creation** and **inclusiveness of government efforts** at all levels.

We are delighted that Georgia's efforts have been acknowledged by the OGP community: at the OGP Global Summit in Mexico last year, Georgia received an **OGP Government Champions Award** for going the extra mile to accommodate civil society into the OGP process. Georgia has also been selected as **co-chair of the Partnership** together with France. Let me take this opportunity to thank you all for entrusting us with this important task.

We all have success stories that reflect achievements of the OGP. Here are just a few examples: Kenya adopted the Access to Information Law; Paraguay and Uruguay are working to engage

citizens in local government decision making processes; Ukraine is opening up the Soviet Archives; the UK, Norway, South Africa, Kenya, and France are all increasing transparency of beneficial ownership.

But we must not stop at these successes. Today, it is important to raise questions and set new challenges, and to think ahead to the next 5 years.

To do so we need to go back to the start. We need to remind ourselves why the platform was created: it is aimed to improve the daily lives of our citizens. Yet only few people know about the OGP, how it operates, or what goals and objectives it pursues.

An analysis of the OGP national action plans shows that the majority of commitments taken by the member governments are associated with improving governments' own efficiencies, open data, and budget transparency. We lack commitments related to civil, political or socio-economic rights – something that has far greater impact on our citizens.

So, here are some fundamental questions we need to ask ourselves going forward:

- How do we plan for the next five years to ensure that we deliver transformational impact on the lives of citizens?
- What specific steps are we willing to take to broaden the focus from open data and open budgets to sector-based sustainable development goals (SDGs), anticorruption and service delivery?
- How do we close the feedback loop?

Public consultations under the 2nd Action Plan in Georgia again revealed that the better we are at delivering public services, the closer we get to our citizens. We therefore designed a new project titled **“The Voice of the Costumer”**, which guarantees direct communication with citizens on services they receive from the **Public Service Hall**, a special public service hub in Georgia. We committed to informing each citizen on the steps we were taking to respond to their suggestions and ideas.

The OGP's achievements and strategic plans are well recognized by all who are familiar with the partnership's operations, but still remain relatively unknown to the wider public. This is a challenge Georgia, as co-chair of the partnership, is keen to respond to. We firmly believe that promoting the OGP's message across the globe and bringing it to the attention of as many people as possible should be a leadership priority in the years to come. It is a powerful tool for citizens across the world to demand more open and more responsive policies from their governments.

I am pleased to recall that 70 countries have already joined the OGP. However, on our 5th anniversary, we need to push our drive and ambition up, to bring more countries on board and to make the OGP more influential. Georgia will work with France to explain the value of open governance to newcomers.

A key part of this will also be ensuring that civil society continues to form an integral part of decision-making worldwide. Let us remember that civic space is shrinking in many countries. We

need to encourage governments and civil society organizations to take and implement ambitious commitments in this regard, especially in those countries that might not have sufficient resources to do so. We have already experienced that taking commitments does not always lead to successful implementation.

The next OGP global summit due to take place in Paris in December is approaching. Governments and civil society leaders from all around the world will be committing to lasting change. Let's aim to make the OGP summit an opportunity to learn more from others and secure real improvements – to push for real political action and commitment that can move the open government agenda forward and broaden our collective ambition.

The OGP has reached a turning point, and I believe that together we can determine how to take it forward.

Thank you!