

SIERRA LEONE SHINES BRIGHT AT OGP REGIONAL MEETING IN MOROCCO

A cross section of the Sierra Leone Delegation at the OGP Africa and Middle East Regional Meeting in Morocco (1-3 November) held a bilateral meeting with the CEO of OGP Global, Mr. Sanjay Pradhan on the margins of the conference in Marrakech, Morocco, Monday, November 1, 2022.

In his opening statement, the OGP CEO, Mr. Pradhan recognized the good governance strides Sierra Leone is making in the global open governance arena. He commended President Julius Maada Bio for his continued support to the principles of Open Government, while noting that the role of Parliament in the process stood out as the country has done “a few things very different and commendable”. He applauded the country’s work in Access to Information and the work of Parliament in pursuing Open Parliament commitments, among others. He said, “as a country Sierra Leone should share and showcase what you are doing in the Open Parliament commitments”. He also expressed interest in the commitment on elections transparency.

The Chairman, National Council for Civic Education and Development (NaCCED) and OGP Point of Contact (POC) for Sierra Leone, Mr. Kalilu Totangi, in response, thanked Mr. Sanjay Pradhan and the OGP Global family for recognizing his country’s commitment to good governance and OGP global principles, especially. He said Sierra Leone is in the process of implementing its fourth National Action Plan (NAP) since it acceded to the OGP in 2013. He noted the improvements recorded in the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) scorecard from its third NAP. He said in the fourth NAP, Sierra Leone has made commitments in Open Parliament, Open Elections, Access to Justice, and Beneficiary Ownership. On the Open Parliament commitment, Chairman Totangi reminded the meeting of the Africa Open Parliament Index (OPI) report of July 2022, which ranked Sierra Leone Parliament 3rd best among 13 West African Countries in Open Parliament. He said the OGP Sierra Leone family is working with the Electoral Commission, Sierra Leone to ensure the outcome of elections should be beyond reproach, both from the OGP and Civic Education perspectives. He also pointed to the

recent high score the country received in the Extractives Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) as a marker of his country's continued commitment to the OGP principles. On the issues of Access to Justice, the Chairman and OGP Point of Contact for Sierra Leone lauded the efforts of the Chief Justice and the judiciary in employing more Magistrates and Judges to fill the courts in order to ensure that cases are heard in an expeditious manner. He especially acclaimed the Fasttrack Courts dedicated to hearing GBV cases. Chairman Kalilu Totangi assured the OGP Global CEO of his country's continued commitment to the OGP ideals.

In his brief statement, the Speaker of Parliament, (Rt) Hon. Dr. Chernoh Abass Bundu, thanked Mr. Pradhan for choosing Sierra Leone among only three from the region for the bilateral meeting. He said this was a clear indication that the efforts government is making at good governance and staying the course of the OGP Global principles is receiving international commendation. He thanked the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco and OGP Global for extending a special invitation to him to attend the Regional Meeting. He said the Parliament of Sierra Leone has instituted the OGP Working Group (a cross-party political group) and is seriously considering establishing a standalone OGP Standing Committee soon. The Speaker referenced a speech he delivered at the session on Institutionalization of OGP in the Administration of Parliament, in which he showcased Parliaments progress in being Open by highlighting the gains they are making in their Open Parliament commitment. He said Parliament has integrated OGP values within its new strategic plan (2021-2025). He noted that Goal 4 of the strategic plan reinforces building relationships with citizens and that there is now an OGP Secretariat in place in Parliament to support the work of the OGP Working Group. The leadership of Parliament, he said, has approved the establishment of a functional CSO Desk in Parliament and the Terms of Reference (ToR) for this CSO Desk have been developed and commitments secured from Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) to support the work of the CSO Desk in Parliament. He reiterated the shared commitment of Parliament, across party lines, to the OGP principles.

Maureen Karuiki OGP Africa and Middle East Regional Coordinator acknowledged the

efforts Sierra Leone is making in ensuring robust co-creation consultations and assured the delegation that this have not gone unnoticed and that the parliamentary engagements are worthy of note. She conveyed the satisfaction of OGP Global for the outstanding work of OGP Sierra Leone and thanked the Speaker and Parliament of Sierra Leone for their support to the process.

In closing, the CEO conveyed the compliments of OGP Global to President Bio and the Government and people of Sierra Leone for their invaluable commitment to the OGP process.

In the spirit of accelerating sustainable development and economic recovery in Africa, this year's meeting focused on ***Leveraging Open Government Approaches to Strengthen Public Service Delivery*** in the region through anti-corruption, digital innovation, access to justice, and civic participation.

The Sierra Leone delegation was led by Hon. Dr. Chernoh Abass Bundu, and included Mr. Francis Ben Kaifala, Commissioner, Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), Mr. Kalilu Totangi, Chairman NaCCED, and other representatives from the OGP Steering Committee.