



REPORT ON THE 1ST MEETING OF THE NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE ON OGP

1.0 Introduction

Mr F. Kalowamfumbi welcomed members of the National Steering Committee (NSC) and Technical Working Groups (TWGs) to the meeting held at the Bingu Convention Centre in Lilongwe on 17th November, 2023. Attendance of the members was confirmed through a roll call. There was satisfactory attendance of members to the meeting chaired by the Deputy Secretary to the President and Cabinet, Dr Janet Banda SC. The absence of some Senior government officials of the rank of Principal Secretary was a concern. There was only PS Matanda from the Ministry of Justice in attendance.

2.0 Speech by the Chair

The Chair told the meeting that she was aware that it was the first meeting of the National Steering Committee since the launch of the NAP by His Excellency the President Dr Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera on 6th June, 2023. She lamented lack of regular meetings which are important for strategizing through receipt of reports from the TWGs on progress of implementation of various commitments on OGP. Meetings of the National Steering Committee need to be done quarterly. The National Steering Committee (NSC) and the Technical Working Groups (TWGs) signed commitments with the Head of State for implementation on the 2 (two) year implementation circle.

The objectives of the meeting were to validate the work plan for the NSC and receive reports from the TWGs. The meeting was also expected to provide relevant guidance to the TWGs. The Chair reminded the meeting that the implementation performance of the NAP will be assessed at the end of the 2 (two) year implementation cycle in 2025 by the Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM), an accountability independent global body. She said it was important to remember that there is only one year left for implementation of the NAP.

The Chair told the meeting that there is progress on the implementation of the reforms connected to all the thematic areas of OGP. There is need to have an OGP repository for publicizing all the OGP milestones achieved so far.

The Chair also informed the meeting that His Excellency the President reported to the OGP Global Summit held on 6th September, 2023 in Tallinn, Estonia through his virtue address on the milestones Malawi has achieved on OGP. They include the following:

- The promulgation of companies (Open Beneficial ownership) regulations.
- Introduction of e-procurement to achieve efficiency in public procurement
- Establishment of the Office of the Registrar of Political Parties to facilitate access to information on political party financing.
- Enactment of the Mines and Minerals Act which provides for the establishment of an independent regulatory authority for the mining activities.
- The adoption of the National Digitalization Policy to widen the scope of ICT.

The Chair reiterated the need to expedite the process of creating a repository where successes and lessons of OGP Malawi should be posted for public information.

The Chair told the meeting that the challenges affecting implementation of OGP in Malawi include lack of funding and poor multi-sector collaboration on the implementation of OGP activities.

The Chair singled out Chandler Foundation for its never ending financial and technical support rendered towards implementation of OGP activities and also appealed to other

development partners to assist with resources for the implementation of OGP commitments in Malawi.

3.0 Summary of Presentations

Mr F. Kalowamfumbi combined two presentations on the General overview on Implementation of NAP and the Independent Reporting Mechanisms.

3.1 General Overview on Implementation of NAP

The National Action Plan was accepted in December, 2022 and Malawi regained her status as an active member of the Open Government Partnership Initiative. A multi-stakeholders workshop was then convened in March, 2023 for the reconstitution of the National Steering Committee (NSC) and the Technical Working Groups(TWGs). There was then orientation of the NSC and the TWGs, and also adoption of the Terms of Reference (TORs) in May 2023. His Excellency the President Dr Lazaras McCathy Chakwera presided over launch of the NAP where commitments were signed by the NSC and the TWGs, at the Bingu Convention Centre on 6th June, 2023. The Secretariat submitted the initial IRM Report to the IRM Mechanism of the OGP from July to August, 2023. The Northern Region CSO held an awareness workshop on OGP in the same month of July, this year. The Technical Working Groups have produced and adopted their work plans from September to this month of November, 2023. The National Steering Committee has held a meeting to validate its work plan, receive reports from Technical Working Groups and adopt them if they are in compliance with the requirements of the guiding Work plan, on the 17th November, 2023. There are complimentary efforts that have been engaged on OGP's other commitments areas of EITI and NACS II.

3.2 OGP Reporting Mechanisms

The governments do publish self-assessment reports that are prepared on consultation with the public. There is then an independent report prepared for submission to the Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM) of the OGP.

The IRM report is an analysis of the level of completion of OGP commitments and does have early results of action plan commitments and lessons for the purposes of reflection and accountability.

The report contains:

- The assessment part of the level of completion of all commitments which is not evidence based.
- An analysis of the overall quality of participation and co-creation throughout the action plan cycle
- Review report
- Results report

3.3 Adoption of Draft Work Plan

On the adoption of a Work Plan, Mr Martin Kalima guided the meeting on the requirements for consideration. All the Technical Working Groups were advised on using the same template for the National Steering Committee.

4.0 Resolutions and Action Points

- The Chair guided the meeting on the adoption of the Work plan for the NSC. She clarified on important areas requiring attention of the National Steering Committee and the Technical Working Groups. The work plan was validated.
- Chair was not amused with the delay in the adoption of the work plans for the Technical Working Groups (TWGs). Secretariat was queried on its advisory role. She felt there is a gap between Secretariat and the TWGs. She told secretariat to guide the TWGs on preparation of work plans to avoid further delay.
- Chair wanted to know if all the TWGs had prepared their work plans and they were ready for presentation to the NSC.
- Parliament's work plan was found wanting as follows:

- it did not focus on the commitments signed by the Open Parliament Technical Working Group with His Excellency the State President
 - They populated too many activities which are not implementable.
 - The deadlines for completion of activities were not clearly provided
 - They were told to rework on their work plan before resubmission
- Work plan for Access to Information TWG was also found wanting as follows:
 - Did not focus on the signed commitments with the Head of State
 - Deadlines for completion of activities were not clear
 - They were told to rework on the work plan before resubmission
- The Anti-Corruption Work plan was adopted but they need to clearly indicate deadlines for completion of certain activities. This work plan focused on the signed commitments with the Head of State.
- The Digital Governance TWG Work plan was also adopted as it focused on the signed commitments with the Head of State. However, they were advised to provide clear deadlines for completion of activities.
- The Natural Resources TWG Work plan was not presented at all. The TWG is yet to meet hence no work plan was prepared. This TWG needs serious guidance on the preparation of a work plan.
- Resource Mobilisation task has to be assigned to certain individuals to champion it. This is really important as funding has been a huge set back on OGP implementation. The following individuals will be responsible for resource mobilization
 - PS Matanda as head of the team
 - Mr Frank Kalowamfumbi
 - Mr Martin Kalima

6.0 Conclusion

The Chair thanked members of the National Steering Committee (NSC) and Technical Working Groups (TWGs) for attending the 1st NSC meeting. Secretariat did not provide proper guidance on the preparation of the work plans for the TWGs. Going forward, members of the secretariat were strongly advised to do the needful. The team working on resource mobilization, led by PS Matanda was encouraged to work hard. The meeting agreed to hold its next NSC meeting in February, 2024 while the Technical Working Groups will be expected to meet prior to the NSC meeting, in January, 2024. A full list of participants is attached to the report.