

**Governance Cooperation Fund – Open Government Partnership
Knowledge Exchange and Learning Event
23 – 24 November, 2015
Auditorium C and D**

**Welcome Remarks
Bart Édes
23 November, 9:00 am**

Good morning and a very warm welcome to ADB Headquarters and to the Open Government Partnership Knowledge Exchange and Learning Event.

First of all, I would like to use this opportunity to thank the Asia Foundation, the Open Government Partnership regional office in Singapore, the World Bank, and USAID as well as the country teams from Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste for working in partnership with ADB in the design and delivery of this event. Your collective knowledge and enthusiasm is reflected in the style and content of the program.

ADB has joined OGP in 2014 and we noted that during the Mexico Global OGP Summit, the number of OGP member countries from the Asia and Pacific region has increased from 6 to 8 with Papua New Guinea and Sri Lanka being the most recent member countries. This underscores the importance and value of the OGP Initiative.

ADB's ambition is to play a more proactive role assisting countries across the region to share experiences and ideas on open government reforms, as well as making our own technical expertise and knowledge available on demand to help OGP members formulate, implement and independently monitor OGP reform initiatives.

We demonstrated our commitment to the principles of open government at various occasions, including the most recent event in September when we hosted an Asia regional OGP meeting. The event brought together government and civil society representatives from across the region to take stock of OGP achievements, as well as share insights on what works, what remains a challenge, and what can be done better under the OGP framework. This was also the thrust of the session that ADB hosted last month at the OGP Global Summit in Mexico, which many of you attended.

This event is designed as a natural follow on to the two previous OGP events hosted by ADB. This time, the program contains important thematic areas fundamental to securing open government in ways that bring real improvements to the quality of lives of people, including the poor and marginalized. Reforms associated with the Right to Information, Asset Disclosure and Open Budgets are central to improving services, creating the economic environment for inclusive growth and building trust between government and people. The successful implementation of these reforms brings other benefits including reduced corruption and better capacity to implement the mitigation and adaptation measures associated with climate change.

Reforms in these areas are also important for countries that are working to achieve OGP eligibility criteria. We hope that by focusing on a discussion of what it takes to achieve eligibility, the participation in this event will also be stimulating to countries that are aspiring to become members and are working towards achieving the eligibility criteria.

The interesting cross section of countries from the region that we will have in the room for the coming two days, combined with the voices from government and CSOs provides an ideal platform for exchanging knowledge and learning. It is our hope that you will participate actively and go back with practical answers on how to deepen and widen the open government reform agendas in your countries.

The views expressed in this presentation are the views of the author/s and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Asian Development Bank, or its Board of Governors, or the governments they represent. ADB does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this presentation and accepts no responsibility for any consequence of their use. The countries listed in this presentation do not imply any view on ADB's part as to sovereignty or independent status or necessarily conform to ADB's terminology.

Finally, you probably wondered why the title of the event highlights the Governance Cooperation Fund. The reason is that the event is financed by ADB's Governance Cooperation Fund, a multilateral trust fund managed by ADB and financed by the Governments of Canada, Denmark, Norway, and Ireland. I would like to thank our funders for making this event possible.

Thank you for participating in this program. I hope that after the two days all of you have acquired new ideas to advance open government reforms in your own country contexts and that you will become a force to foster an empowered citizenry and a responsive and accountable government that is better equipped to stimulate economic growth, improve public services and help build a more prosperous Asia and Pacific region.