



6 May 2016

South Africa's commitment to beneficial ownership welcomed at OGP regional meeting

As part of this week's meeting of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in Cape Town, South Africa today launched its third national action plan (NAP) which includes a high-level commitment to creating a public register of beneficial ownership information.

Corruption Watch, as a participant in Transparency International's (TI) [Unmask the Corrupt](#) campaign, has been calling on the South African government to implement the G20 High-level Principles on Beneficial Ownership, which the government has failed to honour up until this point. Brazil and South Africa were featured in TI's [report](#) on beneficial ownership released at last year's G20 meeting in Turkey. The two countries were lagging the most in addressing basic aspects of transparency in business practices, including providing critical information about the real owners of companies, which would make it more difficult for the corrupt to hide or move money across borders.

The move towards making this information public is welcomed by civil society organisations that have long been pressing for not only the creation of a register of beneficial ownership but also for this to be publicly accessible.

"However," says David Lewis, executive director of Corruption Watch, "a major point of concern is the lack of provision for civil society cooperation in the plan. This is contrary to the principles and ethos of the OGP, which seek to ensure genuine dialogue and collaboration between governments and civil society.

"Although the NAP also emphasises compliance with the G20 principles," Lewis continued, "we believe that the implementation of this commitment should go further by including the creation of a public register, not specified in the current plan, as we see this as an essential part of fighting corruption and illicit financial flows."

Corruption Watch will continue to actively engage with government on the issue of beneficial ownership, which includes monitoring the Financial Intelligence Centre Amendment (FICA) bill and on-going interaction with the National Treasury. South Africa's participation in the OGP provides a unique opportunity to ensure that critical matters such as this, which have a major impact on the fight against corruption, are being addressed by all stakeholders from government and civil society.

Civil society organisations have written an [open letter](#) to South Africa's special envoy to the Open Government Partnership, expressing their deep dismay at government's inadequate efforts to implement and co-ordinate OGP policies in the country.

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