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## **Parliamentary Meeting on the Occasion on the First High-Level Meeting of the GPEDC 14 April, 2014 Mexico City, Mexico**

**Speech at the opening session  
by Lord David Chidgey, member of the AWEPA Governing Council**

### **THE ROLE OF ODA IN PARLIAMENTARY STRENGTHENING**

The Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation has helped countries and organisations work together to end poverty through political dialogue, since before the turn of the millennium. That was when questions of how to scale up OECD contributions and make aid more effective towards the achievement of the MDGs came to the fore.

From there, the 'how' of development was established. Significant milestones were reached in Paris in 2005 where the principles of process were laid: namely those of ownership, alignment, harmonisation, mutual accountability, and vitally, results. These were agreed and incorporated into the daily parlance and planning in the development field.

But it was not until late in the game, at the third High Level Meeting in Accra (2008), that the legislative perspective broke into the fold through the vocal participation of the AWEPA-led parliamentary delegation, where legislators demanded greater recognition on the key role of parliament in this debate.

Why? Because parliaments matter. Without sufficient oversight of all forms of development funding, and without well-informed policy making, development efforts are bound to miss the mark.

Since that time MPs across Africa and Europe continued to engage in the debate in the context of AWEPA's Development Effectiveness Programme, resulting in a significant shift amongst parliaments on the urgent need to step up their role in both setting development policy and following up on government service delivery. In the use of development aid, and achieving value for money.

There is a clear, growing emphasis on the accrual of natural resource revenues, foreign direct investment, taxation, philanthropy and other domestic resources. And with this shift, the pool of resources to be accounted for has increased. Not only are partner governments and parliaments responsible for managing and accounting for external finance like ODA, but with the growth of local potential, domestic resources as well.

The newfound focus on the private sector makes sense. Developing countries are in dire need of jobs and wealth creation. In order to sustain this new influx, strong institutions are vital. In the developing world, parliamentary institutions are not only the political underdogs in an executive dominated landscape, they are chronically ill-informed. They are barely engaged. They are sorely under resourced; capacity is often minimal.

This last point bears repeating: Parliaments – the only institution to hold the mandate of the people and thus at the apex of every country's accountability system- do not have the resources to carry out their roles effectively. In fact, the chief constraint to effective execution of development efforts is the weak capacity for oversight in most parliaments in the developing world.

When parliaments effectively engage in the budget process, both in terms of budget formulation and the oversight of activities planned, development has a fighting chance to be effective. Executives cannot, however, be expected to prioritize spending or other forms of support for parliaments in overseeing their own performance. For this reason, here at this meeting, its parliaments who look to the donor community to support them at this critical time in their own institutional development.

Donors should not shy away from supporting legislatures by investing instead in civil society organisations as their "development watchdogs". Partner country governments should not seek comfort through the idea of stronger NGOs but instead look to stronger parliaments. Continuing to bypass parliaments because of weakness just further weakens rather than develops their capacity. While a parliament with teeth- one that can exercise its constitutional mandate- is in everyone's interest.

Through Paris (2005), Accra (2008) and Busan (2011), governments and development partners have pledged ten commitments aimed at improving relations with parliaments towards better development results.

These range from a dedication to increasing executive accountability to parliaments, to engaging with them in the drafting of development policies or plans, to strengthening parliamentary capacity to oversee and monitor implementation in the development sector, and assuring that parliaments take an active role in international discussions on development.

The Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) has undertaken to monitor the overall implementation of the commitments made to various stakeholders in these landmark documents. That is, with the exception of parliaments.

And I ask you, fellow parliamentarians, just reflect on progress made. What has changed? Sadly, the silence is deafening. So what to do? We must act as parliamentarians should. We must begin holding our governments and development partners accountable for promises they have made.

Parliaments themselves- across all regions- must take a stand on these issues and recognize the extent of their involvement in this dynamic development scenario. This includes embracing donors as partners in their own development plans and how these relations should be shaped, as well as how to monitor promises made at the highest levels by those in the frontlines of development.

Parliaments can no longer afford to shy away from demanding changes in the way they are involved in the management of ODA or local resources, like those of the extractive industry or smart taxation policies.

Ultimately, it is every parliamentarians responsibility to retain a central position in its country's development. This institution is uniquely placed to hold those responsible to account, on behalf of the communities which elect them. It is the parliamentarians who are uniquely, directly, accountable to the people- no other group, body or faction.

Now is the time for parliaments to take on a stronger role, as decisions unfold about what the development architecture will look like post-2015. If parliaments don't step up now, a key opportunity will be missed to help shape future relations between the developed and developing worlds; between parliaments themselves and other development actors. But external assistance is needed.

We must send a strong message to the donor community present here in Mexico: a political imperative is at play. If they do not support parliamentary engagement in the budget process, who will? Alongside private sector growth, private sector accountability must be maintained. And what better place to begin

than that of our own parliaments. Spread the message. Push for results. Your institutions are vital to any development process.

We, Members of Parliament from over thirty national parliaments and three regional parliamentary bodies meeting on the occasion of the First High-Level Meeting of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (*GPEDC*), issue the following statement as a contribution to the final outcome of the High-Level Meeting.

We are aware of the opportunity the GPEDC presents to parliamentarians to appeal to development stakeholders to strengthen parliaments as institutions in line with their constitutional mandates.

Noting the commitments made through the Paris Declaration, the Accra Agenda for Action and the Busan Partnership, particularly those that pertain to the role of parliament in effective development cooperation, we are concerned at the continued underfunding of the capacity of parliaments to fulfil their basic functions, including budgetary oversight and policy-making, as well as at the chronic lack of involvement of parliaments in mutual accountability structures at country level. We are equally concerned that the findings of recent progress reports on the implementation of commitments made show limited progress across all indicators measured.

We acknowledge that reducing poverty and inequality as well as cooperation that fosters sustainable development, are top priorities in the post 2015 global development agenda. To this end, we see an urgent need for incorporating the parliamentary perspective into the discussion of new actors, models and mechanisms in the international development cooperation agenda. We reiterate the importance of South-South and triangular cooperation as a new framework for inclusive development partnerships. We also note that States affected by conflicts should receive special attention as recipients of development cooperation.

We underscore the importance of parliamentary solidarity between developed and developing countries, including through information sharing as a way of enhancing transparency and accountability in the resource sector, official assistance and other areas of mutual interest. At the same time, we encourage colleagues around the world to continue to work to strengthen their own parliamentary institutions through proactive measures to endow the parliament with greater oversight powers.

We therefore call for:

- I. A strong parliamentary involvement in the final review of the Millennium Development Goals and the design of the new development framework beyond 2015;
- II. Increased support for ensuring strong analytical and technical capacity for the execution of our duties in overseeing and scrutinizing all resources of development, domestic or foreign, public or private, so that they would benefit the nationals of recipient countries;
- III. The creation of an enabling environment on the part of the executive and development partners for parliamentary engagement in the budget process and parliamentary oversight of development expenditures;
- IV. The catalytic use of external assistance in bolstering the execution of oversight functions of parliaments and the involvement of parliamentarians in the budget process;
- V. Accelerated implementation of the commitment towards gender-disaggregated budgeting and monitoring systems; as well as stronger commitment to support the political empowerment of women as a proven way to improve development outcomes;
- VI. Widespread support for the establishment of Independent Fiscal Institutions and other expertise to support parliamentary budget and accounts committees in tandem with Supreme Audit Institutions;

- VII. More frequent and rigorous country-level monitoring of development cooperation commitments and the urgent inclusion of parliaments in all relevant processes;
- VIII. A leading role for parliaments in mutual accountability as a key enabler of effective development cooperation, particularly through the design and adoption of a national aid policy;
- IX. A stronger role for parliaments in creating legislative frameworks to increase the effectiveness and sustainability of international development cooperation, including through the participation of civil society and the private sector, as well as the media;
- X. Legislative action in promoting domestic resource mobilization, particularly with regard to tax policy, the extractive sector and illicit financial flows;
- XI. The institutionalization of this Parliamentary meeting so that it takes place regularly before the High-Level Meeting;
- XII. The High Level Meeting of the GPEDC to reaffirm and strengthen the existing commitments to parliamentary stakeholders in development effectiveness and to further strengthen the role of parliaments in monitoring all resources for development.