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Second Expert Roundtable on the Common Principles for Support to Parliaments

Common Principles Guide: Questions to aid drafting

INTRODUCTION

The first *Common Principles* Roundtable in October 2016 concluded that guidance on applying the *Common Principles* would be a useful aid for parliaments to manage development needs.

The purpose of a Guide is to assist parliaments and partners to strengthen parliament's development role in two main ways:

- ***To enable parliament to better assess offers of support, and***
- ***When offers of support are taken up, to ensure that parliament retains central direction of project/activity design and implementation.***

(Discussion Paper: 3)

The purpose of the Second Roundtable is to draw on the knowledge of participants in drafting a *Guide*. **The following text and questions, together with the *Discussion Paper* and *Concept Note*, are designed to assist each breakout group to work up and present a structure and content for a 'zero' draft *Common Principles Guide*.**

Participants are invited to use the questions in whatever way they find helpful as a stimulus to in-group creation of the zero draft. The questions may also be useful in structuring the brief presentations groups will be asked to make of their conclusions, and subsequent discussion.

QUESTIONS

(A) Actors and development process

Those involved in parliamentary development

The first task is to identify parliamentary structures and individuals within and external to parliament responsible for parliamentary development. We encourage colleagues to begin their 'break out' discussions with this issue. The *Discussion Paper Annex* (part 2) seeks to identify some relevant participants involved.

(1.) What parts of parliament's infrastructure, and individual post holders, are key to parliamentary development?

Assessment and governance: 'Mapping the process'

Second, the actors identified engage in a development process. For example, to assess what development may be required, the available support, the management of development once initiated. That process is envisaged as a transparent series of actions leading to, for example, a decision about whether or not to proceed with development activities, priorities for development, means of implementation, and the role of external partners.

Realistically, management of such a process requires parliament to have internal technical expertise within the secretariat. For example, if parliament is to 'better assess offers' of external support, then in-house parliamentary expertise and evaluation tools will be required alongside expert capacity offered by external advisors.

Parliament's ability to take charge of its development also requires good management capacity. Having tools to assess proposals is meaningless without the willingness and capacity to deploy them. This in turn requires dedicated secretariat staff time and a clear chain of command.

(2.) What are the stages for parliamentary development where parliament's ownership can be asserted? (Ex. Assessing offers of support, needs assessments, terms of references, expert selection, program drafting, M&E, etc.)¹

(3.) What should parliament's process of assessing and governing development look like?

(4.) What internal technical evaluation skills/tools will parliament need to assess development proposals of support? How can these be enhanced?

(5.) What management skills and practices will parliament require to have realistic governance of its own development?

(B) Balancing uniqueness and common features of parliament

The *Common Principles* lay emphasis on the uniqueness of parliament: each has its own internal decision-making structure and procedure. At the same time, there appear to be common features between most, for example, the office of Speaker, though the 'weight' of such common features may differ between parliaments.

(6.) What are the relevant common features of parliaments, and how can the *Guide* capture them without creating an inaccurate impression of uniformity?

(7.) To what extent should the *Guide* seek to reflect a 'best practice' applicable to all parliaments?

(C) Strategy/no strategy in place

An obvious example of how parliaments differ is that some have a strategy, others not. The *Discussion Paper* sets out advantages to parliament of having a strategy, one being that through the process of working it up parliament will have identified (and ideally costed) its future needs. But not all parliaments have strategies, and the *Paper* argues that identifying development requirements need not, indeed probably should not, await one.

(8.) How can the *Guide* best navigate for all parliaments: those with and those without a strategy?

(D) Guide content, structure, and format

The example zero draft structure provided in the *Discussion Paper Annex* identifies elements of content necessary for a *Guide* but is not necessarily exhaustive. The breakout groups will discuss and identify specific content. The example zero draft is in two parts, infrastructure and process, but alternative structures are of course possible.

(9.) What content should the *Guide* have and how should it be structured?

The *Guide* must be useful for parliaments, i.e. a practical working document. There is a presumption that it could be more granular than the *Common Principles* text (*Discussion Paper*: paras 21, 22). This does not mean longer, and if the *Guide* is to be useful it needs to be succinct and in a 'handy' format.

(10.) What level of detail and approximate length should the *Guide* aim for; and in what format(s) should it appear, for example, narrative, checklist, etc.?

¹ See also, *Discussion Paper*, para 24.