

**United Nations Committee of Experts on Public Administration:  
Accelerating public financial management reform to reinforce the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable  
Development and eradicate poverty in times of multiple crises**

*Wednesday, April 17, 2024: 3-6pm*

Remarks by Raquel Ferreira, Network Manager, Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency (5 mins)

Good afternoon,

Honourable Chair, distinguished guests, it is a privilege to be here today, representing the Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency, or GIFT. Firstly, congratulations to the authors for their insightful paper. Our mission at GIFT aligns itself closely with the transformative recommendations put forward in it, recognizing the indispensable role of efficient and effective public financial management systems in eradicating poverty and fostering sustainable development, especially in times of crises. These recommendations not only pave the way for reinforced fiscal governance but also echo our commitment to transparency, participation, and leveraging digitalization in public financial management.

Established in 2011, GIFT is a dynamic action-network of 58 stewards, bringing together ministries of finance, civil society organizations, international financial institutions as well as other stakeholders. Our mission is clear: to advance global norms, promote peer learning, collaborative assistance, and champion the use of digital tools for sustainable and measurable improvements in fiscal transparency and inclusive participation.

The call to strengthen public financial management is a compelling call for us at GIFT. Fiscal transparency is not just about making data available; it is about making quality information available that can be actively used by key stakeholders in their quest to reach development goals. Program-based budgeting and budget tagging, as recommended, are critical tools that facilitate the link between budget allocations and the achievement of development goals. GIFT has done work with countries in integrating Sustainable Development Goal-tagging in the budget process, enabling a direct link between expenditure and outcomes, thereby enhancing the accountability and effectiveness of public spending.

Fiscal transparency must, however, transcend mere information publication, it must be accompanied by meaningful engagement. Often, we've observed countries boasting high levels of transparency, yet the potential users of this information are failing to leverage it for meaningful progress. As the paper suggests, often information is disseminated without a clear understanding of the intended audience—without grasping who they are, what they seek, or how the information can best meet their needs. This hampers the effective utilization of transparency measures and undermines their potential impact. Digital tools, such as well-designed fiscal transparency portals featuring user-friendly information, open data, and interactive windows offer promising avenues to bridge this gap. And so, we echo and support the recommendation to fully realize the benefits of government digitalization.

In this regard, many countries within the GIFT network are actively sharing experiences and lessons learned. For example, Brazil will soon celebrate the 20th anniversary of its fiscal transparency portal. We've also witnessed technological innovations developed by those outside government, including civil society, for instance in many of the Dataquests that GIFT has had the privilege of being part of - we encourage governments to tap into these useful resources.

The emphasis promoting public expenditure review and efficiency gains resonate with our advocacy for inclusive budgets. Accountability institutions and think tanks play a pivotal role, as highlighted in the recommendations, in identifying opportunities for more effective government spending. GIFT champions the

cause of meaningful public participation in fiscal policies. Well-designed participation opportunities enable the public, including marginalized groups, to use fiscal information to influence public decisions that affect their lives.

However, global levels of public participation remain very low and necessitate the more proactive involvement of key stakeholders, including parliaments, supreme audit institutions, civil society, and the public. Within GIFT's Fiscal Openness Accelerator project, we worked hand in hand with colleagues in five African countries to pilot innovative mechanisms for engagement in budget processes. While promising results were achieved, the project also highlighted the need to ensure meaningful participation from traditionally excluded groups, and the importance of closing the feedback loop between citizens and decision-makers. While we continue to work closely with countries, it is safe to say, that globally, a lot more work needs to be done in this area, if we are to gain benefits from it.

The journey towards achieving the SDGs is complex and challenging. Aligned closely with GIFT's mission of promoting fiscal transparency, inclusive participation and accountability, the recommendations put forward assist in ensuring that fiscal policies are not just effective but transformative. Together, let us embrace these recommendations and work towards a future where fiscal transparency and inclusive participation are the norm, not the exception—a future where every action we take brings us closer to the SDGs.

Thank-you.