

**22<sup>nd</sup> session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration:**  
*Thursday, 30 March 2023: 3-4:30pm*

Remarks by Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency  
on lessons from country experiences for SDG implementation

Item 8: Public financial management in times of emergency and implications for the credibility of budgets session

Good afternoon,

Firstly, I would like to congratulate the authors on their insightful paper touching on many of the core issues that we at the Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency (GIFT) constantly grapple with. Thank-you for inviting us, we are always happy to be part of these reflections and to share GIFT network experiences, a network whose members are constantly facing challenges and actively sharing potential solutions towards the most effective use of public resources.

In recognizing that while fiscal transparency is one of the critical backbones for better governance towards greater government efficiency, accountability, and ultimately the attainment of societal goals, including the SDGs, we know that practitioners somewhat struggle to navigate the different norms and standards and to find appropriate examples of what can be done. To assist in overcoming this, we developed two related knowledge products:

The first is the Advancing Fiscal Transparency for Development online course launched in 2021, and more recently, in February of this year, the accompanying guide. These two freely available resources were developed drawing on the unique diversity of the GIFT network, taking advantage of the expertise from international organizations including the IBP, the IMF, the World Bank; PEFA Secretariat; the OECD, IFAC, CABRI, EITI, INTOSAI as well as the knowledge and experience of GIFT steward practitioners that have advanced fiscal transparency policies and practices in their respective countries.

These resources touch on many of the key issues raised in this paper, aiming to provide practical solutions to enhancing fiscal transparency. Examples are provided throughout, illustrating how key elements of fiscal transparency have been achieved by practitioners in the field. Hearing directly from those that have benefited from different elements of fiscal transparency in many countries at different levels of development is sure to motivate those that may be unsure of whether it is actually achievable and/or worth the effort.

Particularly, Module 1 presents all the basic concepts, including what fiscal transparency is and why it matters, including presenting the case of how fiscal transparency assisted the Philippines in accessing international credit markets. It ends with a summary table showing the coherence between GIFT's 10 principles of fiscal transparency, public participation and accountability and the different relevant internationally recognized norms and standards.

As stated in the paper, a key weakness often identified is that key fiscal transparency stakeholders outside the executive are often not sufficiently included in budget processes for good governance, especially in times of emergency, such as parliaments, civil society, the public, supreme audit institutions, and donors. Module 2 of the GIFT guide is dedicated to the role of these different stakeholders, talking to how each one has critical contributions to make. Examples are provided from Kenya's Parliamentary Budget Office, Brazilian public councils, and from Peru's Comptroller General, as well as multiple examples of the benefits of civil society involvement, including from GIFT's Fiscal Openness Accelerator (FOA) project, that implemented

pilot public participation mechanisms in 5 African countries - Benin, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa.

A key point made in the paper relates to the executive itself, also needing quality information to base decisions on. Module 3 sets out the importance of an underpinning legal framework and the minimum information requirements that international norms and standards set as desired practices in respect of the contents and quality of key budget related publications. Examples are provided of each of these documents so it can be easily understood what is required. Revenue transparency, including tax transparency, is often a more neglected area as touched on in this paper, these GIFT products thus dedicate space specifically to this topic and put forward GIFT's newly released Principles for tax policy and administration.

The paper recommends that digital innovations are used to enhance budget credibility. In the field of fiscal transparency, there are numerous digital tools, such as fiscal transparency portals and open data that make it easier for enhanced levels of transparency to be achieved and to link budget resources to societal goals, such as the SDGs. Module 4 of the Guide is dedicated to these tools. GIFT is also doing quite a bit of work in these areas, assisting governments, such as that of Egypt and Lesotho in linking cross-cutting development indicators, and inclusive policies, such as women, children, and youth programs; making it possible to show the link between budget transparency reforms and development. We have also witnessed a wealth of technological alternatives that civil society has developed for public engagement in the budget process, including in many of the Dataquest events that GIFT had had the privilege of being part of - we encourage governments to tap into these useful resources.

Finally, as experience shows us that technical tools are generally not sufficient to advance fiscal transparency, the last module/chapter focuses on answering practical questions, based on insights obtained from within and outside the GIFT network, on what can be done related to the political economy to advance fiscal transparency for development. Once again, to do this, numerous practical examples are provided, providing reassurance that all of this is not merely a theoretical aspiration, but something that can actually be achieved through the perseverance of interested, motivated stakeholders!

The GIFT Course and Guide thus give practical advice on many of the key areas addressed in the paper, we thus invite everyone to use them as public resources available to assist in furthering this important cause.

Thank-you for your time.