

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

MINISTRIES OF FINANCE AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS:  
FRIENDS OR FOES?

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**Introduction and Moderator:**

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**Presenter:**

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**Closing Remarks:**

WARREN KRAFCHIK  
Director, International Budget Project  
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

**Panelists:**

SHAMSUDDEEN USMAN  
Minister of Finance, Nigeria

GOODALL E. GONDWE  
Minister of Finance, Malawi

GILBERT MAOUNDONODJI  
Coordinator, Group for Alternative Research and  
Monitoring of the Chad-Cameroon

JEAN-BAPTISTE COMPAORE  
Minister of Finance, Burkina Faso

ANTHONY AKOTO OSEI  
Minister of State at Ministry of Finance, Ghana

ALOYSIUS TOE  
Executive Director, Foundation for Human Rights and Democracy

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## PROCEEDINGS

MR. GRIFFIN: -- project, co-sponsors for this afternoon's event. I'd like to invite the panelists, the ministers of finance and the two civil society organization representatives to come up.

I apologize. We have made a mistake and we don't have the placards yet here for the front. But there's a name for each person in front of the chair, and if you can just come and take your place, then we can get started. We're only missing the minister from Malawi, who has obviously been delayed but we're hoping will still be able to get here.

So, please come up.

(Pause)

MR. GRIFFIN: Okay. Welcome, everybody.

My name is Charles Griffin. I'm a Fellow in the Global Economy Program at Brookings, across the street. Along with my colleague David de Ferranti, who's sitting here in the front, and who until two years ago was the Vice President for Latin America in the World Bank, we lead together what's called the "Transparency and Accountability Project" at Brookings. And we are honored to co-sponsor this event, as I mentioned, with SAIS and with the International Budget Project.

And, Warren Krafchik, I don't see you, but could you -- oh, there you are. He's our co-sponsor and excellent colleague in helping to arrange some of these events.

I'd also like to mention that Brookings is preparing to launch an Africa Employment and Growth Initiative. So today's event, in a sense, is a taste of Brookings' future plans to increase its own capabilities in Africa, on African economic policy.

The purpose of our Transparency and Accountability Project is to improve the quality, fairness and impact of public spending. Our particular focus is public spending in low- and middle-income countries. But, as you all know, the problem of doing a better job with government spending is not limited to poorer countries. Rich countries have exactly the same problem.

A glaring difference, though, between the environments in richer and poorer countries is the openness and the intensity of the public debate surrounding budgets and expenditures.

In the U.S., for example, we take for granted civil society institutions like the Brookings Institution across the street, on the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, which is the parent organization for Warren's group. They insert themselves in the debate over public expenditures. They develop new ideas that they think would solve policy problems. Whether

anybody wants those ideas or not, they provide experts who move in and out of government and much more.

But even here in the U.S., this capability is actually quite recent. Brookings is the granddaddy of all think tanks, and that grandfather or grandmother is only 90 years old. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Warren's group, is only 25 years old.

So even here, this is not something that's been around forever. It's quite new.

In countries where the democratic roots are more recent, therefore, it's no surprise that institutions, civil institutions, that have this role in society are really in their early stages of development.

But we think that their development, and anything we can do to help them along, could contribute to a stronger accountability environment. And our own view is that of all the government ministries, the ministry of finance is the one most interested in holding their own brother and sister ministries, sector ministries, accountable.

So, in a sense, we're guessing that there may be a positive answer today to the question that we're raising, which is: "Ministries of finance and civil society organizations, are they friends or foes?"

But we'll find out, I guess, at the end, what actually comes out of this.

Okay, so to answer the question, or to at least shed light on it, we're honored to have representatives of what we planned to have four African ministries of finance, and two very well known African civil society organizations that are here today. And I'll just quickly introduce this very august group.

First of all, I'd like to introduce, to my right, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, who's a Distinguished Visiting Scholar at the Brookings Institution. As all of you know, she's a former minister of finance, and also the minister of foreign affairs in Nigeria. And I have to say we've had a wonderful year with her at Brookings, and we're very sad -- but proud -- that she's leaving us to go to the World Bank in six weeks to become one of the three managing directors.

For those of you who don't know the World Bank, this means -- well, she and the other two manager directors actually pretty much run the place. And so she's really second in command under the president.

My personal hope is that her next tour of duty might be as the president. Let's hope.

(Laughter)

(Applause)

I'm not starting a campaign committee yet.

Then I'd like to also introduce our panelists.

First of all -- and there's no particular order here -- the Honorable Shamsuddeen Usman, the new Minister of Finance in Nigeria with the new government. Welcome.

(Applause)

The Honorable Jean Baptiste Compaore, the Minister of Finance and Budget from Burkina Faso.

(Applause)

Dr. Anthony Akoto Osei, Minister of State at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning in Ghana.

(Applause)

Mr. Gilbert Maoundonodji, who's the coordinator for the Group for Alternative Research and Monitoring of the Chad-Cameroon Oil Pipeline Project. He's also on the board of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, which is an international organization.

(Applause)

And then, finally, I'd like to introduce Mr. Aloysius Toe.

(Applause)

He's the Executive Director of the Foundation for Human Rights and Democracy in Liberia -- and probably the only one in our group today, in all of us, who's actually spent time in jail as part of his experience building.

So welcome, all of the panelists. Welcome to the audience.

And we're looking forward to what I hope will be like 90 minutes of a very interesting presentation by Ngozi, and then short presentations, or little short contributions by each of the panelists, and then an open question-and-answer.

So, Ngozi, I'll turn it over to you.

MS. OKONJO-IWEALA: Okay.

MR. GRIFFIN: Thank you.

MS. OKONJO-IWEALA: Well, thank you, Charlie. Let me say that I'm really very honored to have my colleagues here, both from the ministries of finance, the honorable ministers, as well as the civil society colleagues. And, of course, I hope my other colleagues on the panel won't mind if I say a special welcome to my own Minister of Finance from Nigeria, Dr. Shamsuddeen Usman. I'm so delighted that he and the team could make it.

I think this is really an auspicious time for Brookings, because as Charlie mentioned, they're starting to focus on a program on Africa, I think for the first time. And, you know, this is a good beginning, that we should be able to attract such a distinguished panel to kick off this focus of Brookings. And I hope that this will be the first of many such events at time of the annual meetings, when all the ministers are here, that we have a particular focus on an issue of great interest to Africa.

My task is really to just kick off the discussion. So I'll try not to take too long. We have prepared a draft paper, which I think you may have seen. If you haven't, hopefully a copy will be available. But I worked on this paper with one of our bright young Africans, a Ghanaian, so this is good West African collaboration, Phillip Osafo Kwaku, who is in the audience here.

(Applause)

Yes. So, he's just flown in from Harvard today.

What I'd like to do is summarize a little what the main thrust of the paper, and then leave many of the issues for debate.

I think it was through my colleague David de Ferranti and Charlie, talking about transparency and accountability. In the project that they are running at Brookings, they began to ask questions about, you know, what do you think about the role of civil society in monitoring budgets, in helping to increase the transparency of the budgetary process in Africa? What is happening with this? What was the experience? And how can we make this a tool for greater accountability and transparency, and better governance in African countries?

I thought these were very important questions that the TAP project is looking at at Brookings. And, you know, it got me thinking. And we eventually agreed, with Charlie and David, that this would be a good focus to bring the ministers of finance and the civil society organizations to look at

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how they can cooperate. And we thought by being provocative, and saying “friends or foe,” this would generate an interesting debate.

But, essentially, the idea was that, you know, by looking at our own experience in Nigeria, perhaps this could provide the kind of framework within which we can discuss other experiences from other countries, and which may be even more robust than the one we had in Nigeria, and begin to get at this issue of how can we use civil society as an instrument to improve accountability and transparency in our societies?

So we looked at the experience that we had while I was in the Ministry of Finance from 2003 to 2006 in Nigeria. And there were four areas we identified that civil society played an important role.

The first was in the budget process. The second was in the monitoring of returned looted assets. The third was in the extractive industries transparency initiative. And the fourth, that didn't quite happen -- and I'll speak about this -- is in the monitoring of sub-national accounts. Because Nigeria is a large, decentralized country, where there's true fiscal decentralization. And so there's obviously a role for greater transparency and greater monitoring and participation of civil society in this area.

So, just briefly, on the issue, on the budget process. In Nigeria I think we have typically the kind of budget process that obtains in many African countries. We have the drafting stage, when we prepare the budget,

the legislative approval, implementation stage, and then, of course, the monitoring stage.

And at each of those stages there was a potential for civil society organizations to intervene and participate to make the process more transparent. But you see that actual participation was really only in one area.

In the drafting stage of the budget we typically start with a discussion with the President -- and this is very much our own process -- where he gives his ideas of priorities he wants in the budget, the kind of size and the parameters, and we discuss back and forth with the director of the budget office and the team from the ministry of finance. And following these initial discussions, we then go away and attempt to put together, you know, some kind of a draft approach to the budget, which we call a "Fiscal Strategy Paper." Essentially, we set out the parameters, and we set out the directions of the budget and the potential trade-offs that we have to make in financing the budget.

And, you know, this Fiscal Strategy Paper was a new tool introduced during my time in office. Because we noticed that cabinet members did not really make trade-offs. Everybody wanted the maximum size of budget possible, as you can imagine. And, you know, this idea that, you know, we need to focus on two or three key areas wasn't really robustly developed.

After this initial process, we typically would start to go out to consult the legislature, the civil society, to get their inputs, you know, and also to draw in the departments, spending departments and agencies, you know, to give inputs on whether the directions and the parameters and so on were correct.

Bringing in or consulting with civil society organizations was actually a new approach and a new way of doing business that didn't really happen in the country previously. And what we did is that we held fora in the two main cities, in Abuja and in Lagos, where we invited civil society organizations, the media, labor unions. And I participated in two years in a row in these discussions myself. And they would have a draft paper to look at. And we sought their input on whether the directions for the budget were right, the parameters made sense, the priorities made sense, etcetera.

And we often got very robust comments and -- mostly criticisms, much of the time, back, but which we found very interesting and helpful.

And then, you know, after this we would take these comments into account, revise the budget, have a debate in cabinet, and then send the budget, after the President had approved it, to the legislature. And here we would have a very tough time indeed. Because this was now the time for horse trading. When the budget actually goes to the legislature many people -- as

you know, in many countries, this is the time for them to try to insert their pet projects into the budget. What they call “constituency projects” in Nigeria, that is the projects for each individual area. And I’m very happy that there’s an honorable member of parliament from Ghana here. And I hope at some stage he will make some comments.

Because it was really tough. Because then they would start changing the parameters, you know, trying to increase -- we had a fiscal rule in Nigeria where we tried to budget at a certain price level below the oil price in order to stabilize, you know, our expenditure pattern. And they would often want to increase this, increase the size of the budget, put in all kinds of things. And it was a very difficult process. And, you know, a lot of horse trading went on during this process. Eventually, you know, we would get it approved with a lot of delays, and it would go back to the President.

But in this process we thought that there was a chance for civil society to also intervene and participate actively. If we had cooperated well with civil society they could have helped us in lobbying some of the parliamentary members to say, “Look, keep a focus on these priorities. This is important. We must give more to health -- ” -- or to roads, or to water -- whatever it was that priorities had been decided on.

But I don’t think, from our part as ministry of finance, we really made that big -- we didn’t make the kind of effort needed. I think we were

simply overwhelmed in trying to put things right. But we could have made a better alliance and had them help us lobby to maintain focus.

So this is another area in which civil society organizations could have played, or could play, a role.

And then, in terms of implementation of the budget, of course working with the sector spending agencies, and the sector departments, a very important role for civil society organizations to see what's really going on, and how the budget is being spent. And, of course, at the end of the budget cycle we introduced a budget implementation report which didn't exist previously. And, of course, civil society would have a big role to play in that.

But, again, I would say that there was more interaction with civil society at the front end, and not as much at the back end of the process. But clearly a need for that to happen.

So that's in the budgeting cycle and process. And one of the experiences I had was that often, once the budget was passed and, you know, implemented, or in the process, rather than being allies we had a lot of antagonism with civil society, because they would actually come out and say, "Oh, the ministry of finance has done this, or taken away money from this area," or "They are lying. They haven't put as much money in this area," and so on. And, you know, we could have had much more productive relationships than we had.

But I found that very often the civil society organizations did not possess the kind of knowledge and expertise that made them really good critics of the budget process. And this is one of the areas, you know, wanting the skills to be able to do this kind of intervention and helping the job simply was not as good as it could have been.

Now in the next area where civil society was active was a very interesting one. We had money that was stolen away from Nigeria under the Abacha regime and lodged abroad. And after a big fight by the various administrations, we were able to get this money back, particularly under the Obasanjo administration.

The President then made a strong focus on trying to get this money repatriated and it was quite successful. But, interestingly, civil society organizations played a very active role. They were very interested, as was the general Nigerian public. They were aggrieved about the fact that this money was sitting in Swiss bank accounts and it was taking a long time to get back. And so there was an active role played by these organizations in exposing what was going on, in lobbying for it to come back. They even, some of them, liaised with Swiss civil society organizations to put pressure in Switzerland, as well as put pressure in Nigeria.

So I think that was a very, very good role. And the very interesting thing is that, you know, once the money was repatriated, the World

Bank, the Swiss government, asked the World Bank and the Nigerian government if we could all collaborate in monitoring the way that the money was spent. And the Bank took charge of this process at the request of the Nigerian government and the Swiss government, and invited a civil society group, or coalition, called “Integrity,” to participate in the monitoring of how that money was actually spent on the ground.

And I think it was a very productive effort, all in all. And it’s the kind of role that I think is very important for civil society organizations to play.

I’m particularly excited about that role because of the new initiative at the World Bank to, you know, called the STAR Initiative, the Stolen Assets Recovery Initiative, which was launched just about a month ago to try and recover the assets of developing countries that have been looted and stolen abroad. And a key aspect of that recovery would be, you know, voluntary monitoring of the use of these assets once they get back to the countries. And I think that here civil society organizations can play the kind of role that they played so well in the Nigeria case.

A third area that civil society played an important role in Nigeria in the budget monitoring process was in being a part of the national working group on the NEITI, the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. Many of you will know about EITI, the “Publish What You Pay”

initiative, whereby in natural-resource rich countries they attempt to get, you know, say oil companies or extractive companies to publish what they paid government, and get government to publish what it has received so that the public can match those and see that no money is being taken away. This initiative was launched some years ago by Tony Blair, the Prime Minister of the U.K. and George Soros.

I see Minister Gondwe in the back. Please come up and join us.  
Welcome.

(Pause)

I don't mean to embarrass you, but I think it's important you're with us. You have a seat up here.

You know, so the EITI initiative that was launched to expose or make more transparent the use of resources in the oil and the extractive sectors, you know, Nigeria joined this initiative. President Obasanjo, the then president, enrolled the country in this initiative. And under President Yar'Adua, the new president, this has continued.

And civil society has become part of the working group that drives this initiative in the country. There are three or four civil society representatives from the NGO community, from media, from labor unions. And essentially they've supported an audit of what has gone on in the oil sector in the past five years, exposing monies that have been received,

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weaknesses in the financial management, as well as the physical processes in the oil sector.

And so the civil society organizations have been quite active and quite vocal in terms of the way this initiative is run. And it has resulted in a very good thing, with publication of this audit available to the public at [www.neiti.org](http://www.neiti.org). And I think, again, it's the kind of role, in trying to enhance transparency in particular sectors, that civil society organizations can play well.

Finally, you know, a fourth area in which civil society organizations could, should, and should have played a big role in Nigeria but they didn't really, was in monitoring fiscal transparency at the sub-national level.

Since the country is quite a decentralized country, with a federal government, 36 states, 774 local governments. And with 50 percent of the budget being spent by the state governments and the local governments, a lot of resources do go to the sub-national level. And, moreover, the governors of the states and the local government chairmen have a considerable amount of discretion in how these resources are spent.

And, unfortunately, we've not had a very good record in terms of transparency of accounts at the sub-national level, implementation of budgets -- so even sharing of information. And I think that this is an area in

which we could have focused civil society attention to monitor what goes on at that level, and what the state governments are doing with the resources. But not very much of that went on.

Civil society organizations in Nigeria tended to concentrate on the federal government and the federal budget, and they rarely went down to the provinces or to the local governments or states to ask any questions. So it was a very big frustration to me, you know, why this focus on ministry of finance? What not go to even the other ministries? Why not go to the states? Why not go to the local governments? I thought that there was a huge missed opportunity in this area. And it's one of the places where we can build substantial capacity for civil society organizations to work.

So these are the four areas, quickly, where, you know, there was some potential and some action on the ground in Nigeria. And I think there are some lessons to be learned on both sides -- both the side of the civil society organizations, as well as government, in terms of enhancing transparency or government accounts.

First of all, the civil society organizations that we dealt with I felt didn't have very clear objectives. You know, it wasn't clear were they interested in -- was it about tackling corruption and patronage? Was it about assuring a better location of resources to certain sectors? Was it about supporting certain marginalized groups? What was really the objective in

doing this? It wasn't always clear to me. At the end of the day, I think they were more about, you know, the idea of having more information and more transparency of accounts exposed.

But this issue of what is the objective of the civil society group that is dealing in this area is very critical. And, you know, it's the first thing that CSOs should get clarified before they enter into this.

The other was technical competencies. You know, there was a group of nine civil society organizations that worked more closely with me. And I'm sorry that -- one or two of them were invited to participate in this, but they didn't get visas so they couldn't make it. They worked closely in terms of this budget monitoring and enhancing transparency. But there was a very different level of skills within the group. I felt that many of them just didn't really understand the budget process, didn't have the skills, you know, where they could make really good and critical comments. So this is an obvious area where, if we are to have CSOs do the kind of engagement to enhance transparency that we want, we really need to find a way to up their skills so that they can play a better role than they have to date.

Effective communication strategies -- I think CSOs that are engaged in the budget process need to look at this. We had a few times when they went out and gave press conferences. And, do you know, figures were just not right. The information being put out wasn't right -- in spite of having

spent some time with them, in spite of having made information available.

And sometimes it just seemed like, you know, it was done to grab a headline.

So, again, what are you really trying to achieve? And how can you communicate effectively to push your purpose forward?

And then the dialogue with the authorities. I mean, I used to hear that, “Well, you know, we always have a difficulty accessing information. We’re very glad you’ve given us this information. Oh, but you’re not accessible. It’s difficult to see you.” And I admitted to that. You know, but we could have done better in trying to make, formulate, maybe a team within the ministry that would constantly engage with them. I did have a CSO coordinator, but I guess the effort wasn’t enough. So we take some of the blame.

But if ministries of finance and CSOs are to work well on budget issues, there needs to be maybe a concerted effort at the CSO level and the ministry level to put in place a continuous dialogue.

They also needed, I found, CSO should look at their lobbying skills. Because they were not really focused on their strategy and the objectives, they missed opportunities where they could have lobbied legislators to make sure that they kept up the budget priorities.

And, finally, I found that they didn't self-assess. You know, they were very critical of government, but they had shortcomings themselves. And I didn't see them trying to criticize themselves and their own approach.

On the government side there are also issues. I felt that, you know, we had given out much more information, or made accessible information, to CSOs than they had ever seen before. But still it was not enough. There was a constant complaint that it was difficult to get access to information.

So governments really, ministers of finance and officials, really need to look at how can they make information available? CSOs cannot be useful in this process unless they have the information with which to work.

Also, missed opportunities from the side of government in forming strategic alliances. Like I said before, if we had worked better with them I think we could have worked together to persuade the legislature not to do some of the things that they did with the budget.

And, finally, involving them in budget monitoring. I think government has to make a greater effort to integrate civil society organizations in budget monitoring, because it really help. And it helps spread information. It helps people see you have nothing to hide, and that things are going well.

Well, if CSOs are to play this kind of role, how do they get funded? We struggled with this in Nigeria. Many of the organizations did not

have adequate funding, and they would come -- and they were torn. You know, they came sometimes and said, "Give us part of the budget, you know, to help us." And then the next minute they will say, "No, maybe you shouldn't. Because if you give us, then people will think we've sold out."

So I could see them struggling with this issue. And I think this is where donors really need to step up. And I'm glad to say that there's an effort now on the part of donors to fund this kind of thing.

But if there are any aid organizations in the room, this is a clear area in which you can make a difference. There is no point sending organizations from out here, here or in any other capitals, to countries to come and monitor. They will never do the same kind of job that indigenous civil society organizations will do. So it's better to spend money training civil society organizations in the countries and getting them to do the monitoring than to have support organizations out here to do it. Or at least there should be partnerships between civil society organizations out here and those in the countries.

So I'd like to stop there and say that I see clear opportunities for us to step up our game in the African countries in terms of this whole issue of governance and the fiscal and financial aspects of our work, by working much more tightly and closely with civil society organizations, and making sure that

we provide them with the information, the training, or the access to others, to donors and so on, who can help them train to play a critical role.

If we are serious about improved governance in our countries, improved transparency, then we really need to set to work on this area.

And I'm very, very curious to hear about the experiences of my other colleagues, or my former colleagues in the ministry, and also the civil society organizations themselves.

Thank you very much.

(Applause)

MR. GRIFFIN: Thank you very much, Ngozi. That was wonderful.

We would like to now give us a bit of time to each of the ministers and the civil society representatives to comment on a -- we sent them a few suggestions, bullet-points, for questions we were interested in. But we don't want to limit you in any way.

But we'd like to have some discipline about the time. And this is always what ministers of finance are good at. They're very well disciplined.

(Laughter)

And if we can be careful with the time, then we'll have time for plenty of questions and answers.

I'd like to change -- we had purposely put Minister Usman later so that we wouldn't have too many Nigerians at the beginning.

(Laughter)

But he has to leave a bit early, so I think in respect for his schedule, I think it would make the most sense if we just start with you, Minister Usman. Thank you.

(Applause)

MINISTER USMAN: Thank you very much, and good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. My apology for disrupting the program. I will try not to abide that bribe-bait about ministers of finance observing time.

But let me thank, first of all, the Brookings Institution for this invitation. I'm honored to be here. And also Ngozi for not only an excellent paper, but I'm sure what you'll agree is an excellent delivery.

On a personal note, I also need to thank her for laying the ground, doing a good job, because of what she says she has done, so mine will be more of an elaboration.

But really to show that she's done a good job, in terms of the institutionalizing of the budget process. When I was appointed minister in July, I discovered that I was five months behind in terms of really preparing for the 2008 budget. But because most of the institutional arrangements were in place, I am in a position today that I've more than made up for those five

months. And as soon as I get back to Nigeria, we are taking the 2008 budget to the National Assembly. So it just shows you how much work has been done.

(Applause)

Now, on the issues, overall I think I totally agree that engagement by and with CSOs is a highly desirable issue, especially in the budgetary process, especially because of the additional transparency and accountability that they will add.

Something that I think is clearly represented in the paper, but I think for time issues that Ngozi probably forgot to raise, is the issue of capture by these institutions, especially whether it is capture by the elites -- and in our society it's different interest groups. Sometimes not necessarily the elite. It can be a serious problem, and I'll come back to that.

The paper talks about the need for budget monitoring and being a critical area in which civil society organizations will participate. That is, again, a very important point.

Now, for example, in Nigeria, she has started the process of budget monitoring, or at least tried to reinforce it. The problem we have is that there is, up to now, a problem of multiplicity, even within the government, of institutions that are doing budget monitoring. Not only a multiplicity of them but, unfortunately, a lack of coordination also among the different agencies.

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And that is something that I have, I mean, is one of the issues that I have promised to try and tackle. And, again, in this area clearly civil society organizations can bring in an additional benefit.

She mentioned the different stages of the budgeting in Nigeria and the fact that she has started a system of trying to bring in key stakeholders at the drafting stage of the budget. What I did, again -- when you come and meet certain things you try to improve on them. One experimentation that I did this year, she mentioned in the paper that she consulted the chairman of the relevant committees of the National Assembly. What I experimented with this year, to great benefit, is not only the chairmen, but I actually had the joint sessions. For example, there are two appropriate committees for this, the appropriation committee and the finance committee. So I had the two of them in the House and the two of them in the Senate, and briefed each of them in great detail, not just the chairmen but all the members. And this was very useful.

In fact in the Senate, they were joined, these two committees were joined by the leadership of the Senate. So, again, it was a very, very -- and in fact it was open to the press, at least the House one. The Senate insisted that they wanted it in camera for the sort of reasons that she mentioned earlier about the issue of constituency projects and other things that they didn't want

to be discussed openly. And this is where, again, civil society organizations can be very useful.

And the benefit I had was because I had to also go to them with a revised 2007 budget. And I used that opportunity not only to present the framework for the 2008 budget, but to explain to them the need for this revised 2007 budget. And I think the result of that, since that briefing the National Assembly never called me again. The only thing I heard was on the news, that they had actually approved the revised 2007 budget, without even asking me to go back and explain anything.

So this sort of approach can be very useful.

Budget monitoring, as I said, offers great scope for participation by CSOs. Unfortunately, at least in the case of Nigeria, not much is happening as the paper has pointed out.

The problem -- and I think it has been quite rightly addressed by Ngozi -- is the issue of expertise and responsibility of the civil society organizations. They lack expertise.

But, like I will say shortly, the expertise is actually lacking not only with the civil society organizations but also even with the government in the executive. There isn't much of that expertise.

So, again, when we are talking of capacity building, for the process to be really much more effective, I think there is need for capacity,

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capacity, capacity -- in three key areas. Within the government itself, greater capacity, greater coordination. Then at the National Assembly, which has the legal responsibility for approving the budget, again the capacity there is also relatively weak, not to talk at the level of the civil society organizations.

So capacity, capacity, capacity, as I said.

Now, the risk of capture is a serious threat that Ngozi mentioned. And I think the paper talks about one has to be careful: are you dealing with an NGO? Or are you dealing with an NGI? An NGI. I'm sure we all know what NGOs are. "NGI" is something that I learned in the paper, which is the "non-governmental individual."

(Applause)

So that is really a serious issue, because some of the civil society organizations are just certain individuals who are claiming to be representing one interest group. And it's become very fashionable in Nigeria especially, again, because there is donor funding.

So the warning, I think, that Ngozi gave is very important for the donors. Yes -- but be careful that the people you are dealing with actually represent -- as I will recommend later, I think we should focus more on institutions rather than individuals, develop that kind of capacity.

So, as I said, we need sound institutions rather than individuals.

For example, examples we are given, Institutional Economic Affairs in Kenya,

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and the IDASA in South Africa. And I might add, the 25-year-old experience of Brookings Institution in this area.

Now, I would like to highlight, or to emphasize -- which is what Ngozi has done -- the role of international civil society organizations, especially by putting more pressure on their governments to release the looted funds. Now she's mentioned we got some money released in Nigeria from Switzerland, but that's probably only a fraction, a small fraction, of what actually has been looted out. Even in Switzerland we didn't get everything back. And there's lots of money all over the place.

Now, international CSOs can continue to play that role. And, for me, in fact, we can probably, especially if you link it up with a kind of mechanism that the World Bank used to provide some kind of authentication, at least that the funds are not being abused when they are recovered by the governments.

Now, maybe we can find a solution to the problem that Ngozi raised about how do you fund the local CSOs? I can see a possibility whereby, say for Nigeria, if you say, "Okay, we are going to help you recover a billion dollars, but we want you to put 10 million dollars, or a hundred million dollars into developing local CSOs, their capacity to monitor the budget -- " -- and so on and so forth. So actually this can provide a win-win situation for everybody, and maybe even provide the solution to the funding problem.

On the (inaudible), I don't want to add anything, just to endorse the conclusion that there is, again, the need for capacity building in that.

Brief comments on the transparency at the sub-national level. Again, capacity is a very serious problem here. Especially, one of the things that the President, new government, has done is to address the issue of not only the capacity of this, but the need to rationalize what level of government does what in the budgetary process. President Umaru Yar'Adua was very careful about, "Look, don't -- what is the point of the federal government going to a local government trying to do a rural electricity project?" Or a road project? Or a water project -- at a level that you are not represented, where you have very little ability to really even understand some of the domestic issues, and that we should develop a cooperative framework, especially under the MDD Initiative, to work closely with the lower tiers of government in order to be able to do this in a much more efficient and effective way.

And I agree, therefore, with the presentation of the presentation that CSO advocacy at the sub-national level has been very shallow. And I think here one needs to appreciate, at least in the case of Nigeria, the work of other institutions, development institutions like DIFFI and one or two others, that are trying to actually help to develop this capacity at the lower tiers of government.

And I think one lesson that I probably have learned, or additional lesson -- I've learned quite a number of lessons from Ngozi. But one, from this presentation, and to answer her concern about publicity, how do you -- public enlightenment, that the Central Bank of Nigeria, when I was there until recently when I moved to the Ministry of Finance, we used to organize an annual seminar for finance correspondents in order to explain to them the banking issues and so on, so as to get them at least to understand what are the key issues.

Maybe ministries of finance should also organize such a seminar, not only for finance correspondents, but also for civil society organizations, or maybe the two of them together. And I think this is certainly an idea that I will go and give a trial to, or give it a try.

And here in Nigeria at least we have got some additional very important decisions that have been taken. At the last National Economic Committee meeting, at least a decision was taken by all the state governors to go back to their state and initiate and try to pursue two pieces of legislation which are going to help in this whole process. One of them is to do with the Fiscal Responsibility Law. So each state -- you know we have a federation -- such a law has been passed at the national level but, like she said, we are 50 percent of the fiscal resources are controlled by the lower tiers of government. Even if the federal government does that, it's still only 50 percent of the

picture. But we've reached agreement now that at the lower tiers of government, they will try and pass this legislation before the end of the year.

A related legislation which will also help the whole process is the Public Procurement legislation which has, again, been passed and is quite active at the federal level.

I'll also commend what I'll call the "DIY toolbox of lessons" in the paper that Ngozi has given to CSOs.

And, lastly, I would like to leave you with the concern that I have, which is how do you ensure -- how do you ensure -- in dealing with CSOs in this area that you are dealing with NGOs, rather than NGIs?

Thank you very much.

(Applause)

MR. GRIFFIN: Thank you very much, Minister, for those -- a good segue from Ngozi's speech. So I'm really glad at how the order worked out.

The next speaker will be Minister Gondwe -- could I invite you to the podium? -- from Malawi?

(Applause)

MINISTER GONDWE: Mr. Chairman, Let me start by thanking Ngozi, who thought of us in the southern part of Africa, that I should come

here and share views with you on this very important subject as far as budget work is concerned.

Let me start by saying that the involvement of civil society in the budgetary process or, indeed, in economic policy formulation is new. In the British system that I think Nigeria, Malawi and other English-speaking countries follow -- and I'm sure my colleague for Burkina Faso is here, this is true of the French system also -- it used to be that the budget was a secret document. People prepared it secretly, and then it went to Parliament. And even Parliament was shown the estimates, expenditure estimates, but never quite what you wanted to say as far as taxes were concerned. Only the last day did you open up and let the world know what you wanted to do. This was extremely -- this was supposed to be the case.

Formulation of policies and plans were done by the government, discussed with Parliament very much within the confines of the constitutional bodies. You were very much surprised if civil society outside that constitutional institutions got involved in the process.

So I'd like to say that this, what we're discussing here, an involvement of the civil society, is new. And I think a lot of the problems that we've had with civil society in this process is because of that. Both the civil society is trying to see what to do, and what to do with opportunities now

available to them, get involved. And the government office, people, also not quite knowing just what to do with these people who are upstarts in the job.

Let me describe what is happening in Malawi.

In some ways the paper that Ngozi has produced summarizes things that have happened, I think, pretty well throughout Africa. There are some things that she gets involved in that are local to Nigeria, and I will also mention some which are local to my country.

As far as Malawi is concerned, one can divide civil society organizations involved in the budget or, should I say, economic activities of the government into two. One group is very much concerned with the revenue aspects of the budget. You have the accountant society, the accounting society. You have the chamber of commerce. You have institutions like the University Economic Society and institutions of that sort.

There are also civil society organizations. They are not as obnoxious as the others, but nevertheless they are.

(Laughter)

Our experience is that we have derived a lot of advantage from getting involved the accountants in the budget field. Every year, almost religiously, some four or five months before the budget itself we have a series of meetings with these people who will advise and come out very strongly as to how they see the fiscal running, in particular what sort of taxes, what's

wrong with this tax, and what could be improved. And I find that in most cases very good points of view are taken, technically very sound.

In Malawi, like a number of African countries, we are now involved in trying to clean up the economies, to get them attractive to the private sector, to get them to be more competitive. And the tax system is an aspect that we're trying to improve in that sense. And we have gained a lot from civil society, these meetings that I'm talking about.

There are some outrageous proposals that we get. We discard those. But by and large, we have had some advantage in involving the civil society in those aspects of the budget.

On the other side is the expenditure side, of course. And that's where almost everything that Ngozi has to say is very, very true in Malawi.

There are two things involved as far as economic policy is concerned. We have -- a number of people call it "PRSP" document, where we find the civil society has been very, very active in putting it forward. And we, there I think we found that we had grabbed advantage from them. But I should agree with her, sometimes I wondered whether we were talking to Malawians. In most cases we're talking to, I think, NGOs from outside Africa who had infiltrated the ranks of the Malawians.

And the point of view that they expressed in some cases were not all that Malawian. I will give you an example. Don't let me take too much time. I will give you one example.

The Malawians typically think that in the medium term or the long term we really should be concerned with growth of the economy, and that poverty reduction will follow. When you look at the PRSP and what the NGOs officially were concerned with, they were religiously pursuing what one would call -- I notice Ngozi you're back there now, so I better be very careful -- "the Washington consensus" that strongly feels that the main objective would be poverty reduction. The two should not be all that different. But the point is that there are some policies that you can pursue that will have poverty reduction in front and growth behind.

I found that there was a problem there. Let me not go too much into that. On the budget itself, we felt -- I still feel -- that apart from us, not unlike Nigeria where they have been quite forthcoming in providing information, I got the impression that my staff were rather reluctant to be so liberal in putting forward information to these upstarts.

(Laughter)

Why? Sometimes I sympathized, because, as she says, there is a complete misuse of the information. First, very few, unless they are penetrated farther by the western NGOs, quite understand what these figures really are

about and what they imply. And so when they go to the press to tell the public what is happening, most of the interpretation of what is happening is really, really very wrong and, in some cases, quite dangerous in a way. And so you are, if you are in government, you are rather worried that these upstarts, and they're up to no good, they just want to damage the reputation of the government. And therefore why give them the information?

On the other hand, I have found it very, very interesting, there are some who do a very good, thorough job dividing themselves into sectors. They are able to take on the government on various sectors like education, and they will go into the depth of whether the expenditure on primary education or university education or secondary education is really, really optimal. And they can go into the depth of a discussion of that.

I find that interesting sometimes because it may not be important that year, but the next year I am able to look at what they said and see whether we can't make use of it. So there are advantages sometimes.

The second thing is that they are -- because in some cases they are specialized, they are able to come out with information that is beneficial to members of Parliament, to tell them really the intricacies of what the budget means for the sectors in which they're interested; in agriculture, in health, in education and what have you.

So where they are specialized, where you've got good people there, they can be very helpful. But the trouble is that most of them play to the galleries. And that's where probably, as my colleague from Nigeria and Ngozi said, there is need, if they are to be helpful, for us or the NGOs in the West to invest in their education so that they actually understand and are able to even articulate what they want to say, and to understand what those figures mean.

Let me end by saying that there used to be a time when we thought that these CSOs are upstarts, they will go away at some stage.

(Laughter)

So, tolerate them for some time. They'll go away.

Well, it doesn't seem so.

(Laughter)

They will not go. And therefore I think it's important that we should reach a point where we should concentrate on how you can make them to be even more helpful to the government as well as to society as a whole. They are part, now, of the process, the budgetary process. You have to accept it. But I think they have, some of them will have to be going in for a further education, and stop playing to the galleries. That's not their job.

Secondly, in Malawi there is a weakness -- I think in Nigeria they have taken it out -- but in Malawi they're not interested so much about how projects are being implemented. They are not. They have not got

involved in procurement issues. They are not interested in these things because I don't think they think that they're sexy enough. But I hope very much that they can get involved in that, too. As far as Malawi is concerned -- I don't see any Malawians here so I can say it --

(Laughter)

-- there is need for that.

Chairman, I think this is as much as I can contribute as far as Malawi is concerned, and I will enjoy it if there are any questions.

Thank you very much.

(Applause)

MR. GRIFFIN: Minister Gondwe, thanks very much. That was both easy to receive because of the humor, and well spoken, and very important points you brought up, particularly the fact that they're not going away. That really changes the landscape.

And now, for our third speaker, I'd like to welcome Gilbert Maoundonodji, who's going to speak in French, and then we'll have a slight delay and it will be translated to English.

So -- welcome.

(Applause)

MR. MAOUNDONODJI: I would like to thank the Brookings Institution deeply for the opportunity that they're offering me to speak about

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the experience of my country, Chad -- Chad, which is famous in the media because of what is happening in Darfur, and because of all the refugees we are welcoming in our country, but which is not as well known for what's happening inside at the level of organization of civil society.

I would also like to thank Dr. Ngozi for the very rich and interesting paper she presented, but also for her nomination at the World Bank. And I would like to tell her that we missed her very much at the last meeting -- the EITI meeting.

There are three observations I would like to make about Dr. Ngozi's paper. The first one is I thought it was a little unbalanced concerning the role of the ministers of finance. And the first observation I made is that in her paper I didn't hear, I didn't see the --

SPEAKER: He said that he did not -- that civil society organizations were particularly highlighted for their shortcomings. But the role of the ministries of finance in ensuring fiscal transparency was not highlighted enough.

MR. MAOUNDONODJI: Another thing that she didn't mention was the intervention of financial institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF in the promotion of fiscal transparency.

Another thing that will probably be agreed among the ministers of finance who are here is that in Africa the question of transparency is not a

subject that is deliberately expressed. Because, as we say in Africa, money doesn't --

SPEAKER: Money doesn't make noise.

TRANSLATOR: Money doesn't make noise.

SPEAKER: You know, money is quiet. It's a silent matter.

TRANSLATOR: It's a silent matter.

MR. MAOUNDONODJI: I will try to answer to the question in explaining if ministers of finance are friends or enemies.

They're neither friends nor enemies, though they are citizens to the service of the common needs and interests of their country.

I'm going to explain why at the end of my intervention.

We were asked to comment on our organizations and how these organizations intervene in the transparency of the budget and also to comment on the way forward.

There are two factors in my country that facilitated the implication of civil society.

The first factor is due to a change in the political system in the late '90s which brought a new democratic process and also facilitated the emergence of civil societies.

The second factor is the perspective of exploitation of petrol in Chad, of oil in Chad.

MR. MAOUNDONODJI: Thank you, Ngozi. He said that the process of the exploitation of setting up the framework for looking at the exploitation of resources of oil in which the World Bank was heavily implicated or involved -- and now I've lost track.

MR. MAOUNDONODJI: Okay.

MS. OKONJO-IWEALA: Sorry. Repeat -- vous pouvez repeter?

MR. MAOUNDONODJIY: And the civil society organizations wanted to make quite sure that they would avoid the Dutch disease syndrome that is prevalent in many of these countries where natural resources have been exploited. So we asked the World Bank to intervene and pass a law aiming at helping the transparency of the budget, the use of the budget and the resources.

In December '98 this law was passed and -- I think, to summarize, set up a mechanism for monitoring the use of the resources which were to be used or divided sectorily. And civil society organizations were, for the first time, integrated into this process of looking at the use of these resources.

You know, and it was in this process that, you know, the civil society, in looking at the way that the resources were being used, the civil society organizations decided to set up an independent process of review of the resources themselves.

So the members, you know, who were interested in doing this started by setting up a sort of observatory for the use of the -- for monitoring the use of the petroleum resources.

And they published a magazine called the "Transparency Letter," in which they published the resources, the budgetary resources, the use of the petroleum resources, and even the use of the budgetary resources of government.

And in 2005 they received the support of the international budget project to strengthen the capacity of civil society for doing this kind of work.

And the issue of capacity was raised not only in the paper that we prepared, but also by the presenters, the ministers of finance in their presentation.

They organized in the context of this project four sessions, workshops, training workshops on the budget, implementation of the budget of the state.

200 representatives of those civil society were trained and learned how to follow up the process of the budget.

So after those trainings we created committees that were in charge of monitoring the budget process.

Those committees came up with programs to make those -- to spread the budget process in an easier way to understand. SPEAKER:

Another important function of this committee is the follow up that they do with the budget in different sectors. For example, they make copies of all the documents of the -- the budgetary documents.

This is just to summarize the activities to my organizations, but now I would like to talk a little bit about the relationship with the ministries. The first -- we organized a forum for the -- a national forum about the state budget. We had to demystify the budget process. We had to explain who the budget was formulated, executed, and observed and controlled, so we organized this forum so we could demystify the budget process.

This forum was presided by the Prime Minister and the Minister of the Budget. So, we had at the beginning a lot of difficulties with the relations. There was a suspicious relation -- a feeling of suspicion, and the access to the information was very difficult. So, we contacted the Prime Minister and we asked them to give us more access.

So, these are the results we obtained and the lessons we've learned. We now have better access to all the budget documentaries. Parliament, members of the Parliament, the media, and other institutions actually solicit our point of view. The lesson we've learned is that the dialogue between and the

collaboration between the Parliament, the social societies, and the government are crucial to the budget process.

The second thing we learned is that without available information and access to information, it is impossible to do our work. And this constitutes a true challenge because we live in a culture where administrative information constitute a -- the last lesson learned is that without any financial assistance for those societies -- for the civil societies, they cannot be involved and help out. And of course, the context -- the democratic context and the context of pluralism is very important.

So, as a conclusion, I would like to say again that the relationship between civil societies and the ministries -- once again, we're not friends. We're neither friends nor enemies. Because if we were friends, there would be a collision of our interests, and if we were enemies, there would be conflicts of interest. So, we are citizens of the country and we're working in the common interests of the country.

We've concluded by saying that the issues has now gone beyond transparency. You know, you now get information on the budget. The issue right now is how is that budget used, what are the rules of the game, and what is the substance of the use of the budget. That's where they are at now.

MR. GRIFFIN: Thanks very much, Gilbert. I think we learned there that this is a new area. The vocabulary is even quite specialized and

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difficult to keep up with. It won't be the first time this has happened. We also learned that Ngozi has a fallback job in case she has trouble with her new one. So, very wonderful talk in many different aspects.

I'd like to then move to -- we have three more speakers and then I still hope we'll have some time before 4:00 for some questions and answers because there are so many ideas that are being thrown here, and I think actually a fair amount of consistency even from the Ministry of Finance side and the civil society side with this first intervention from the civil society side.

So, we will now have Minister Jean-Baptiste Compaore from Burkina Faso. Thank you very much.

MINISTER COMPAORE: I'll try in English, but I apologize before for my terrible English, but I expect it will help us to go further in good commission to allow you to have some questions.

I want to first of all thank the Brookings Institution and Ngozi for inviting me to this session. I'm very glad and proud to be near my former Minister of Finance of Nigeria, and she is again back in the World Bank system and it's a pleasure to meet her again.

And to answer to the question friends or foes, my predecessor said that neither one sides. I can see he's right, because we are in a partnership in which we can do together the best thing for our people. And it is important to know that because we are civil servants, that's right. We ought to have the same

place, but the responsibility of Minister of Finance is too high, to large that he can only alone be the person that can respond to any problem in the country, which is difficult.

When I sign a paper with the World Bank, regarding a credit, for example, there is a line that it is putting in and it said if something goes wrong on that subject, the Minister of Finance will pay back. You see, and I'll have to do so even if the fund is going to the subsidiary, to the decentralized system. I can go further to go there and to see if it is well done. I can't go. I need people to say it is well done or not. And it is a sort of partnership that CSOs are doing for us.

(Applause)

MINISTER COMPAORE: I can also say that as the paper well done by Ngozi, it is a very good paper indeed. And she has done as usual very well. And she's said that it is before during the execution of the budget, but after the execution of the budget. And I have to say the same thing. Before, it isn't the same process in the French speaking countries, but nearly in the -- it is broadly the same because in the subject of CSO's contribution, it is the same.

We must see that if the budget respond to the need of the people, if it is enough done on the amount section, and if it is well enhanced when we have politics to do, and also, if it is sustainable for this because a part of the amount of budget to expense. There is the part of fiscal matter. We must gain resources for people, and we must have -- we must know if it is sustainable or not.

And I see that in the French speaking process, we have many steps, but for me, for my country, the President of my country, goes to -- in front of the

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people to for five years and he says what is my importance now for the next step I have to do so. And so, if it is agreeing to you, you can vote me. It is a democracy.

And during the implementation of these five years, the government have to do things in order to make him agreeing further in the subject, so that every year, they put out a letter to focus what could be the main objectives, the main constraints, and what we are expecting for people to do. And this paper is the first paper that (inaudible) of the Minister of Finance. It takes this as a letter of a roadmap.

And we have now, with the World Bank, the CDMT that is broad leaps the way in which we can go by -- with the budget in order to be near with our resources because in the past time, we should have many ministries with ambitions. They can go very fast with very much and huge amount to be saddled on the budget, and you can't do so.

When it is out -- the budget is out, not -- no more secret, they found that it is too more away from what they are supposed to do. And so, it's sort of concern for the Minister of Finance to broadly say in this year, I have resources in that size. It's important so that expenses can be at the same level. So, we tried to have this sort of transaction with the ministries.

And after this part of the budget, there is a sectorial elaboration of budget, and there is a sort of examination within the Minister of Finance and the

ministries. And after that, we can vote the National Committee of Physicality, because they must have to say what is important to have as fiscal matter rules in the year to permit me to have the resources.

And in that concept, we have the CSOs that are invited to be in. And there is a sort of examination with the minister -- the Prime Minister that have to see if he can go with the -- Minister of Counsel with the start of budget and to explain it. And after the Counsel -- the Minister Counsel, we can go to the exam of the Parliament.

After the Parliament, every year, it is important that the Minister of Finance go with the journalists and to explain what the main part of the budget and to explain it to the people. It is something that is very helpful but somehow very difficult for the Minister of Finance at this moment.

And after that part, there is a TV. -- a TV. occasion every year. And along the year, we present the budget and we are exposed to the questions of the people. And now if you -- it's a one month -- one a month -- once a month. And during this occasion, people can go again on the budget. You haven't well to explain and so on. And every time, we need to explain things and to come again and to explain the things during this moment.

But it takes time, so we have now a sort of link but a internet link. If someone hasn't found the real response to his question, they can also write to me and I promise to respond in a few weeks, two or three weeks about these

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questions. And after that, there is an annual meeting that I have in program to do with the NGOs and CSOs. I've just left it last month.

That is the schedule of the budget in my country. As you see, there is many parts that we can have CSOs to involve in. at the beginning, the circular of the President, it is something that must be known. But as the (inaudible), the fact that CSOs are involved in budget is too recent. And we are trying to have a sort of contributions, but it isn't so well in that. It is in Nigeria. Sometime it is something conflictual because they don't understand really what is the budget.

They want to see a sort of line about -- according to a situation in the village, for example, and it is difficult. That sends us the problem of capacity. The problem of capacity is something we must front and it is important to help them to have the capacity to know what is a good budget, how it is done, what can we expect to see in time, because it's something that is aggregates. It is not aligned.

Projects, yes, we can see a project in the budget, but if it is to help gender, gender budgeting for example, it's in something very new for us. And it is difficult to say that is for gender budget in the Minister of Health and so on. It is difficult. But on the way, we are expecting something will come better and better.

But we are expecting them in the -- very truly in the way of executing of the budget. That is where they are very important for me because they can help me when they protest somewhere that sees something is going wrong. And I am really glad to go with my inspector to see if it is real or not. But to go and to see, that permit me to give a sort of signal. If there is a protestation, I'll go with my inspector, and that is something very interesting. That is something very interesting.

I use them also -- I can say that, I use them when I want to do some project. It is new, but the fact I want them to do things that I can't do myself as a Minister of Finance. And they are implement projects and somehow it's better done that -- when it is administration that is doing it.

And what I can say? They also try me to have all the bad -- all the resources in the budget. They are the one that can go to say to the donors, you say you have given so much in Burkina Faso in the budget, but they said in the budget, this is this amount. Where is the other part? And sometimes, I haven't all the -- in my budget, I haven't all the donors resources that is given to Burkina Faso. And that is one way they help me also.

I won't be long. I am very happy to be here, and the paper was very good. And what she has said, I agree with it, and I wanted to say what is done in Burkina Faso also. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

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MR. GRIFFIN: Thank you, Minister Compaore. We'll now ask Aloysius Toe to take the podium. And he is from Liberia and will give another civil society organization viewpoint. Welcome.

MR. TOE: Good afternoon. I wish to be a little bit brief because I think time is running out, and the previous speakers have done very well. So, on that note, I'd like to thank the International Budget Project.

I also want to thank the Transparency and Accountability Project at Brookings Institution. I want to thank Dr. Ngozi for the excellent presentation. I also want to thank our ministers from Ghana, from Malawi, and from Burkina Faso for their presentations.

You know, I think civil society actors and finance ministries officials or finance ministries are friends. Why? Because if you look at the gathering here, three finance ministers, one ex-minister, two civil society actors, and another minister from the state -- Minister of State of Ghana is a sign of friendship that they have agreed to sit on the same table with civil society actors to this cause. I think it is a very good sign of friendship.

Very hardly at home will you see ministers sitting at the same table with civil society actors. In most cases, they will send under level managers to go to this kind of forum, so I think I want to commend them for showing and demonstrating a kind of friendship that all of us can tap into.

(Applause)

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MR. TOE: In the October 10, 2007 announcement of the Brookings Institution, it is mentioned that civil society organizations can play an important role in enhancing transparency and good governance in developing countries, particularly on issues surrounding the formulation and implementation of government budgets and greater transparency of public revenues.

But too often, however, civil society organizations are viewed by governments as political adversaries or policy lightweights. Indeed, in theory, ministers of finance and civil society organizations working on poverty and social justice issues as well as budget transparency and accountability ought to be friends and not foes.

And to the extent that both ministries of finance and civil society organizations seek to serve the general and specific welfare of their target populations, in an ideal relationship that is mutually rewarding and collaboratively reinforcing, they can become friends.

But quite often in an environment and society like mine where rampant corruption is progressive, while fighting is still visible and corruption and impunity are becoming a threat to peace, the critical and questioning attitude of civil society organizations render them as foe and add them the titles of dangerous troublemakers and sometimes enemies of the government.

The critical and questioning attitude of civil society organizations is informed by one thing. And that thing is from a justice point of view, it is very

important that international money for humanitarian purposes as well as national money for the deliver of basic social services actually reach those in need. But quite contrarily, very large amounts of these monies are being used by individuals in authority for personal benefits.

The role of civil society organizations to play watchdog role on how money is spent and whether the poorest people of Liberia are receiving their fair share of the national and international funds is vital for the sustainability of peace and the creation of a just society.

Here, we see the demands of competing official interests to direct public funds to personal use as well as the pressure from international financial institutions like the World Bank and the IMF on finance ministries to implement economic policies and conditionalities which produce, reproduce, and reinforce poverty and human suffering.

The competing interests of officials and the conditionalities of these international financial institutions create contexts under which civil society organizations and finance ministry officials or finance ministries head on direct collision course, which sometimes lead them to become foes.

According to official finance ministry account in my country, the government of Liberia is taking every step to promote and ensure transparency and accountability in fiscal management. However, on the contrary, civil society organizations' view on this issue is different.

The view of civil society organizations was even confirmed by the recent session of our country's auditor general that our current, meaning the 2007 and 2008 national budget of Liberia, did not pass the minimum test of transparency, accountability, and full disclosure and that oppressing regime in Liberia was three times corrupt than its predecessors.

Civil society organizations' relationship with the finance ministry is not fruitful, if one exists in Liberia. However, informal discussions and collaboration with the Bureau of the Budget seem to be paying off owing presumably to the activist background of the budget director. But this informal collaboration with the budget director and the budget bureau is a result of his personal and individual goodwill and not on the business of any well thought out national policy for engagement with CSOs, meaning civil society organizations.

On this note, I would like to suggest that the government of Liberia and other governments develop a well thought out policy of engagement with civil society organizations, one, that we allow the full participation, I mean the full participation, unhindered, unrestricted, and unconditional participation of civil society groupings in the budgetary process at all stages.

Two, social engagement -- policy engagement framework should allow access to information on the budget and expenditures. Three, social engagements should also allow the holding of equality meetings between finance ministry officials and civil society organizations working on budgets.

Before I conclude, I just want to share my view very briefly on the point made by Dr. Ngozi. And I want to agree with her to some extent that there is a lack of skills and knowledge with many civil society organizations. And to the extent possible where they have to become active participants in the budgetary process and engaging government, they ought to require the necessary skills and knowledge in order to engage government actors.

As good as they may -- as that is, but it also brings me back to reflecting on what happens with civil society organizations and international NGOs in Liberia. Normally, international NGOs have their own meeting points, where civil society groups are excluded to discuss Liberia. And they have their own networks and cartels and consortiums.

But what other international visitors query them why they are excluding our NGOs, the answer is always, oh, they are not qualified; they don't have the skills. But what happens is that these international NGOs recruit their local star from national NGOs, thereby breaking national capacity down.

Now, let me come back to the point that Ngozi was making. It is very important and that civil society actors who want to engage the government should require the necessary budgetary or financial economic skills and knowledge. But it's also important for us to realize that civil society actors who may want to engage the government social service spending on whether enough money is being given to education and health in my view do not need a degree

from Harvard University of Economics before getting involved in that. What is important is from them to properly articulate the issues in a way that will serve the general interest of the population.

At the same time, it is important for also look at the point that both financial ministry officials and civil society groups within the framework of the requirement to have the required knowledge and skills to set benchmarks and criteria dialogue with the finance minister will say well, we agree now to engage with civil society in with our protected national interests, but at the same time, we think within the civil society, we have to be setting benchmarks. We have to be setting qualifications, setting requirements for this kind of work to be done.

The reason for that is -- and I want to agree with the Finance Minister of Nigeria. Why there are NGOs, nongovernmental organizations and NGIs, non-government individuals, there are also GONGOs, government owned NGOs. And these NGOs are encouraged -- the establishment is encouraged by government agencies to undo ministry NGOs that critical of the government. So, each time there's a requirement for a civil society engagement, finance ministries and other ministries of government call their own NGOs that they created to represent civil society.

The other point is this. There's an example. I was just talking with Warren. There's an example. There was a discussion with the government of Liberia, I think 2004, 2005. The European Union and the World Bank and

Liberia for the privatization of water. Now, you know, who were the civil society representatives? Liberian private sector actors, who own companies, who themselves have vested interests to collaborate with international companies for water privatization while representing the interest of civil society.

Now, the invitation was done not by the civil society, but it was done by the government of Liberia and the World Bank. So, another point is to really know what constitutes civil society, who constitutes civil society, who ought to represent the interest of civil society. Because anybody can call anybody once you are not in government, once you are not in the political society, you are civil society. So, whether you have private interests, that is not representative of any constituency, you are regarded as civil society actor. So, I think it is very important for us to look at that.

At the same time, I've got some colleagues in the civil society in Nigeria. Another thing that is done is that in some countries, especially mine, recruitment in government to technical positions was done from the civil society. The budget director was a civil society actor.

So, if the argument holds that civil society groups don't have the skills and knowledge, I am not suggesting that they should not, but if the argument is that they don't have the skills and the knowledge to engage government and that is a hindering factor for onward movement, I think the government also needs to look at the responsibility falls on the government that

wants to ensure and promote transparency, accountability to ensure that civil society actors, like what Dr. Ngozi said, international donors here now should concentrate on building the -- like Warren and the IBP have been doing, building the capacities of civil society groups around the world to engage their governments.

So, on that note, ladies and gentlemen, I want to thank you and I look forward to your questions and comments. Thank you.

MR. GRIFFIN: Thanks, Aloysius, not only passionate but very practical suggestions there.

Now, the man with the hardest job of the day, which falls to the last speaker of many speakers here, I'd like to invite Dr. Anthony Akoto Osei to the podium from the -- he is the Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance and Planning in Ghana. Welcome.

MINISTER OSEI: Thank you, Mr. Chair or MC. I think I -- all has been said. Thank you very much. Let me -- I think to allow enough time to have the audience participate, let me very quickly see if I can tackle the three bullet points that you asked me to look at.

You said you wanted to find out what are we doing to improve fiscal transparency and accountability, how do we describe our relationship with the CSOs, and I think the part that says please be as forthcoming as you wish.

Finally, if there are three things that I want civil society to do, what would they be?

Let me say that this issue about fiscal transparency and accountability must be looked at in the context of this new paradigm of development in Africa. Our new leadership have set a tone which we, ministers of finance, are just implementing, which insists on rule of law, good governance. So, it's a new thing that is happening in Africa. We cannot look at what we are talking about without looking at that.

Once our presidents as it were are giving us instructions, it is our responsibility to assure ourselves that fiscal transparency and accountability is the order of the day. And if that is the order of the day, then we have a lot to do. So, we have to look at it particularly as to how we own the agenda. I think all ministers of finance must understand that for fiscal transparency and accountability to succeed, you must own your agenda. You can partner with donors, et cetera, et cetera, but you must own your agenda.

The second thing I would like to say is that I happen to have -- fortunately or unfortunately, it depends on how you look at it, have spent some time with a very powerful CSO in Ghana before I practically joined government. I spent five years with an organization called The Center for Policy Analysis in Ghana. And I spent those five years always for good reason trying to advise the government of how they are not doing their budgets properly and so forth and so

on. And of course, we were lead by a former minister of finance, so we had inside information as to how the budgets were being prepared.

And I think since that time, since about '95 to about 2000, that institute created a new environment in Ghana that allowed others to follow. So, I'm very sensitive to the role of CSOs and the issue about fiscal transparency and accountability.

What we have done, we meaning my government, was to look -- first of all, there are sometimes that -- laws that are already in place that were not implemented well, and there are other laws that simply did not exist. So, we, in the ministry of finances decided to go out and close the gap in the legislative agenda and seek to implement what was already in the agenda.

In particular, I want to cite three laws that we passed that has really helped in this process. The first, the Public Procurement Act, a very powerful act with the help of our partners, The Internal Audit Agency Act also within the same time period, and finally, The Financial Administration Act, these were three very powerful acts that this government put in place to help in promoting fiscal transparency and accountability.

Of course, we could not have done that without our Parliament. We are in the almost 16th year of a new democratic dispensation and our Parliament has also come along the way. But, in the ministry of finance, having helped spearhead these laws, now, we set out to make sure that we were making

sure that all the things that were on the books were being done. For example, I'm pleased to say that the (inaudible) has now been current for the public account reports. That's -- when we went to (inaudible), it was only about 1998. but since then, they've been into power by empowering them.

In the ministry, we have a -- we've started public expenditure tracking surveys on health and education. We are following very strict cash management processes. The account (inaudible) is living by the monthly publications of the public accounts. And we make sure that since you supposed to watch, it is done very well.

Right before I left, I tried to come to Washington for the first time, the public accounts committee was holding hearings on live television querying ministers as to how their ministries have been spending the government's money. This is new in Ghana. We are trying to do this very well. In fact, the latest thing we have done and you will agree with me that we've gone out the market to borrow \$758,000,000. The market discipline will require fiscal transparency and accountability. And so, we are in a state where now everything that we do must necessarily be transparent and we take the light in leading our colleagues in this sense. I will answer more questions later.

What is our relationship with the CSOs? Ngozi has described a budget process in Nigeria similar to Ghana. The budget process is only an implementation of a big agenda. We have now what we call the Ghana Poverty

Reduction Strategy 2 Agenda, where we are trying to accelerate growth in our country.

Now, in that process, which was led by the National Planning Commission, so had the consultation all around the country where civil society participated fully. That document having been drawn up, our job is simply to implement the budget every year in the three year framework.

Now, so the civil society has had a role, but the details of the general guidelines now has to be done between us, the ministry of finance, and the ministries departmental agencies. There, we get specific. We are about at the tail end of the budget process, where in two weeks time, the final budget should be going cabinet, but we've had consultations.

In fact, now, we invite -- officially, we invite, we advertise for inputs into the budget process and I think last year, we even published all those who contributed, we added their names to the budget, at the back of the budget, so they would be acknowledged. We make sure we meet with all the key organizations, particularly the GUC, the Association of Private Employers, and few groups formally, and then we take their inputs and make sure that it becomes part of the process.

But once we take that, now we engage with the ministries in publicized meeting of the Ministry of Finance. It's open. Everybody is welcome, but the discussion is really between us and the MDs, so we get specific as to what

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they are going to do. And that is another time that CSOs can I think become part of the process.

The details -- I'm specifically talking about the issue of capacity, sometimes that's missing for obvious reasons. Because when you are not necessarily expecting the fiscal framework we are doing, you're to give room to those who know it to do it. Then, we send the final budget, which we will do shortly to the cabinet. Cabinet has the final say.

Once cabinet decides then we come back and finish the draft and now we do it the year before, so come this November, the Minister of Finance will present on behalf of the President the budget 2008. We are going into an election year, so this a very important budget that the minister is going to present. This is the last term of this President and he want to make sure that it is the best budget in his presidency.

Parliament obviously wants and the chairman of my -- the vice chairman of my Parliamentary Finance Committee is sitting right here. Once the minister deposits it to Parliament, it belongs to Parliament with the exception that Parliament cannot increase the ceiling. They can write downwards, so that is the only room that they have.

And this is where CSOs can lobby the various committees and make sure that some horse trading, but most of the time, when it gets there, I think I must confess that there is very little influence. We have pretty much decided.

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And Parliament, all -- I'm a member of Parliament, we will go and see how, if possible we can get one of two, what our projections are, but it's difficult to break through that because by the time it comes from cabinet, it's pretty much done.

But they do debate, and every year Parliament says we wish you could do this, we say thank you very much, but you can't go up if you go down, that's the constitution of this. And then so also I think it's a chance to meet the various committees and in particular the energy and road committees. They have the biggest projects.

So, once Parliament passes the appropriation act, then it's up to us to begin to implement the budget the following January. There, as she said, civil society can have a role at the sectoral level. We try to do a good job at the center, but as my colleague from Burkina said, it's not possible for us to go to every little place. Normally, when the budget is read, we have a month of dissemination where all the ministers and our chief directors are out in the field to the districts to explain what is in the budget.

One of the powerful CSOs we have in Ghana is our press. I think in every city in Ghana they have about 10 radio stations. So, you can't really hide anything. And the debate is sometimes faulty, but there is a debate going on, and I think that is good.

We are invited -- we are -- we have to pretty much answer questions anytime there's a call from the press. It's almost -- even though we

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have a PR office, the ministers themselves are obligated pretty much to -- so, my phone is always in my pocket hoping that some radio station will call. Sometimes the questions are reasonable; other times, you have to educate them, and we are doing that in the best way that we can.

We are involved in the EITI, Ghana EITI Transparency Initiative. I co-chair it with my colleague from the Ministry of Lands and Forestry. Because mining is big in Ghana, that is where we are. We have started doing some audits, but trying to go out, we have received some news that we might have some very not commercial oil reserves closed by Ghana, so soon we are going to have to move into the oil area and ensure that the right things are done. But, the stakeholder membership will have to be broadened. So far, it's been the mining industries that are in the area, but now we are going to have to bring oil experts.

And I must say that we are getting good assistance from the Norwegians, who have -- the Prime Minister has already offered some assistance as to how to manage the oil reserves. And we intend to talk to the committee and so forth and so on to ensure that the EITI initiative and the oil industry becomes very big.

Finally, what three things would I like to see civil society do? The first one has been talked about, capacity building. It is in all our mutual interests to ensure that we have as much capacity to be able to engage anybody, not only the minister of finance as possible.

But for them to do that, the prior condition is that we in the finance ministry must be willing and able to provide as much information to them as possible. I think we can debate the data if it's available to everybody else, so that we don't spend time arguing about the data. If they don't have it, then it's difficult for them to be able to engage us. And we need to assure that this is done and done promptly.

We sometimes have a difficulty trying to talk about financing them. Groups like the TUC, when they invite their people to have debates, sometimes we try to assist them in putting up workshops, but there's difficulty as to whether or not they'll become a captured group, and so it's a difficult area.

But finally, finally CSOs if they want to be taken seriously must also be more transparent than some of us see in Ghana. Typically they're funded by donors. They go and account for the donors. They go account to the people who are in Ghana. And I think this is one area where they could -- sometimes nobody knows what taxes they've paid or not paid. When you request information, there is sensitivity. But if you are asking us to engage and we want to be transparent, they also ought to be transparent.

In the end, we're neither friends nor enemies. We all have an important duty to move the agenda forward. Thank you very much.

MR. GRIFFIN: Well, it looks like we made a small mistake on the timing, but I think it's -- I'd like to be respectful of the fact that the ministers of

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finance have taken a large chunk of time out of a very busy part of the year for you to join us. And I think it would probably be beneficial if we move towards the end of the session and not have the questions and answer because it could go on for a much longer period of time.

Instead, would it be okay to invite you, Warren to -- okay. So, first, Ngozi, we thought it would be great if you could give five minutes to kind of sum up from what you've heard here, and then we would like to have Warren Krafchik close the session with a prospective from the International Budget Project.

Okay. So, just a couple observations of the main things that you'd take away.

DR. OKONJO-IWEALA: I would like to donate my time. Can I do that? Because it's been very rich, and I feel like the audience has sat very patiently. So, I have five minutes; I'm going to be a rebel and donate my five minutes to two questions or comments, but they have to be really short.

Gentleman? Oh, sorry. Sorry, Charlie. Well, you can talk loudly.

SPEAKER: Thank you, Ngozi. I was getting very frustrated because having hearing for all these speakers and then don't have an opportunity to make a comment or to ask a question.

I have just one comment. I don't have a question.

DR. OKONJO-IWEALA: It has to be fast.

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SPEAKER: The CSO organization mostly involve in some process, like PRSPs in our country. But unfortunately, they are involved only when those PRSP are prepared. But when it come to implementation of those PRSPs of MTFs, so it thinks MTF have a link with budget, they are not absolutely that involved.

The second comment I have to make -- unfortunately we don't have time. I would like to raise with you -- to share with you the experiences of Cameroon with the diminishment of the Hippic fund. You have a Hippic Committee where CSOs are involved. My friend, Gilbert, talked about Chad from the World Bank and working on the Chad-Cameroon Project.

Unfortunately, all those initiatives are driven by international organizations. There is lack of self-commitment of our government and it was -- it may be very important to have a real commitment and self-commitment of our government, of our people instead of receiving instructions outside from international finance organization or from bilateral partners.

DR. OKONJO-IWEALA: Thank you.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

DR. OKONJO-IWEALA: Okay. Thank you. The lady in front?

SPEAKER: How are you -- I would like to know how are you encouraging the leaders of the civil organizations to study. Because for them, it's very important to improve their capacities without breaking their culture and

without -- because when you break their culture and you don't respect their traditional knowledge, well, you break the capacities of the vulnerable communities. Usually paternalistic projects harm those communities.

I think it's very interesting what you are doing in your countries. And thank you very much.

DR. OKONJO-IWEALA: Okay. Thank you. I said two, and I'm going to be very strict. I'm sorry. Thank you for the comments.

I think everybody agrees that the capacity of CSOs have to be built. I think if there is one common theme that every single commentator has said, it is that capacity. And it should be done in a way that is respectful of their knowledge.

You know the fact that you're having capacity built doesn't mean that you don't have any of your own knowledge to contribute and hopefully, to the enhancing that knowledge and bringing in new skills that are missing.

And I think if we have takeaway from this meeting, it is that those who are in a position to assist from outside or inside -- both the ministers of finance if a mechanism can be found, as was suggested by my Nigerian colleague earlier or donors building capacity to enhance this work of ensuring transparencies critical.

Let me leave it there because we are truly running out of time and ask that you -- you want to say a word or donate your time?

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SPEAKER: (Inaudible).

DR. OKONJO-IWEALA: Okay. Then we have two, two more.

Okay. Yes?

SPEAKER: -- so there may be systematic structural issues. And also, the other thing I think is already been mentioned is what I call soft challenges, which is cultural appropriateness. Most countries have the cultural systems already in existence and when we copy it a civil society movement in the international community, we have to be aware that there are already cultural systems existing.

It's how we have to design systems so that they're culturally appropriate, taking the rural system, the Ebers in Nigeria have their own cultural system, the Alzers have a cultural system, it's how to link cultural system into some kind of civil society so that communication can happen properly.

And I think the final thing that UK government's really felt, if we have to modernize our public sector, we really think that civil societies are cheaper to deliver it and politically, it paid them. So, they created what I call public service delivery and the finance ministers, instead of looking at the role of the civil society in delivery of public services, that got a lot of currency, politically everyone said yes, because it's good civil society found a way to make money.

So, there's the quick observations but there are a few other things I could talk on but because of time, I have to leave you on this.

DR. OKONJO-IWEALA: Thank you. Those are very good observations. One last one from the back of the room? Nobody? Oh, great, then we can wrap it -- oh, you have one? Very quick.

SPEAKER: Yes. Thank you very much. I just want to contribute to the debate on what is civil society and who is civil society. And I want to borrow the definition from the London School of Economics Center for Civil Society that said, "As is best between the family, the business, and the state. And this space is broad, complex, and negotiated."

So, I want to say that interacting with civil society with the NGI or GONGO or NGOs, anybody that has a contribution to make falls within this umbrella. By the way, the civil society lies in office of the Nigerian (inaudible) Transparency Initiative. And I want to address the move from civil society to government for me is two sides of service and contribution to our fatherland.

And one final thing I want to say, Madame, with your kind permission is that civil society and government must not necessarily agree. Democracy must accommodate dissenting views. But these views must be empirical, constructive, and based on verifiable information.

There's a proverb in my village that says when two people go into the room and they complete their whispering and they come out smiling, maybe

they have not told each other the truth. So, in this discussion, we must be able to accommodate critical views, dissenting views, but these must be constructive and based on empirical evidence.

I thank you very much for this time.

DR. OKONJO-IWEALA: Well, on that note, we conclude. I want to -- Charlie, perhaps I should do this, again thank my very distinguished colleagues on the panel. I think they were very stimulating. They were excellent. I learned a lot from the individual experiences, and I'm sure so did the audience.

And I found the civil society colleagues very engaging and challenging. I want to thank them in particular for their contribution and say that there will be many more friendly encounters at the table.

As for the audience, you were fantastic. I mean, two whole hours, sitting and listening and participating, thank you so much. And have a good evening.

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