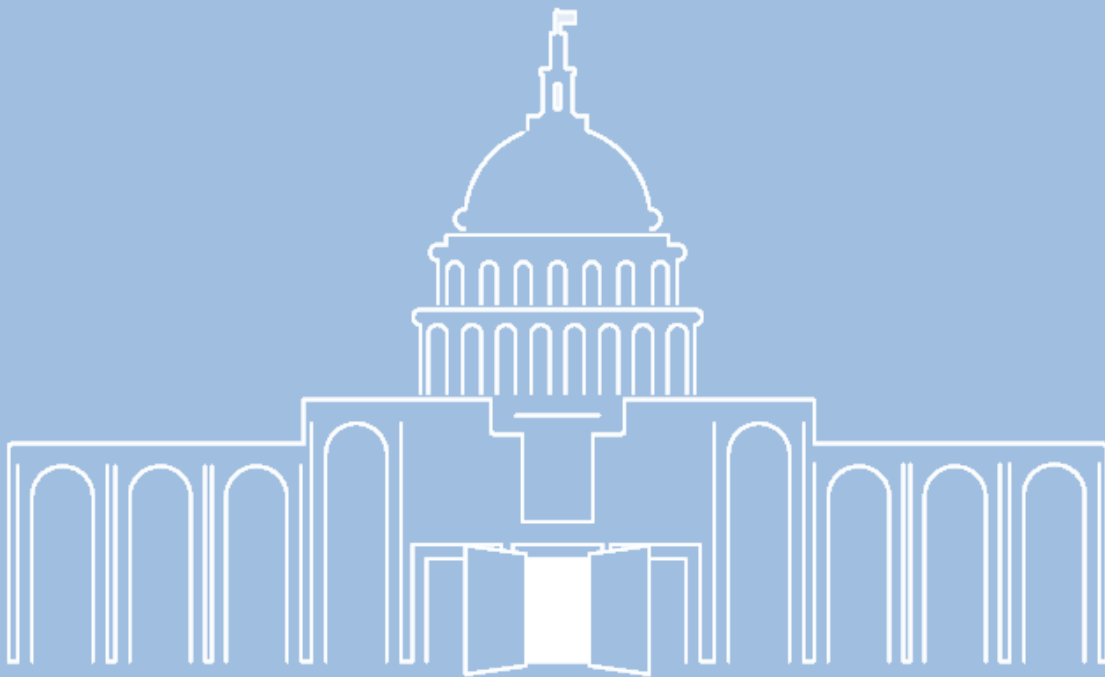




**Working Document**  
**Session 4: Guidelines to Develop Open**  
**Parliament Action Plans**



***3rd Gathering of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network - Peru 2018:  
Open States for Democratic Governance Against Corruption***  
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## Overview of Session 4

This Working Document will be used to guide discussions during Session 4: Guidelines to Develop Open Parliament Action Plans of the 3rd Gathering of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network - Peru 2018: Open States for Democratic Governance Against Corruption on the occasion of the 8th Summit of the Americas.

Open parliament action plans developed in collaboration with civil society to advance transparency, accountability, citizen participation, and ethics in the legislative branch are a highlight of the efforts undertaken by parliaments of the hemisphere towards legislative openness. Given the results that have been obtained through these plans, it is important to define guidelines based on the experiences of the five countries that already have this type of action plan in place.

### Objective

This session aims to review the co-creation process to develop, implement and monitor Open Parliament Actions Plans. It will serve as the basis for a new chapter of the ParlAmericas Road Map Towards Legislative Openness explaining how to create an Open Parliament Action Plan.

### Methodology

Participants are invited to read this document in advance of the gathering. During this session, eight discussion tables will be formed, each with a discussion leader with thematic experience. Each table will hold a discussion about one of the phases of the co-creation process. These discussions will be guided by the questions listed in accordance with their table number (in boxes throughout the document).

## Background

An **Open Parliament** refers to a new form of interaction between citizens and legislatures that promotes parliamentary openness and transparency, to ensure access to public information, accountability, citizen participation, and high probity and ethical standards in parliamentary work.



### **Transparency and Access to Information**

Citizens' right to information that is of public interest through mechanisms for the disclosure of reliable information and compliance with requests for such information



### **Accountability**

Public servants' obligation to explain, provide justification for, and communicate their decisions and actions with respect to public resources



### **Citizen participation**

Active involvement of citizens in public decision-making processes that may impact their lives



### **Ethics and probity**

Norms of highest integrity that individuals should adhere to while serving as public servants

A movement promoting such initiatives was launched with the [Declaration on Parliamentary Openness](#) supported by more than 160 organizations in over 82 countries and the [Santiago Declaration on Transparency and Integrity in Parliaments and Political Parties](#).

ParlAmericas developed a [Road Map Towards Legislative Openness](#), co-created by parliamentarians and civil society representatives, to translate these principles into concrete actions that can be undertaken within parliaments. It contains a list of standards in accordance with each of the four above mentioned pillars to provide guidance to those who want to improve their parliament's openness.

The Road Map can be accessed through the ParlAmericas website at [www.parlAmericas.org](http://www.parlAmericas.org) or by using the QR code



## Overview of an Open Parliament Action Plan

While there are many strategies and mechanisms through which parliamentarians can advance legislative openness, this document will focus on the [Open Parliament Action Plan](#). It is a mechanism through which a parliament interested in implementing such reforms can identify priorities, plan for their implementation, and monitor progress towards these objectives. Given the goal to improve interaction with citizens, inviting various stakeholder groups and citizens more broadly to engage in the plan's process can go a long way to increase the effectiveness and public legitimacy of these efforts. It is based on this logic that the concept of **Co-Creation** is applied to Open Parliament Action Plans.

**Co-Creation:**  
To develop, implement and monitor an Action Plan in collaboration with civil society actors.

There are international mechanisms available to support parliaments in this process, promote these efforts and hold parliaments accountable to these commitments.

The [Open Government Partnership \(OGP\)](#) is a multilateral initiative that aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. More than 75 countries currently participate in this initiative centered around the co-development and co-implementation of a 2-year National Action with civil society. Parliaments of OGP participating countries can contribute to their country's National Action Plan in two ways:

- Submit legislative openness commitments to be included in their government's National Action Plan
- Create an independent Open Parliament Action to be included within the government's National Action Plan as an annex

OGP participating countries currently include: Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, United States and Uruguay.

These efforts are supported by the OGP Open Parliament e-Network (formerly the OGP Legislative Openness Working Group), of which ParlAmericas is a member alongside the National Democratic Institute, Latin American Legislative Transparency Network, Westminster Foundation for Democracy, Directorio Legislativo and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

In addition to supporting these efforts, [ParlAmericas](#) also works with its member parliaments whose governments are not OGP participants and provides a platform for parliaments to present and monitor legislative openness commitments in a transparent manner.

## Civil Society and Other Stakeholders

Civil society actors are key stakeholders in developing, implementing and monitoring an Open Parliament Action Plan. According to the UNDP, [Civil Society Organizations \(CSOs\)](#) can be defined to include all non-market and non-State organizations outside of the family in which people organize themselves to pursue shared interests in the public domain. Examples include community-based organizations and village associations, environmental groups, women's rights groups, farmers' associations, faith-based organizations, labour unions, co-operatives, professional associations, chambers of commerce, independent research institutes and the not-for-profit media.

Parliaments can also consider engaging other stakeholder groups that can provide important contributions to such action plans, particularly academia.

## Commitments in an Open Parliament Action Plan

An Open Parliament Action Plan normally includes up to 10 commitments. Such commitments should be ambitious, specific, measurable, achievable within the timeframe, and respond to a real need expressed by stakeholders (citizens, journalists, civil society organizations, academia, private sector or other). It is important to recognize that opening parliament generally involves a cultural change within the institution, and that the process must be incremental to ensure its sustainability. The first plan can therefore be used to recognize the efforts already underway in parliament and build momentum and interest, create quick wins and set itself up for success. One of the main objectives of such a plan is to establish or formalize a relationship with civil society to launch an ongoing dialogue. After the first plan has been successfully co-created and implemented, there will be an opportunity to adopt more ambitious commitments in future plans.

The following are examples of commitments adopted by parliaments across the world in an Open Parliament Action Plan:

Area	Commitment	Country
Transparency	Integrate the process for requesting public information into the State Transparency Portal to ensure that citizens can make requests for information and access data from the Senate, the Chamber of Deputies and the Library of the National Congress through that website.	Chile
Transparency / Open Data	Make more than 800,000 documents accessible in open data; hold a collaborative event open to the public, to develop innovative solutions to strengthen parliamentary work and debates; put in place an "Innovative Fellows Program" at the National Assembly where a digital expert will be brought in to provide expertise on a certain number of projects.	France
Accountability	Establish a tradition of preparing annual reports on parliamentary activities in order to raise public awareness and engagement.	Georgia
Citizen Participation	Design and implement a mobile application that informs citizens on plenary proceedings and how senators vote and allows citizens to participate by voting on topics under discussion.	Colombia
Ethics	Implement good practices on ethics and legislative transparency. 1. Good legislative practices on ethics and transparency implemented in the Honourable Chamber of Senators.	Paraguay

	2. A Code of Ethics and the relevant regulations in place in the Senate.	
Strategic Planning	Continue the process of appropriating open parliament concepts in the Legislative Assembly. This objective is intended to give continuity to educational actions on open state, open parliament, and their principles, expanding their reach to advisers and Members of the Legislative Assembly and strengthening the work done with legislative officials during the first action plan.	Costa Rica

### Overview of the Process to Co-create an Open Parliament Action Plan

The main steps to develop an Open Parliament Action Plan are as follows:

1. Build political will across all parties and the administration. In the case of a bicameral parliament, determine which chambers will participate in the plan (ideally both). In the case of an OGP participating country, determine if the plan will be submitted as an annex to the government's Open Government National Action Plan and align with the government's timeline.
2. Create or identify a parliamentary body with the appropriate authority to lead the development, implementation and monitoring of an Open Parliament Action Plan.
3. Select an administrative point of contact responsible for supporting this parliamentary body in developing, implementing and monitoring the Open Parliament Action Plan.
4. Identify a process / criteria to determine which civil society organizations will co-create the Open Parliament Action Plan.
5. Hold a meeting of the parliamentary body, administrative point of contact and the selected civil society actors to develop the co-creation process for the Open Parliament Action Plan.
6. Implement the co-creation process and develop a draft Open Parliament Action Plan, identifying the actions that the parliament will take to open its institution further to citizens.
7. Adopt the Open Parliament Action Plan in Parliament and if relevant submit it as an annex to the government's Open Government National Action Plan.
8. Implement the Open Parliament Action Plan in collaboration with the civil society actors who participated in its development.
9. Report on progress regularly and if relevant, participate in the Open Government Partnership's Independent Review Mechanism.
10. Repeat the cycle starting at step 5 to develop a new plan for the next period based on the lessons learned from the previous plan.

## Round Table Discussions

To inform the new chapter of the Road Map, round table discussions centered around the various phases to develop an Open Parliament Action Plan will take place in Session 4 of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Gathering of the Open Parliament Network. A detailed description of each step is outlined below, followed by the discussion questions that will be addressed by each round table.

### 1. **Building political will**

Building political will is a critical step to advancing open parliament reforms. It can take place prior to or after identifying or creating the appropriate parliamentary body to lead the Open Parliament Action Plan process. As part of this step, bicameral parliaments should determine which chambers will participate in the plan (ideally both), and parliaments from an OGP participating country should determine if the plan will be aligned with the government's timeline so as to submit the plan as an annex to the government's Open Government National Action Plan.

#### **Table 1 – Building Political Will**

##### **Discussion Questions**

- A. What are some strategies that can be applied to build political will to develop an Open Parliament Action Plan?
- B. What are some of the most common concerns raised within parliament when attempting to build political will for open parliament reforms?
- C. What material should ParlAmericas produce for parliamentarians to support their efforts to build political will?



## **2. Create or identify a parliamentary body**

A parliamentary body with multi-partisan representation and appropriate authority to engage civil society and make commitments must be created or appointed to lead the Open Parliament Action Plan process. Initial discussions within this parliamentary body should also consider the authorization process that will need to be followed to commit the parliament to the actions adopted within the Open Parliament Action Plan they will develop. This process will differ depending on the rules of the parliament. It may require a motion in plenary, a vote by the Board of the parliament, input into the parliament's strategic plan, among others. The process to assign personnel and financial resources should also be discussed. It may also be advisable to discuss expectations and determine the priorities that Parliament wishes to address in the plan.

**Table 2 – Create or identify a parliamentary body**

### **Discussion Questions**

- A. What other considerations are required when identifying or creating the lead parliamentary body?
- B. In your parliaments, what authorization process could be followed to ensure that the commitments developed as part of the Open Parliament Action Plan are implemented?
- C. What other initial discussions are important to have with this parliamentary body before undertaking this process?

## **3. Select a Parliamentary Point of Contact for all open parliament matters**

This role is usually assigned to a non-partisan senior parliamentary official for sustainability reasons, to support the work of the parliamentary body leading this process. This person's main responsibilities are to:

- Serve as an internal champion for openness reform efforts
- Support dialogue between parliament and civil society
- Coordinate the implementation of legislative openness commitments adopted in the Open Parliament Action Plan
- Report on progress of the Open Parliament Action Plan
- Support communications around the Open Parliament Action Plan
- Liaise with the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Program and the international open parliament community

For parliaments in OGP participating countries, the following additional responsibilities can also be included:

- Liaise with the OGP government point of contact
- Liaise with the OGP Support unit and OGP Parliamentary Point of Contacts
- Distribute information about OGP events, domestic OGP National Action Plan process and Independent Review Mechanism in parliament

#### **4. Identify a process / criteria to determine civil society engagement**

To ensure high quality participation from various stakeholder groups, a strategy to engage civil society in this process should be established. To promote ownership of the plan by civil society, it is advised that they not only be engaged in its development but also in determining the process that will be applied to develop it.

To this end, the OGP methodology suggests that governments create a [Multi-Stakeholder Forum](#) composed of both government and civil society representatives appointed through a fair and transparent process. Such a Forum enables regular multi-stakeholder consultation on OGP implementation through a structured environment designed to maximize participation and cooperation between government and civil society by bringing relevant partners into the discussion and ensuring that all voices are heard. For the purposes of developing an Open Parliament Action Plan, as similar type of Multi-Stakeholder engagement model can be applied.

**Table 3 – Identify a process / criteria to determine civil society engagement**

##### **Discussion Questions**

- A. How could a Multi-Stakeholder Forum contribute to an Open Parliament Action Plan?  
Suggestions could include:
- Discussing options and offering strategies to be support the parliament in the development and implementation of the Action Plan
  - Involving other actors in Open Parliament activities
  - Incorporating new open parliament strategies into the existing Action Plan
  - Better coordinating cross-sector efforts towards openness, beyond the Action Plan
- B. To ensure transparent and fair participation, what criteria or processes can be applied to determine which organizations participate in the co-creation of the Open Parliament Action Plan? (various suggestions can be presented)

## **5. Develop the co-creation process**

The first co-creation meeting should focus on determining the co-creation process for the Open Parliament Action Plan. It can also be used as a forum to share initial expectations from both the parliament and civil society stakeholders.

The co-creation methodology should consider the following steps:

- Number of in-person and virtual meetings
- Online consultations for broader citizen input
- Timeframe of the plan and timeline for its development (if the parliament is from an OGP participating country, consider the government's OGP timeline)
- Structure of the plan / commitments (see Annex A for a suggested format)
- Rules of engagement, facilitation, decision-making and final adoption process
- Role of civil society in the implementation and monitoring of the Open Parliament Action Plan
- Communications plan

**Table 4 – Develop the co-creation process**

### **Discussion Questions**

- A. What considerations should guide the dialogue on rules of engagement and decision-making within this process?
- B. Who should facilitate the in-person co-creation meetings?
- C. What advice can be provided to the facilitator(s) of a co-creation meeting to ensure effective dialogue between parliamentarians and civil society?

## **6. Implement the co-creation process and develop the Open Parliament Action Plan**

The co-creation process is applied and the commitments of the Open Parliament Action Plan are developed and prioritized. The final document should have up to 10 commitments organized in a similar fashion as displayed in Annex A.

## **7. Adopt the Open Parliament Action Plan**

The Open Parliament Action Plan is formally adopted by the parliament in accordance with the authorization process determined in step 2.

## **8. Implement the Open Parliament Action Plan**

The parliament, in collaboration with civil society partners, implements the commitments of the Open Parliament Action Plan. As the plan is implemented and commitments are achieved, it can be helpful complement these efforts with a communications strategy sharing progress with citizens.

**Table 5 – Implement a communications strategy**

### **Discussion Questions**

- A. How can a communications strategy complement the efforts undertaken through the implementation of the Open Parliament Action Plan?
- B. What type of actions could be included in such a strategy?
- C. How can civil society stakeholders collaborate in implementing such a communications strategy?

## **9. Monitor Progress and Evaluate Success**

To ensure that the plan is on track and that commitments are implemented successfully, the parliament should monitor its progress on a regular basis and engage stakeholders to determine if new initiatives are reaching intended outcomes.

If the parliament is from an OGP participating country and the parliament's plan was submitted through the OGP process, the parliament must also participate in the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM). To this end, an independent researcher develops a report assessing governments and parliaments on the development and implementation of OGP / Open Parliament action plans, progress in fulfilling open government / open parliament principles, and make technical recommendations for improvements. These reports are intended to stimulate dialogue and promote accountability between member states and citizens.

**Table 6 – Monitor Progress and Evaluate Success**

### **Discussion Questions**

- A. How can civil society stakeholders be engaged in monitoring the progress and evaluating the success of the implementation of the plan?
- B. Should civil society engagement in the monitoring and evaluation process be formal (ie. through a Multi-stakeholder Forum described in step 4) or more ad-hoc?
- C. How should parliaments whose Open Parliament Action Plans are implemented outside of OGP and not subject to the Independent Review Mechanism monitor their progress and success?

**10. Repeat the cycle starting at step 5**

Given that this is a process of continuous improvement, after one plan ends, lessons learned from the monitoring and evaluation process are considered as the process to develop a new plan starts again.

**Table 7 – Ensure sustainability**

**Discussion Questions**

- A. How can parliament ensure the sustainability of these efforts throughout the electoral cycle?
- B. How can these efforts be institutionalized so that a change in leadership does not automatically result in the removal of this agenda from parliament?
- C. How can collaboration with civil society help with the sustainability of these efforts?

**Other Mechanisms to Develop and Implement Open Parliament Initiatives**

In cases where developing an Open Parliament Action Plan or a legislative commitment is not possible, parliamentarians interested in reforming their institutions in accordance with open parliament standards can also work through various channels to promote the prioritization of these reforms, for example:

- Including these priorities in their political party’s electoral platform
- Including these priorities in the respective parliamentary committee agendas
- Promoting these priorities through a more informal group or caucus
- Proposing legislation in accordance with these priorities in response to a crisis
- Proposing private members’ bills in accordance with these priorities

**Table 8 – Other Mechanisms for Open Parliament Initiatives**

**Discussion Questions**

A. What are the pros and cons of the mechanisms listed through which parliamentarians can undertake openness reforms, and what other mechanisms are available?

<b>Mechanism</b>	<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>
Open Parliament Action Plan		
Legislative Commitment		
Political Party Platform		
Parliamentary Committee Agenda		
Informal Group or Caucus		
Respond to Crisis		
Private Members’ Bill		
Open Parliament Action Plan		
Legislative Commitment		

B. What are your main considerations when determining a strategy to advance reforms? (i.e. evaluation of existing political will, ensuring sustainability, etc.)

## Additional Resources

- [The Open Government Partnership: An Overview for Parliamentarians in the Americas and the Caribbean](#)
- [Parliaments as Partners for Open Government Reform](#)
- [ParlAmericas Road Map Towards Legislative Openness](#)
- [A Toolkit for Advancing Legislative Openness](#)
- [ParlAmericas Citizen Participation in the Legislative Process Toolkit](#)

## Open Parliament Action Plans in the Americas and the Caribbean

- [Chile: 2014-2016](#)
- [Chile 2017-2018](#)
- [Colombia 2016-2017](#)
- [Costa Rica 2015-2016](#)
- [Costa Rica 2016-2017](#)
- [Guatemala 2016-2017](#)
- [Paraguay 2016-2018](#)

## Annex A – Suggested Format to Display Commitments in an Open Parliament Action Plan

Commitment #: Brief description		
Timeframe:	Start date / End date	
Responsible institution or actor:	Chamber / Committee / etc.	
Government / Parliament Partners:	Actors within Chamber, etc.	
Other Partners:	CSO / private sector / academia / etc.	
Issue:	Describe the issue that this commitment aims to address.	
Commitment:	Describe the commitment in more detail.	
Justification:	Describe how the commitment will address the issue.	
OGP Relevance (if OGP participating country):	Describe how the commitment is relevant to OGP values: transparency, accountability, citizen participation, ethical standards, ICT innovation.	
Activities:	Describe the activities that will be undertaken to achieve this commitment.	
- Describe each activity and deliverable	Start date	End date
Indicators:	Indicate how the success of this commitment will be measured	
Budget:	If required	
Contact person:	Name, title, department, organization	