**Draft Notes Civil Society Forum Meeting**

**11 February 2014 17.30-21.00**

**Attendees:** Anne Colgan, Ingo Keck, Ivan Cooper (The Wheel), Antoin Ó Lachtnain (DRI) Denis Parfenov (Active Citizen/OKF Ireland), Edward Stevenson, Nuala Haughey (TASC/TII)

**Apologies:** Andrew Jackson (An Taisce), Flora Fleischer (OKF Ireland), Nat O’Connor (TASC), Mick Byrne

Anne Colgan presented the notes and Action Points from the first meeting of the joint working group (JWG) established for Ireland’s first OGP Action Plan. This meeting was held on 6th February in DPER’s offices, from 11.30 to 13.00. At that meeting it was agreed that the JWG would meet weekly on Wednesday afternoons /Thursday mornings and that it would try to alternate between government offices and civil society premises. The next meeting of the JWG is scheduled for 11.30-13.00 on 13th February in TASC’s offices. The intention is to have a draft Action Plan ready by April 3rd, which means that there will be up to eight more meetings of the JWG.

There was a general discussion on several Action Points arising from the meeting on 6th February. It was stressed that civil society needs a working method which would allow the JWG members to bring any substantive DPER proposals back to the CS Forum for discussion before they are agreed. This puts an onus on everyone in the CS Forum to read materials circulated after JWG meetings.

In order to facilitate this back and forth, it was agreed that the CS Forum would meet weekly on Tuesday evenings and that a timetable for these meetings would be distributed through all existing mailing lists. It was also agreed that a priority for the CS Forum administrator when appointed would be to ensure that the ogpireland.ie website is kept up to date and that key documents, meetings and opportunities for input are clearly signposted. Another priority is to create a single mailing list to avoid cross-postings.

The group noted that the Overview document distributed by DPER at the JWG meeting on 6th February identified some government initiatives that are relative to some of the 62 proposals generated during the summer 2013 consultations with civil society. The document is helpful to the extent that it indicates the distance that has already been travelled in a number of areas, and will be factored into civil society’s consideration of Action Plan proposals in the coming weeks.

There was consensus on the need for a robust process to whittle down civil society’s 62 AP proposals as the process moves forward, and that establishing a strong narrative and themes for the first NAP would help guide this process and assist us in determining the ‘fit’ and ‘impact’ of any proposed commitments. There was agreement that the priority themes identified in the report on the summer consultations would guide us. These relate to enabling citizen participation in decision-making; strengthening public accountability/effective democratic oversight; improving public services; economic and budgetary transparency; and using open data and better information flows as a means to ensure these ends.

There was a discussion on whether and when to convene a larger civil society gathering to examine the 62 Action Plan proposals in the light of DPER’s Overview document and any other DPER proposals which will be tabled.  Ivan Cooper said it was important that those with expertise on CS’s 62 proposals read the Overview document in order to determine final Action Plan priorities. After some discussion on the best timing for such a meeting, it was agreed to aim for on or around Tuesday February 25th.  In relation to the format of the Action Plan, it was agreed that civil society would like to have the option of a civil society introduction and annex and also a ‘next steps’ section.

The meeting agreed to seek expressions of interest from civil society for participating in a planning committee with DPER ahead of the EU OGP conference in Dublin castle on 8th/9th May 2014. Nuala briefed the meeting on the efforts to recruit a temporary administrator for the CS Forum – there was a strong interest in the position which was advertised on Activelink and through the various mailing lists.  Interviews will be held on Thursday 13th February with a view to filling the position as soon as possible.