

Time for Cameron to deliver on the promise of transparency

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Today (8 October 2013), [civil society organisations from the UK OGP civil society network](#) sent the following open letter to the Prime Minister calling on him to announce a series of ambitious commitments towards greater openness:

Rt Hon David Cameron MP

10 Downing Street London SW1A 2AA Cc: The Rt Hon Nick Clegg MP (Deputy Prime Minister), Rt Hon Francis Maude MP (Minister for the Cabinet Office), Nick Hurd MP (Minister for Civil Society)

8 October 2013

Dear Prime Minister,

The end of October is a critical moment for open government in the UK and beyond. The UK will publish its second open government National Action Plan, host the Open Government Partnership Annual Summit, and hand over the baton of chairing the OGP. We hope that the Government will mark this important occasion by announcing a series of ambitious commitments towards greater openness, building on the leadership shown at the G8 Summit.

We welcome the emphasis that you have placed on the principles of open government both domestically and internationally and your ambition of becoming 'the most open and transparent government in the world'. The true strength of your Government's efforts will ultimately be judged by the level of new ambition in the commitments made and delivered through the action plan launched on 31 October at the Summit in London.

For the UK Plan, while progress has been made in finding common ground on a number of important issues, we are concerned by the absence of any truly ambitious new commitments. With three weeks to go, we call on you to take a lead in delivering such commitments:

1. Make public who owns and controls companies and trusts, by publishing a beneficial ownership register that meets the standards set out in the [**Open Data Charter**](#). **A public register would support good corporate governance and a clean and respected business environment, as well as lift the veil of secrecy that the corrupt and the criminal use to hide their identity.**

2. Enable public scrutiny of all organisations in receipt of public money, by opening up public sector contracts and extending transparency standards and legislation. Endorse and implement a system of '[**Open Contracting**](#)', **ensuring public disclosure and monitoring of contracting from procurement to the close of projects, and amend the Freedom of Information Act so that all information held by a contractor in connection with a public service contract is brought within its scope.**

3. Bring lobbying out into the open in the UK, by developing a robust, compulsory register of lobbyists. An open and comprehensive register would allow public scrutiny of who is lobbying whom, what they are seeking to influence and how much is being spent in the process.

Ambitious commitments such as these will not only send a clear message about the UK's commitment to open government at home, but will lead by example and demonstrate the level of ambition expected of other countries as they draft their own national action plans.

Yours sincerely,

Alexandra Runswick, Director, Unlock Democracy
Anna Thomson, Director, International Records Management Trust
Anthony Zaczek, Director, The Democratic Society
Carly Palmer, Executive, Public Concern at Work
Chris Patten, Director, Oxfam & CEO, Open Corporates
Claire Spillman, Programme Director, Integrity Action
David Hall-Matthews, Managing Director, Publish What You Fund
Emily Gerrard, Director, Development Research and Training UK
Gavin Hayman, Director of Campaigns, Global Witness
Javier Ruiz, Campaigner, Open Rights Group
Jor Laura James, CEO, Open Knowledge Foundation
Maggie Franken, Director, Campaign for Freedom of Information
Miles Hulbert, Coordinator, Publish What You Pay UK
Richard Murphy, Director, Tax Research
Simon Burrows, Director, Invoicewatch
Tim Davies, Director, Practical Participation