Washington DC, June 11th, 2018.

Dear Stewards,

I am very pleased to inform you that the General Directorate of the National Public Budget of the Ministry of the Treasury and Public Credit of Colombia has become a new Steward of GIFT. It joins the Ministry of Finance of Argentina, the Ministry of Finance of Chile, the Ministry of Economy and Finance of Benin, the Ministry of Finance of Ukraine, and the Civil Association for Equality and Justice from Argentina, in becoming the newest members of the network (February 2018). Together with the stewards who joined in December (The Ministry of Budget and National Planning of the Republic of Nigeria, The Latin-American Initiative on Open Data of Uruguay and the Observatory of Fiscal Spending of Chile), GIFT now has 46 stewards, 9 more than when we had our last General Stewards Meeting, in October 2017.

In terms of sectors, the network has today 19 budget authorities; 16 national or regional civil society organizations or professional associations; 4 expert organizations or technical networks; 3 multilateral financial institutions; 3 private foundations; and 1 international development institution (list here: http://bit.ly/2JHrTvE). This makes GIFT a very balanced and powerful network, whose members are leaders in the field, characterized by their determination to work together in advancing fiscal transparency, public participation and accountability. The time has come to start preparing for our next meeting.

I am happy to invite you to the 2018 General Stewards Meeting to take place on October 15-17, in Cascais, Portugal. This meeting will be special for many reasons.

First for its location in Cascais, a municipality that was recognized by GIFT in 2017 for its outstanding experience on [participatory](http://guide.fiscaltransparency.net/) budgets, and is kindly opening its doors to host the GIFT stewards meeting. The occasion will include a field visit to learn more about the participatory budget experience in Portugal. Moreover, the GIFT meeting will be organized back-to-back with a 3-day course on public participation in public policies, held by European and Portuguese experts, to give us an opportunity to learn more about the newest experiences on citizen engagement in open government. Finally, the October GIFT meeting will be organized in coordination with the PEMPAL (World Bank Public Expenditure Management Peer-Assisted Learning) network, a multilateral effort to develop capacity and share reform experiences among countries in Central Asia and Central and Eastern Europe, a group of finance representatives with whom GIFT has been working closely for the past 2 years.

Among other relevant issues, the Cascais meeting will address a proposal to develop a joint strategy to engage government stewards in the agenda of public participation in fiscal policies (please find a first draft proposal here: http://bit.ly/2Mit5UL). The participation of GIFT government stewards is crucial in this effort, and I believe many will be enthusiastically engaging in the initiative.

All these factors will make our General Stewards Meeting a very exceptional and relevant one. With new members that make us stronger, in cooperation with the PEMPAL countries, in an amazing venue, where we will see *in situ* the participatory budget experience, and back-to-back with a high-level public participation course. More details will be provided in the days to come.

For now, please save the dates from October 15th to the 17th for the General Stewards Meeting and, if interested, from October 14th to the 17th if you would like to attend the course. To sum up, this is the programmed schedule:

* October 14, arrival in Lisbon-Cascais, Portugal
* October 15-16, GIFT General Stewards Meeting (with the participation of the PEMPAL community)
* October 17, field visit to hear about the participatory budget experience in Cascais
* October 18, departure from Portugal
* *Optional additional activity:* October 10-13, course on public participation in Cascais, with Portuguese and European experts (Escola de Participação de Cascais organized by the Municipal authorities).

Please consider that GIFT will be able to support your travel and lodging expenses for the General Stewards Meetings in case your institution cannot possibly cover the costs of your participation. Please let us know if that is the case and please confirm your participation with Albertina Meana (albertina@fiscaltransparency.net), at your earliest convenience. If you are interested in the public participation course, please know that all costs related to that activity must be covered by you/your institution. We will be soon be providing details about the costs of this activity.

I thank you in advance for your time and I look forward to hearing soon from you.

Best regards,

**Juan Pablo Guerrero**

**Network Director**

PS: please take note that some members of the GIFT network will be present at the Tbilisi Open Government Partnership Global Summit in Georgia, July 17-19. Among other activities, we might have two side workshops, one led by IBP and the OECD (a joint workshop on Tax transparency and a high level ministerial conference on FT and PP) and the second led by GIFT (Impact of digitalization on citizen engagement in the provision of public services). We would be grateful if you could let us know if you are planning to be in Tbilisi at the OGP Summit too!