
CSO GATHERING SUMMARY REPORT

19 MARCH 2024



**SETTING THE SCENE:
STAKEHOLDERS CONVENE ON
PARLIAMENTARY MATTERS**

Overview

On 19 March 2024, at 25 Commercial Street, Cape Town CBD, a notable gathering titled "Setting the Scene: Stakeholders Convene on Parliamentary Matters" took place. This event, co-hosted by OpenUp, OUTA, and PMG, in collaboration with Africa Centre, Bridges, and Green Connection, aimed to delve into critical discussions surrounding the Budget and introduced the EU co-funded dashboard project dedicated to enhancing Parliamentary Oversight. The convening brought together a diverse array of stakeholders, including civil society organisations, non-governmental organisations, potential future Members of Parliament, other Parliamentary officials, and the public. More than 40 representatives from various sectors joined, enriching the discussions and fostering a deeper understanding and engagement with parliamentary processes and accountability mechanisms.

The gathering was strategically scheduled after the Annual Budget Speech (22 February 2024) and before the National and Provincial Elections (29 May 2024). Its primary objective was to illuminate the intricacies of the budgetary cycle, the role of Parliament in budget oversight, avenues for MP influence on budgets, and the importance of civil society engagement for accountable executive spending.

The event kicked off with introductions from Rachel Fischer of OUTA, Liz McDaid from Green Connections, and Ralph Freese from Bridges and the Africa Centre, setting the stage for a day filled with insightful discussions and exchanges. Key topics addressed included the significance of understanding the budget cycle, the importance of public participation in the oversight process, and mechanisms for enhancing the accountability of the budget to the people. Discussions highlighted the complexity of the budget and parliamentary oversight, underscoring the necessity for informed stakeholders and collaborative efforts to bridge identified gaps.

Recommendations

- 1. Enhanced Public Engagement:** Emphasize transparent information dissemination and the development of inclusive dialogue platforms to bridge the gap between citizens and parliamentary processes.
- 2. Scrutiny of Budget and Policies:** Encourage civil societies to scrutinize the budget and annual performance plans of departments meticulously, especially before the Budget Review and Recommendation Reports (BRRRs), to ensure accountability and effective allocation of resources.
- 3. Strengthening Oversight Mechanisms:** Leverage the insights from the event to strengthen oversight mechanisms by fostering collaborative solutions and promoting active public participation.

4. Network for Ongoing Collaboration: Establish a network for continuous collaboration and information exchange among stakeholders to support effective oversight and improve service delivery.

The event concluded on a note that recognized the complexities surrounding budget and parliamentary oversight, calling for actionable recommendations and a collective effort to enhance transparency, accountability, and public participation. It was agreed that a collaborative approach involving CSOs, MPs, and other stakeholders is crucial for addressing the challenges identified during the discussions. Going forward, the emphasis will be on implementing the recommendations, fostering partnerships, and ensuring that the insights and strategies developed during the gathering are acted upon to improve parliamentary oversight and public engagement.

The CSO gathering proved to be a pivotal moment for reflection, discussion, and collaboration among diverse stakeholders committed to enhancing parliamentary processes and accountability. By convening this event, the organisers have laid the groundwork for positive change, setting the stage for ongoing efforts to create a more transparent, efficient, and responsive parliamentary system. The discussions and outcomes of the gathering will undoubtedly contribute to the broader goals of improving transparency and accountability in Parliament, as envisaged by the EU-funded dashboard project on parliamentary oversight.

Please read the media release to the event entitled [Stakeholders collaborate to Strengthen parliamentary oversight and accountability](#)

