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**PUBLIC GOVERNANCE AND TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE
PUBLIC GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

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DRAFT ANNOTATED AGENDA

Meeting of Senior Officials from Centres of Government on Strengthening Public Trust by Delivering on Promises: What Role for the Centre?

Bern, 4-5 October 2007

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English - Or. English

ANNUAL MEETING OF SENIOR OFFICIALS FROM CENTRES OF GOVERNMENT

STRENGTHENING PUBLIC TRUST BY DELIVERING ON PROMISES: WHAT ROLE FOR THE CENTRE?

4-5 October 2007

Bern, Switzerland

DRAFT ANNOTATED AGENDA

OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

1. The meeting of Senior Officials from Centres of Government offers a unique opportunity for participants to meet with their opposite numbers from the OECD member countries.
2. The 2007 meeting in Bern, has three main objectives:
 - To review what role Centres of Government may play in strengthening public trust by delivering on promises.
 - To multiply the opportunities for **informal exchanges between participants** and strengthen ties between the members of this network of colleagues with similar responsibilities in their respective countries.
 - To launch an initial discussion of the issue to be discussed in detail at the 2008 Centres of Government meeting in Mexico entitled “political economy of reform: ensuring stakeholder support”.
3. The annual Centres of Government meeting will also include three parallel workshops. Their purpose is to provide participants with the opportunity to discuss topics of their choice in smaller groups, followed by a report to plenary.
4. Finally, the meeting will provide an opportunity for a mutual exchange of information between participants and the OECD Public Governance and Territorial Development Directorate (GOV). Participants will be informed about GOVs work, particularly where it has directly benefited from discussions held by Senior Officials from Centres of Government in the past, and OECD activities of interest to them. Participants will also be invited to indicate their priorities for the coming years, in terms of public management and governance.

ANNOTATED AGENDA

Wednesday 3 October 2007

- 16.30** **Welcome and check in at the reception of the Hotel Bellevue Palace**
Kochergasse 3-5, Bern
- 17.00 – 19.00** **Guided tour of the City of Bern** organised by the Swiss authorities
- 19.00** **Welcome cocktail at the Von Wattenwyl Haus**
Junkerngasse 59, Bern

Thursday 4 October 2007

Strengthening Public Trust by Delivering on Promises: What Role for the Centre?

- Venue** **Bernerhof**
Bundesgasse 3, Bern
- 08.30** **Departure from the Hotel Bellevue**
5-minute walk to the **Bernerhof**
- 08.45-09.15** **Opening of the meeting by Mr. Hans-Rudolf Merz, Federal Councillor of Finance,
and Mr. Angel Gurría, Secretary General of the OECD**

Public trust in government is based, in large part, on the perceptions of the public of government performance. To be able to judge performance, the public needs a point of departure. Service delivery by government is one of the touchstones. Another touchstone is the promises made by a new cabinet on taking up office, and to what degree the cabinet actually fulfils its promises during its time in office. How can the realisation of these promises be achieved? What role do Centres of Government play? Centres of Government are charged with translating political promises into policy and delivery, but they must share this task with other levels of government, other line ministries and specifically the Ministry of Finance.

This year's meeting of the Network of Senior Officials from Centres of Government (CoG) offers an opportunity for members to discuss this challenging topic on the basis of participants' own experiences. Building on initial discussions held during the 2006 CoG meeting in Vienna, the Bern meeting will allow members to explore issues of delivery on promises in more depth, including the specific question on delivery on promises by coalition governments.

09.15-10.15 Session 1: How to translate political promises into administrative delivery goals

[Reference document: GOV/PGC/MPM(2007)1]

Promises are of a political nature, often the result of a – sometimes fierce – struggle between political parties for the favour of the voters. Delivery on the other hand is a matter of effective and efficient use of resources: it is the task of the administration rather than of the politicians. Transforming promises into delivery is a difficult process, which starts by determining clear policy goals and objectives and prioritizing and safeguarding coherence between them. Moreover, many OECD member countries have coalition governments, adding an extra step between parties' promises and defining policy goals: the process of bargaining and compromising a coalition agreement.

What role does the Centre play in the shaping of a coalition cabinet's programme? How does the Centre of Government translate political promises into delivery goals at the outset of a new government? How are budget constraints reconciled with public and political expectations?

10.15-10.45 (approx.) Coffee break

10.45-12.15 Session 2: Tools available to Centres of Government to promote delivery on promises

[Reference document: GOV/PGC/MPM(2007)2]

Once the promises have been translated into concrete goals for delivery, the different ministries and levels of government will ideally go about designing and implementing the policies that were identified, while the Centre of Government returns to its 'usual' tasks. To what extent can the Centre then monitor and evaluate progress on promise delivery throughout government, and what tools does the Centre have for doing so? The 2004 OECD comparative analysis of CoG revealed that only CoGs in four countries have units solely dedicated to monitoring performance.

What means of coordination, monitoring and evaluation are available to Centres, and what best practices can be identified? How can changes in priorities or policy that occur during the term of office be carried through, and what is the role of the Centre in this respect?

12.15-12.20 Conclusions of the morning's discussions by Swiss chair

12.20-14.15 Lunch hosted by the Swiss authorities at the meeting venue

14.15-15.15 Session 3: Parallel workshops**WORKSHOPS**

As in previous years, the purpose of the parallel workshops is to provide participants with the opportunity to discuss topics of their choice in smaller groups, followed by a report to plenary. The first workshop will allow for the in-depth discussion of a specific issue related to the main theme of the meeting, while the second workshop will have no pre-established topic, allowing for ‘free’ discussion on issues of mutual interest.

- **Workshop 1: Communicating on promises and delivery.** Whereas the expression of promises is highly political, the communication of results, effects and delivery is often an administrative task, or at least needs administrative support. Virtually all OECD CoGs¹ have an overall responsibility for communication, and also communicate the delivery on promises, for example when the budget is being discussed in parliament. Difficulties may arise around the communication of policy changes that have proven necessary along the way, as a result of changes in the social, economical or political realm. Then there’s also communication on promises made that are not met, for whatever reason. How do the Centres of Government communicate on delivery, especially when promises are not met or priorities have been changed? What role does the government take in these matters?

Reference document: GOV/PGC/MPM(2007)3

- **Workshop 2: Coordinating delivery between different levels of government and between line ministries.** The position of the Centre of Government regarding delivery on promises is difficult, seeing that it is basically the line ministries and government agencies and, to some extent, other levels of government (local, regional) that have the capacity to actually define the policy goals and reach the identified objectives. The principle way of influencing these entities (the budget) is under the control of the Ministry of Finance. The power of the Centre of Government regarding delivery on promises is therefore limited. How can the Centre nonetheless coordinate and promote delivery on promises by all these different entities? How can the Centre bring together the efforts in different fields and make sure they are in line with the general political agenda?

Reference document: GOV/PGC/MPM(2007)4

- **Workshop 3:** a ‘free’ session (e.g. on the daily challenges of managing the Centre of Government)

15.15-15.45 Coffee break

15.45-16.15 Reports to plenary: highlights from the parallel workshops

16.15-16.20 Conclusions of the day’s discussions

16.20-16.50 Surprise: Flying over Switzerland

16.55 Walk to Hotel Bellevue

18.00 Departure to concert

18.30 Concert at Historisches Museum Bern

19.30 Official dinner in the Chateau Lohn hosted by the Swiss authorities

¹ Except Iceland and Luxemburg

Friday 5 October 2007
Exploratory discussions for 2008

- 8.30** **Departure from the Hotel Bellevue** (5 minute walk to the Bernerhof)
- 08.45-09.45** **The OECD's horizontal work on the Political Economy of Reform**
Opening by Mr. Aart Jan de Geus, Deputy Secretary-General of the OECD,
followed by *tour de table* and discussion
- 09.45-10.45** **Session 4: Preparation of CoG 2008 – Political Economy of Reform: Ensuring Stakeholder Support**
[Reference document: GOV/PGC/MPM(2007)5]

This session will serve to identify the key points of interest to Centres of Government as basis for developing an agenda for next year's annual meeting, which will be hosted by Mexico. The proposed topic for this meeting is 'Political economy of reform: ensuring stakeholder support'.

Gaining and keeping support from all relevant stakeholders for reforms is critical for the design and implementation of the reform agenda, and the Centre of Government is the first and foremost relay between government and some of these stakeholders, but not all. The first stakeholder of note is civil servants, and the Centre of Government is, in most countries, the main link between the administration and government, as has been put forward in many previous CoG meetings. Other stakeholders whose support needs to be ensured include other levels of government, the legislature, business, and citizens.

Which phases of the reform process can be identified, and which types of stakeholders' support is crucial in which phase? How can Centres of Government help ensure support from all members of the government for the reform agenda? How can Centres of Government ensure support from parliament for the reform agenda? What role can Centres of Government play in ensuring and retaining support from all these stakeholders for the reform agenda?

- 10.45-11.15** **Coffee break** (approx.)
- 11.15-12.00** **How can future OECD work support Centres of Government with regard to the political economy of reform?**
- 12.00-12.15** **Conclusions of the morning's discussions and general conclusions of the meeting**
- 12.15** **Closing of the meeting by Mr. Eric Martin, Swiss Ambassador to the OECD**
- 12.30 -13.30** **Lunch in the Bernerhof**
- 14.15** **Departure by bus to Zentrum Paul Klee**
- 16.15** **Closing of the day in Käfigturm**
Bundesplatz 3, Bern

NOTE: The Swiss authorities would warmly welcome the presence of participants' spouses during the official events (guided tour of the city, welcome cocktail, concert, official dinner, lunch on Thursday, Museum visit, closing cocktail). You can find the accompanying programme for spouses in an annex.