Opening Remarks
International Consortium on Governmental Financial Management
33rd International Training Conference
Washington, D.C., International Monetary Fund Headquarters II,
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Ladies and Gentlemen, Members of the International Consortium on
Governmental Financial Management, honored guests:

Good morning and welcome to Washington DC at the headquarters
of the International Monetary Fund. My name is Lucie Phillips and it is
my honor and great pleasure to serve as the President of ICGFM.

I am delighted to welcome you all to the 2019 Winter Training
Conference. The ICGFM Board of Directors, the Officers and I are
pleased to see all of you here for a program that will bring us up to date
the trends, tools and skills useful in public financial management. When
ICGFM was founded 41 years ago, financial management was largely
manual and every government worked out its own system. Today we are
moving toward international standards and data exchanges that
harmonize fiscal policy, procedures and practices. Yet there is no static
perfect state of public financial management. As new tools come out
regularly, and people change roles in PFM, the situation is always changing. We are moving toward a rhythm of continuous, measurable performance improvement in every unit of government. Achieving that, actually even **aiming** for that, fosters trust between governments and their citizens. It enables government institutions to provide the services that citizens pay for and want to enjoy. It also builds countries’ reputations, oiling the wheels of international trade, finance and foreign investment.

We look to you to turn on active learning this week and volunteer your insights to others, sharing while you are here and planning how new techniques can be applied at home. We have seen that the results of fiscal reform with more transparency permeate every aspect of society. Achieving fiscal sustainability generates confidence at home and among foreign investors, driving economic growth and job creation.

ICGFM is an umbrella professional organization bringing together practitioners and theorists in each of the financial management specialties, from budget to audit. This broad field allows each of us to understand how our own experience fits into the larger picture of
government finance. ICGFM continues to grow by working globally with governments, organizations and individuals to find new ways to improve financial management. When done with integrity, improved finances enable governments to invest in infrastructure and service delivery, visibly improving the life of citizens. How to do this part well is the main theme of this year’s program.

We talk about the growth of ICGFM every year. Look around the room today to appreciate that growth. We have representatives from over 40 countries here with us this week and over 100 persons registered. We also continue to diversify the number of countries and regions represented, and we ask you to spread the good word to help us continue to attract new participants and partners to our conferences. Together we are ICGFM and we are clearly having an impact around the world. A special and warm welcome goes out to our new members and first-time conference participants. If you are attending an ICGFM Conference for the first time, I would ask you to please stand so we can recognize you (pause for applause).
ICGFM has worked hard over the years to develop a unique interactive approach to exploring the latest tools in PFM, clarifying professional standards and spreading best practices in Public Financial Management (PFM). We are now exploring ways of serving overseas constituents directly. In October we presented at an all-Africa Public Financial Forum organized by the African Union. We are also partnering with member firm PFM Training to develop an e-learning that will deliver a comprehensive overview of PFM methods and approaches through the internet, with successful participants certified by ICGFM.

During this week’s program you will meet and discuss with participants from many countries.

- Offer them your advice on sound approaches to financial reform.
- Let them know how you are solving problems that arise in the reform process.

The EventLeaf Guide app that we are using now to manage communications, will allow you to stay in touch with other participants
and speakers once you are back at work. If you participate here and after you return home, in the end you will have a global support network. The next session after these remarks will familiarize you with the EventLeaf app and the use of social media so that you can participate fully now, here and later at home.

This year’s theme is Public Financial Management Impact on Service Delivery. We all know from observation that healthy, well-educated populations drive economic growth. There is also a large body of research data supporting that fact. But countries struggle with how best to achieve that happy state. This week we will hear about what countries have tried, what worked best and what worked less. We will also look at services such as electricity and water supply that are essential for families and businesses to thrive.

While the ability to fund health and education sectors is often cited as a government goal, ironically those sectors are among the least likely to be included in PFM reform programs. In many countries health and education are semi-autonomous, partly funded by government, partly by
participants and sometimes by private organizations. This can leave them a bit isolated from overall financial policy, budget and revenue functions.

The technical experts working in health and education are not often PFM specialists. Yet these sectors have serious problems related to government financial management. Health sectors are rife with complaints of supply chain failure in medicines and medical equipment. Education systems experience weak curriculum support, teacher education and teachers’ pay. But dealing with the sources of these problems can be very sensitive. Those working on technical improvements often shy away from talk of financial issues lest they be seen as troublemakers.

Electricity is another service high among citizen’s priorities and provided by government monopolies in many countries. We will hear about that this week.

Most of the trends in this changing world affect government financial management directly. Take a few:
• Information and communications technology

• Social Media

• Citizen participation in budgeting and other areas

Information technology improves the coherence of our data and our ability to share it, within countries and among them. Customs data from an importer can be matched, shipment by shipment to the export data from countries of origin. PFM work, including tax collection, audit and procurement are becoming less mysterious, secretive processes. Yet bigger data can be harder to manage and less secure.

Social media allow individuals to communicate immediately on witnessing an event or trend. Instances of abuse are recorded and transmitted, sometimes going viral in minutes. This makes it harder for financial abuses to continue unchecked.

We expect you to learn a lot through this week’s program. I always do. That is why I joined and now volunteer with the ICGFM. We invite you to do the same. All participants in this conference are automatically granted a year’s membership in ICGFM. Participate fully, stay
connected with those you meet here, and take-home new insights to improve finances and living conditions in your community.

I’d like to recognize our Vice President for Programs, Dave Pearl and the Program Steering Committee for their efforts that have gone into preparing this year’s program. You will find the names of those individuals listed in your conference program (Dave and all the members of the program steering committee and conference support team please stand). All of these individuals worked many hours on this conference as well as our other ICGFM conferences and meetings, and we are deeply grateful for their support. (Applause)

It takes many people to make events like this possible. I would like to recognize a number of individuals whose participation with ICGFM and in the development of this conference have been invaluable.

- The Executive Committee and Board of Directors who give their knowledge and time to guide this organization and make it work. I would ask each Executive Committee and Board Member to please stand and be recognized. (Let’s give them a round of applause.)
• Our Managing Director, Pat Cornish and our Project Consultant Mari Robinette Deasel. We thank them both for their commitment and dedication. (Pat and Mari Please Stand.)

I also want to recognize our conference sponsors, without whom we could not have put together this exciting program and conference. We are very fortunate to have Chemonics, DAI and Oracle as a Silver Sponsors and we have EY, IBI, JS Morlu and PMCG as supporting Organizations this year. Thank you so much for your continued support which makes ICGFM events like these possible. Will all representatives of our sponsoring organizations who are in the room please stand – let’s give them a warm round of applause and thanks for their support.

As you assess what you have learned and contributed during this conference, we ask you to do three things: (1) Give us honest and specific feedback on what was most useful to you and what was less so. (2) Take home the conference materials and share them with your colleagues. (3) Stay in touch with those you met this week so that we continue to learn from one another, growing into a Community of Practice in Public Financial Management. We also encourage each of
you to be advocates of the ICGFM in your countries to help us achieve our shared vision of an international consortium that helps improve Public Financial Management in developing and emerging countries, and developed countries alike.

We are confident that you will find the 2019 Winter Training Conference to be professionally and personally rewarding. I wish you every success and look forward to meeting each of you this week in Washington.