

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Press Center



Secretary Geithner Marks 20th Anniversary of Treasury's Office of Technical Assistance

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WASHINGTON – Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner, senior Treasury officials and leaders from the development community today marked the 20th anniversary of the Treasury Department's Office of Technical Assistance (OTA) and discussed the office's efforts to help developing nations strengthen their financial sectors and economies. In the last 20 years, OTA has helped finance ministries and central banks in nearly 100 developing countries around the world strengthen their capacity to manage public finances, support their growing economies and combat economic crimes, including corruption, which in turn helps governments provide more effective services to their citizens.

"Treasury's Office of Technical Assistance gives nations the tools they need for functioning economies – the tools they need for stability, prosperity, and long-term growth," said Secretary Geithner. "Our technical advisors don't just provide short-term solutions. They transmit expertise. They help teach public servants from Afghanistan to Albania how to write budgets, manage debt, and fight the fires of financial crises."

Results of OTA's work span the globe. After working closely with Treasury advisors, Ghana successfully issued a pioneering \$750 million bond for infrastructure; Mozambique conducted its first ever audits of petroleum importers; Haiti seized \$20 million in narcotics trafficking assets; Indonesia modernized its tax return processing centers; Uganda saved \$500,000 through a more efficient debt auction; and Paraguay increased its customs revenue by 38 percent.

In providing technical assistance, OTA follows a number of guiding principles. First, the office advocates self-reliance and provides countries with the knowledge and skills required to move towards financial self-sufficiency and reduce dependence on international aid. In addition, OTA works with partners who are committed to reform. Among federal agencies involved in foreign aid, OTA has been singled out for praise in strengthening host country capacities; supporting country ownership; achieving alignment with host country priorities; managing for development results; fostering mutual accountability with host country officials; and evaluating its own performance. OTA does not engage with a country without a signed bilateral agreement on the high-level terms and aims of engagement, followed by a tactical-level agreement specifying the activities in support of those aims. Finally, OTA engagements are based on close interaction between advisors and working-level partners, whether in a finance ministry, central bank, financial intelligence unit, or tax administration.

"I have seen the results of OTA's work first hand in some of the most fragile and poor countries in the world," said Deputy Secretary Neal Wolin. "In Iraq and Afghanistan, I have seen OTA advisors collaborate on budget execution and revenue enhancement – all while donning helmets and flak jackets, traveling in armored vehicles to and from work. These women and men are not only experts in their field but also admirably brave and dedicated to serving the United States in its efforts to help these countries recover and grow."

OTA operates through five major disciplines:

- **Budget and Financial Accountability:** Strengthens the effectiveness of ministries of finance, the readability and transparency of budget documents, and the management and expenditure of government resources.
- **Government Debt Issuance and Management:** Assists in the development of revenue forecasting capabilities, and creation of debt issuance strategies and calendars, with an aim at diversifying sources of finance, and reducing borrowing costs.
- **Banking and Financial Services:** Supports the development of sound, robust, well-regulated institutions that meet private sector financing needs.
- **Economic Crimes:** Develops and implements effective anti-money laundering and anti-terrorist financing laws, regulations, and organizations that meet international standards.
- **Revenue Administration and Policy:** Creates more effective tax administrations that simplify procedures to encourage voluntary compliance on the part of taxpayers, effectively uncover tax evasion, and maintain high standards of fairness and transparency.

Today's event comes ahead of this week's G-20 Meeting of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors and Spring meetings of the International Monetary Fund's International Monetary and Financial Committee and the Joint World Bank-IMF Development Committee in Washington.

