

# GLOBAL **government** SUMMIT SINGAPORE | 2017



## A Global Government Forum event

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Top row from left to right: Harriet Loos, Peter Hughes, Akin Ak, Savva Shipov, Lord Gus O'Donnell, John Manzoni, Serge Dupont, Heiki Loot, Kevin Sorkin.

Bottom row from left to right: Mikhail Pryadilnikov, Elizabeth Kelly, Özer Kuntoğlu, Dr Ali Hamsa, Peter Ong, Kellie Coombes, Matthias Freundlieb, Nadine Smith, Vincent Chin, HE Youk Bunna.

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**Cambodia – HE Youk Bunna**, Secretary of State of Ministry of Civil Service

**Canada – Serge Dupont**, Deputy Clerk of the Privy Council

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**Malaysia – Dr Ali Hamsa**, Chief Secretary to the Government

**New Zealand – Peter Hughes**, Head of State Services, State Services Commission

**New Zealand – Kellie Coombes**, Director, Office of the Head of State Services, State Services Commission

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**Singapore – Peter Ong**, Head of Civil Service, Prime Minister's Office, Government of Singapore

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## Foreword

“ The Global Government Summit, organised by *Global Government Forum*, is a unique event that each year brings together the world's most senior public servants for informal discussions on common and important public sector challenges. Over an evening and a day, top civil servants from a range of countries explore and discuss some of the biggest challenges facing governments today – hearing presentations from their peers, and sharing what they've learned about how to tackle shared problems and agendas. In 2017, it was hosted by the government of Singapore at the city-state's Shangri-La Hotel on 10-11 February, and attracted very senior officials from 11 countries.

The Summit is designed as a safe space for honest, open discussion between people at the highest ranks of government, and as such is held under Chatham House rules – meaning that no quote can be attributed without permission from the speaker. Additionally, Global Government Summit has excluded from this report aspects of the discussion which might lead to governments or delegates being criticised or embarrassed; it is essential that people can speak freely at the Summit without fear of repercussions.

Nonetheless, we produce a report on the event because – with the permission of those quoted – it is possible to present many of the discussions and draw out the key lessons. Our report is intended to share the ideas and learning generated at the Summit, helping senior civil servants in governments around the world to address the issues explored by delegates. We very much hope you find it useful; if you think your country or business might wish to send a delegate, please contact [kevin@globalgovernmentforum.com](mailto:kevin@globalgovernmentforum.com)”

**Kevin Sorkin**, Director, Global Government Forum

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“ This event always connects the people who are actually doing the reforms, and not the theorists and experts and consultants.”

**Mikhail Pryadilnikov** – Deputy Director of the Analytic Center for the Russian Government, Russia



Peter Ong, Singapore



Ms Elizabeth Kelly, Australia

## Introduction

As he welcomed delegates to the 2017 Global Government Summit, host Peter Ong – the Head of the Civil Service of Singapore – neatly summed up the event’s purpose and goals.

The Summit “brings together heads of civil services around the world who share a common aspiration for superior governance, and seek an informal platform where they can share ideas on how to achieve that,” he said. “Everyone comes both to contribute, and to learn from each other. I look forward to reaffirming old friendships, and forging new ones: as our challenges grow, the mutual support these friendships provide will be invaluable.”

Several of those “old friendships” had been forged at past Summits – for this was the fifth such event, and the fourth to be hosted by Singapore. “Over the years, we’ve had wide-ranging discussions on topics like digital government and big data, citizen wellbeing, service deliver, talent management, and public service innovation,” said Ong. But this, he added, was the biggest event to date – with 11 countries represented around the table. The Summit’s growing cast list “is a testament to the recognition of the growing complexity of governance, and the need for dialogue to build shared understanding,” he commented.

The Summit’s popularity may also, though, say something about the scale of the challenges facing senior civil servants in 2017, as political shock waves – symbolised by the UK’s referendum vote to leave the EU, and Donald Trump’s election as US president – spread through many of the world’s democracies. “I’ve always found it valuable to have the opportunity to connect with senior leaders in other public services,” said Ong. “During periods of economic and political turbulence, in particular, such interactions assume a special significance.”

At these times “the governance terrain becomes more treacherous, with little margin for error, and navigating it

successfully is of paramount importance,” he continued. “This is precisely the time when learning from each other becomes crucial to safely steering the ship of state through stormy seas.”

We live, one delegate noted, in “the most interesting of times”. And Lord O’Donnell, the former UK Cabinet Secretary, offered a pithy translation: “The Governor of the Bank of England used to say that success in monetary policy is when it’s really boring,” he commented. “So when we say things are interesting, that means that something’s gone wrong.”

Sketching out the programme for the summit, Peter Ong explained that the key topics had been curated to address the fraught global political and economic context. O’Donnell’s presentation at the opening dinner would, he said, set the stage by discussing a resilient model of economic growth in these turbulent times.

The following day, he explained, the morning sessions would “delve deep into the maintenance of social cohesion amidst diversity, and explore ways of building trust through public engagement and open governance”. The first morning session was planned to give delegates an opportunity to discuss growing public concerns about immigration and integration; and at the second, they would consider why citizens in many countries are growing more cynical about, and disengaged from, established political systems.

In the afternoon, Ong added, the group would discuss ways to strengthen coordination and collaboration across government – creating a more strategic and responsive civil service machine – and consider how digital technologies might reshape the relationships between governments and citizens. “None of these topics are new to any of you – all of us face them, at one level or another,” he concluded. “And it’s through the collective wisdom that you share as we cover each topic that we’ll learn from one another – going away in the evening with some fresh insights and new perspectives.”

“Everyone comes both to contribute, and to learn from each other.”

Peter Ong – Head of Civil Service, Prime Minister’s Office, Singapore

## What brought you here?



*When you're faced every day with immediate pressures, you do need to find space to think things through a bit more—and you can't do that by yourself in the office. You have to make some kind of a break from your day-to-day work. You need to get out and meet new people. Coming to a place like Singapore also allows you to take in a different reality. And the Summit brings you into contact with people who share many of the same challenges you're facing, while bringing to the discussion new experiences and perspectives.*

*In Canada, the cabinet secretaries of the federal and provincial governments get together periodically to talk about their challenges as public service leaders—and that's very fertile ground for discussion. Likewise, interaction among peers [at the national government level] is insightful and productive; and the more informal the setting, the better."*

**Serge Dupont – Deputy Clerk of the Privy Council, Canada**



*I've launched a reform programme in the New Zealand public services, and I'm keen to locate what I'm doing in a broader international context, to test it, and to get new ideas. All of the topics are relevant to us, to a greater or lesser degree, and I like the round table format."*

**Peter Hughes – Head of State Services, State Services Commission, New Zealand**



*In your own country you're on your own—you're the only one doing the job of head of the centre of government. This is a unique opportunity to meet your counterparts who are doing a similar job in their own countries.*

*And there's another reason. This meeting is atypical in that there's a frank and open discussion; it's an open and intimate environment to express freely how you see things in your country, and to learn from your colleagues."*

**Heiki Loot – State Secretary, Estonia**



*There's a lot to learn from each other, because many administrations are raising the same issues. We're all struggling with how you become more efficient, and then there's these big policy issues. We can share, we can learn, and we can take some things back; and civil services don't do this very often."*

**John Manzoni – Chief Executive of the Civil Service, United Kingdom**



*The great benefit of these Summits is that they're informal. In some international meetings, individuals read out prepared scripts; but here people come in a personal capacity, and you get a genuinely informal discussion.*

*You also get the views of countries that you don't get in lots of other forums—like a fast-growing, low-income country like Cambodia; like Malaysia, which is successfully transforming its public services; and like Russia, a country where relations can be difficult at times but which is grappling with precisely the same issues as the rest of us."*

**Lord Gus O'Donnell – Former Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service, United Kingdom**



*It's a unique opportunity to exchange views and share best practice—and, importantly, worst practice: things that may not have worked. The unique thing about public administration is that it's a profession and really non-political: all governments are essentially interested in providing good services to people. People are able to express themselves openly here, because they know their peers will respect them and not divulge information, so that gives the opportunity to talk about mistakes as opposed to just advertising your successes—though that's also part of the story!*

*It's a good format, good host, good set of very high-level discussions—that's why I come."*

**Mikhail Pryadilnikov – Deputy Director, Analytic Center for the Russian Government, Russia**



Lord Gus O'Donnell, United Kingdom

## Session 1: finding a resilient model of economic growth

### Global economic shifts

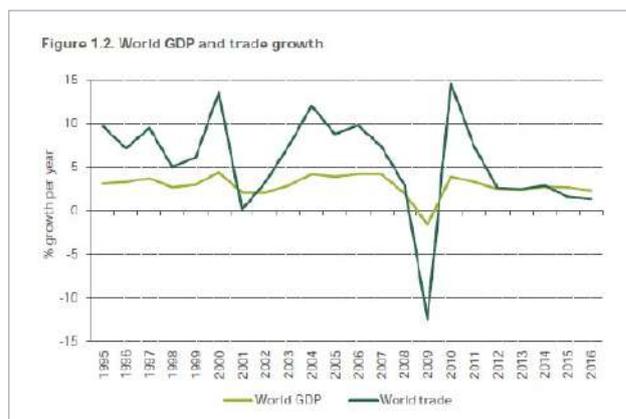
“People are going to attribute this to Trump and protectionism—but let’s be clear: flows of finance, goods and services have fallen from a peak of 53% of global output in 2007, to 39% in 2014. So that whole globalisation process is changing quite radically.”

Gus O'Donnell, who served three prime ministers as UK Cabinet Secretary and Head of the Civil Service, has since 2011 returned to his pre-civil service career in economics: amongst other things, these days he's Chair of consultancy Frontier Economics, President of think tank the Institute of Fiscal Studies, and a trustee for the Economist magazine. So he was well-placed to explain to delegates some of the underlying economic dynamics that have fostered political and social changes in recent years.

After decades during which trade expanded much faster than economies, O'Donnell said, since 2012 they've grown broadly in parallel: “So trade is slowing down, and there's an interesting question as to why.” Two possible hypotheses, he added, are that protectionism has been growing subtly, and that the process of moving production to maximise the efficiency of the supply chain has slowed down—at least for now.

In today's environment of constrained GDP and trade growth, O'Donnell continued, some regions will struggle to make progress; in particular, he raised concerns about structural problems within the Eurozone. But the USA is a different matter: “I've been amazed, talking to US businesspeople, about how bullish they are about the US economy and the impact of Trump's expected policies on infrastructure, tax and the like,” he said. “The people who were telling me what a disaster it would be if he got in have completely changed their tune, and are now saying that—at least short-term and on the economic side—it's going to be great.”

Meanwhile, fast growth is anticipated in India—which may outstrip China in 2017, with growth of nearly 7%—and Turkey. By 2020, O'Donnell said, the emerging economies' combined GDP may top that of the G7: “This is a real change in the global economic weight of the world,” he commented. “For those of us within the West, we need to be thinking about how we cope with a world where we're not the economically dominant part of it.”



Source: The IFS Green Budget, February 2017

### The distribution of growth

Inside that global picture, O'Donnell argued, lie important questions around how the benefits of growth are distributed. “Globalisation has led to growth, but it's leading to some really severe issues around inequality,” he said. Meanwhile, the growth of automation in manufacturing is cutting production jobs and shifting the distribution of rewards between capital and labour: “Technology is driving ‘winner takes all’ sorts of decisions,” he pointed out.

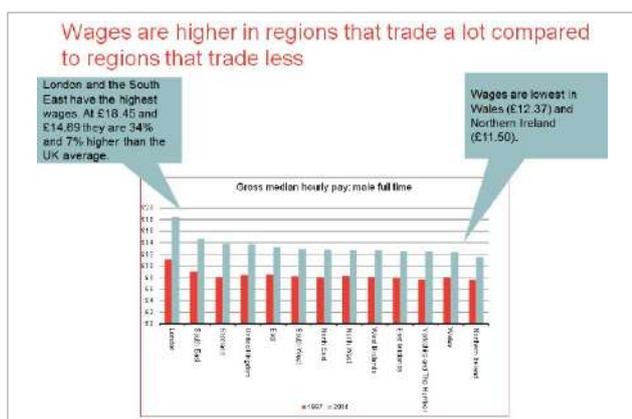
Too often, those losing out in these economic shifts are turning on the perceived beneficiaries—often identified as the “global elite” and new immigrants. “What we did in the UK, I think, was we failed to get the winners to compensate the losers; to find ways to get transfers such that everybody felt they were winning,” O'Donnell argued. “I think that's something we should think about very carefully.”

To illustrate his point, O'Donnell pointed to changes in hourly pay across different British regions: over nearly two decades, he explained, pay growth has been substantially faster in regions that trade a lot—leading to a growing pay gap between the wealthy South-East and outlying regions. “The process of globalisation has exacerbated regional inequalities,” he said. And those who have not benefited from globalisation are now rejecting the model: “One of the biggest indicators of whether an area voted to leave the EU was inequality in wellbeing: people's perceptions of how they were doing in life.”

The most crucial factor, O'Donnell argued, is not people's income or their quality of life, but their perception of fairness: people will put up with a lot if they feel the pain is shared equally—but they're intolerant of what appears to be inequitable treatment. In part, he added, the fact that ‘quality of life’ rankings vary so much across US society “explains why you've got so many people who say: ‘This isn't working for me,’ and so someone like President Trump can come through.”

### The rise of the robot

The rise of automation—and, increasingly, Artificial Intelligence (AI)—presents a parallel set of challenges. To date, we've seen robots replace many skilled manual jobs; but looking ahead, O'Donnell warned, AI will take chunks out of the professional workforce. “If you're an accountant or an auditor, it's not looking good,” he said; and the same is true for many skilled jobs, from health technologists to economists, pilots to technical writers.



Source: Frontier Economics (Europe)



HE Youk Bunna, Cambodia

“This is the kind of thing that AI is going to completely replace,” he said. “In many cases, computers can do a much better job than humans.”

Some jobs are relatively safe, he added – particularly in personal service roles, such as social care and personal training, and in artistic and creative work. But with lifespans continually growing, O'Donnell foresees a world in which people retrain several times over the course of their lives; and in which it's normal to take a step back from paid work to focus on caring and family responsibilities. “We won't be in a situation where, come retirement age, people just stop and do nothing,” he said. “I can imagine newly ‘retired’ people in their 60s looking after people in their 80s – assuming they've saved enough and have reasonable pensions.”

### Sharing the proceeds of growth

“We've forever taken this view that world trade increases GDP and there'll be some kind of magic trickle-down,” said O'Donnell. “Well, actually it turns out that quite a lot of it isn't trickle-down: it's virtuous circles and vicious circles. And often, winner takes all.”

Many of the answers, O'Donnell argued, lie in education – both in giving people the flexibility and adaptability to find opportunities in fast-changing economies, and in supporting people to change roles and develop new skills mid-career. And governments, he argued, also need to address the perception that immigration has weakened the living standards of existing residents.

Immigrants plug gaps in the labour market that residents can't or won't fill, he said, and their readiness to go where the work is provides economies with great flexibility. But there are “mostly wrong, but very firmly-held” views that immigration has harmed host populations, “so we need to come to a sensible way of handling migration which doesn't shoot ourselves in the foot”.

So is there a market solution to this, asked one delegate: a way to reconfigure economies that protects employment rates across the piece? Or must we look at redistributing income, to avoid creating a vast new class of the poor and workless?

Part of the answer will lie in redefining work, O'Donnell answered, so that people spend more of their lives working voluntarily for families or communities. But in the shorter

term, governments must help prod economies in the right direction – assisting transitions in areas left high and dry, whilst stimulating growing market sectors.

There are traps here, he warned. And he cited the UK's attempts to shift civil service jobs out of London in order to support regional economies: these apparently stable, well-paid public service employers took many of the best local staff, weakening private businesses – and when shrinking public budgets took those jobs out, local private sector markets were too weak to take up the slack.

The British government had much more success when it focused on stimulating private business, O'Donnell said. When the pits closed in England's coalfields, for example, regeneration agencies prepared sites, put in broadband, retrained local people and offered tax incentives to investors. Meanwhile digital services and online shopping were pulling money away from many town centres, but stimulating demand for call centres and logistics hubs – neatly fitting the coalfields' offer of cheap land and ready workforces near strategic transport links.

“You can't pick winners – but you can pick sectors and skillsets,” commented O'Donnell. Similarly, working with universities to stimulate spin-off businesses produced good results in the UK – particularly when they linked into established industries such as engineering and manufacturing.

The key point, O'Donnell concluded, is “that there are losers from globalisation, and it's no fault of theirs that they happen to be in the sectors which have gone away.” As the loss of jobs extends into traditionally middle-class professions, “we need to be ahead of the game, helping people to retrain, to restructure.” And this will require big changes in education and skills provision: “We need to build in the ability to change and develop new ideas, and to cope with the demands of whatever the technology throws up.”

Ultimately, then, “we do need to be thinking about redistribution”, said the former Cabinet Secretary – not via subsidies or benefits, but through “adjustment payments, transitional payments, possibly help with relocation.” Governments, he believes, will have to work out “how you redistribute in a smart way and through the right incentive structures – so you're not paying people to do the wrong things in the wrong places.”



Özer Kontoğlu, Turkey



Harriet Loos, CPI

## Session 2: social cohesion in diverse societies

For some years, the challenges around diversity and immigration have been seen in the light of issues around social cohesion, terrorism, poverty and inequality; but the rapid rise of populist leaders across the Western world has demonstrated their enormous political salience.

With economic changes squeezing many people's incomes (see above) and trust in established political systems in decline (see below), far-right and anti-establishment politicians are getting traction with a narrative that seeks to pin the blame for people's suffering on immigrants. "We have a really serious problem at the moment on social cohesion, because of the migration issues and the way they're being exploited by politicians," commented one delegate. "It's very scary."

The solutions will be different in different countries. And the session's presentations, from representatives of Canada and Singapore, showed two powerful – and very different – approaches to the challenge of dovetailing diverse local cultures with the creation of a strong, common identity.

### The Canadian approach: champion diversity

First up was Canada's Serge Dupont, Deputy Clerk of the Privy Council; and he painted a positive picture of the country's attitudes to immigration. Diversity is hard-wired into this nation's history and fabric, he said, and seen as an asset: a source of creativity, innovation and prosperity.

Getting to this point has not been a straight road. Dupont acknowledged the wrongs suffered by Canada's indigenous

peoples, including forced assimilation of indigenous children over a period of 100 years. An official apology, an historic legal settlement, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and now a process of reconciliation are laying the foundations for improvement, he said. And he highlighted the referenda on secession in French-speaking Quebec in 1980 and 1995, both won by the "no" side – though in 1995 by the thinnest of margins. "Our history has been one of overcoming such struggles in the pursuit of a unique, cohesive and prosperous society," he said.

Following more recent waves of immigration, particularly from Asia, Canada's 35m-strong population includes 7m born overseas, and some 13 ethnic groups of greater than 1m people. But Dupont argued that a few key assets have enabled Canada to absorb these migrants whilst protecting its national character, social cohesion and sense of common purpose.

The first comprises the institutions, laws, policies and programmes introduced to recognise and promote diversity – particularly the 1982 Constitution's protections for indigenous rights, and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. And the second, he said, is "leadership that emerged at critical times to build and sustain the political support that must underpin social cohesion and progress".

Dupont noted that the promotion of diversity and inclusion is an explicit priority of the current government. "In forming his government, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau set the tone," he said. "The Cabinet is gender-balanced and it is diverse. Our Minister for the Status of Women entered Canada as a refugee from Afghanistan. Our Minister of Immigration was born and raised in Somalia. Our Minister for Justice is a member of a First Nation from British Columbia. Our Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities was a Paralympic swimmer."

“We have a really serious problem at the moment on social cohesion, because of the migration issues and the way they're being exploited by politicians. It's very scary.”

Delegate



Savva Shipov, Russia



Akin Ak, Turkey

Third, there's an openness to immigration, combined with an objective, points-based system designed to attract skilled immigrants. Would-be Canadians "get points based on a number of criteria, such as age, education, skills and experience, that try to predict their capacity to succeed in Canadian society," Dupont explained. "These new Canadians are not only getting jobs; they're actually helping to create jobs."

Finally, there's a strong and coordinated effort to help less fortunate immigrants to settle in. Canada has accepted nearly 40,000 Syrian refugees since November 2015 – and they benefit from comprehensive resettlement programmes "involving all levels of government, private sector partners, community groups and volunteers," he explained. "We're taking the time to help new permanent residents navigate unfamiliar territory, with daily language training and help finding jobs."

Canada has had no choice but to embrace diversity, Dupont concluded: indeed, it is set to become still more diverse. "Our economy is such that we need more talent from more sources, not less," he said. "What is a choice is inclusion. We know that intolerance, prejudice, divisions and feelings of isolation can spread quickly, and that we mustn't become complacent. Still, a welcoming and inclusive environment fits better our national character. And we draw strength from remarkable personal stories of success."

"We can't force people into a certain notion of national identity," he added. "But we can bake the idea of diversity into a common understanding of who we are."

### The Singaporean approach: create shared experiences

Singapore has taken quite a different approach, explained Lim Shung Yar – Director of the Community Relations and Engagement Division in the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth. Yet its goals are very similar to Canada's: the country's leaders want "citizens of all faiths and cultures to accept each other as equals; and, more than that, to take pride in the fact that each of our individual cultures are part of the collective national identity of Singapore," he said. "Everyone should keep their own beliefs and cultures, while we all meet in the middle – and we want to maximise this middle portion called the common space."

Underpinning these goals, Singapore has many of the same foundations for cohesion as Canada: a constitution safeguarding minority rights and a set of laws outlawing discrimination, for example. But the country takes a more interventionist, directive approach to supporting cohesion – an approach which, Lim Shung Yar suggested, has its roots in the long push to transform Singapore from a rigidly-segregated trading post into a nation state.

With a population mixing Chinese, Malays, Indians and temporary residents – and hit by intercommunal violence in the 1850s and again in the 1960s – Singapore's leaders have understood since the country's foundation that it was "absolutely necessary to manage social cohesion," he explained. "It was about the fault lines of race and religion right from the beginning."

Singapore's most eye-catching attempt to expand that "common space" is its policy around public housing, which comprises 80% of the country's homes: the government ensures that every apartment block is ethnically mixed, with the proportions reflecting the ethnic makeup of Singapore.

Each neighbourhood also includes community centres, schools and leisure facilities, "so there's a community of experience; people see others of different races, different cultures every day, and that becomes part of everyday life," commented Lim Shung Yar. "The everyday lived experience is very important."

This planned mixing extends into politics, where the presidency is passed between ethnic groups, and the use of 'Group Representation Constituencies' ensures that minorities are fairly represented in parliament. It reaches into schools and national service, where the communities are carefully brought together for shared experiences. It even reaches into religion, where faith leaders are encouraged to sit on shared panels to foster mutual communication and understanding.

"These 'hard' policy measures impose on citizens certain things they ought to do or ought not to do," commented Lim Shung Yar. "That's difficult." So the government also uses 'soft' policy levers – "because ultimately, social cohesion is about hearts and minds: having people accept and appreciate others." These, for example, include the creation of a mixed youth corps providing voluntary work with the poor and elderly; a community-wide



*Lim Shung Yar, Singapore*

communications campaign to challenge Islamic radicalism; and the encouragement of workplace and sporting activities that bring different communities together.

### Reactions and responses

Singapore's activist, planned multiculturalism made quite an impression on Summit delegates. "You have a pretty structured set of policies throughout, which have made integration here a lot better than the rest of us," commented one European official. "But we don't have the levers to create the same sort of structures." And it's much harder to create those levers, said another, when countries have been built around a shared cultural identity rather than the concept of mixing different peoples: "We have two types of nations," he said. "Those where the whole nation is built on the idea of diversity—like Canada or Singapore—and those traditionally based on one identity. And there's a difference when it comes to integration policy."

It was clear from the discussion that several delegates felt that their countries had not handled diversity as well as Canada or Singapore—with immigrants performing poorly in educational and economic terms, and remaining isolated from mainstream society. Others, though, felt that they had the right approach to absorbing new immigrants—but were being overwhelmed by the sheer volume of migrants fleeing areas of conflict or seeking economic opportunities.

Turkey, for example, has taken in 3m Syrian refugees since 2011; and Akin Ak, a senior adviser in the Prime Minister's Office, noted that "the government has spent over €25bn [\$26bn or £21bn] in four years: we have to provide education, healthcare, and it's really imposed a burden on the government." His colleague Özer Kontoglu, the Deputy Undersecretary of the Prime Ministry, argued that "the people in Turkey and Syria were living together peacefully under the rule of the Ottoman Empire for 400 years, and many families had members in both countries. Integration is not a problem—but education and employment are."



*Vincent Chin, BCG*

"In terms of the citizen's acceptance of immigrants, it's not just the absolute percentage of immigrants that matters, but also the pace at which people arrive," commented Peter Ong. "If it happens too fast, the public reaction tends to be very strong; but if it can be moderated over a period of time, with good policies to ensure proper integration, most societies can adjust".

That certainly reflects Canada's experience, said Dupont: "You've got to process inflows, and ensure you're doing it in such a way that you can accommodate people," he said. "For us, it's a matter of ensuring we do it at a measured pace."

This approach struck a chord with many delegates. Rapid inflows of immigrants make integration harder to achieve, the feeling was, but the real deciding factor is whether the host state gets on the front foot and gives new arrivals the tools to build a new life: language skills; job opportunities; access to social and community activities. It is not enough simply to provide a space; people need help to connect into wider society.

Sometimes, commented Matthias Freundlieb—a Head of Directorate from Germany's Federal Chancellery—governments have more control over integration policies than they do over the pace of new arrivals. Germany received over 1.3m refugees between 2015 and 2016, he said, and "the Chancellor was criticised for opening the borders; but that's not true. The borders in Europe were open!"

Set at the heart of the EU's Schengen border-free zone, Germany didn't have the luxury of controlling the rate of immigration from faraway countries. But as Freundlieb said, this won't be the first time that the country has tackled a major integration challenge: when East and West Germany were reunified in 1990, "there were two diverse societies, and they had to grow together."

"I think we managed it," he concluded. "And in the end we will manage this too."



Heiki Loot, Estonia



Nadine Smith, CPI

## Session 3: building trust through public engagement and open government

“There’s a decline in trust in government – that much we know,” said Nadine Smith. She didn’t need to spell out the implications for this audience: senior officials everywhere find that populations are increasingly responding to both politicians and policies with cynicism, disillusion and open disbelief. In the short term, this makes it difficult for governments to deliver policies and services collaboratively and effectively; and over the years, this growing scepticism feeds into the anti-establishment feelings that lie behind political upsets such as the Brexit vote and Donald Trump’s election.

Smith is the Global Director of Marketing and Communications at the Centre for Public Impact (CPI), an international foundation backed by consultancy BCG – and the knowledge partner of this year’s Global Government Summit. The CPI has been researching trust along with its relationship to legitimacy and, ultimately, impact. But before setting out its findings, she wanted to get the delegates’ views. Why is trust declining?

### High expectations, dashed

The failure of some governments to keep their promises badly damages trust, said one delegate. Another noted that the growth of social media – and the increasing desperation of struggling mainstream press outlets – means that any perceived failure on the part of government is instantly met with a deluge of online outrage. And these two factors are closely linked to a third challenge: the fact that populations, though cynical about governments’ ability to deliver, still expect them to solve big problems – so politicians are often tempted to promise results that may be beyond their reach. “People are asking governments to do more and more difficult things, which are quite often not within their control,” said one delegate – citing the expectations that governments should be able to reduce obesity levels or stamp out online bullying.

All too often, delegates suggested, politicians are tempted by public pressure and the prospect of electoral advantage into making promises that can’t be kept – prompting an online

scouring by angry social media users, and a further decline in trust in government.

Even in the developing world, public expectations are rising fast. “To begin with, people just wanted peace and security,” commented Kong Sophy, Director General of Cambodia’s General Department of the Civil Service. “But when we have peace, people focus on education and health & safety standards and transport. The needs of the people increase from one day to the next.”

### A formula for rebuilding trust

To retain or regain people’s trust, said Harriet Loos – a Senior Research Associate at CPI – governments must succeed in creating the impacts desired by their populations. And to achieve this, they must master three fields known by CPI as the ‘public impact fundamentals’: policy, action, and legitimacy.

Of these, she explained, policy means applying expertise, evidence and design skills to create the right strategy; action means delivering that strategy successfully, with good management and results measurement; and legitimacy means widespread public recognition that the government has the right to deliver its strategy. “All three are mutually reinforcing and need to exist simultaneously,” she added. “It’s not a matter of doing the policy, doing the action and then tagging on legitimacy at the end; it’s about building all three into the system.”

The delegates appeared to like the model – but several pointed out that of these three characteristics, legitimacy is often edged out of the limelight. “Most of the conversations in government are on turning policy into action: a deliverability issue and an implementation issue, as opposed to the legitimacy issue,” observed John Manzoni, the UK’s Chief Executive of the Civil Service. “It’s a very interesting conversation; it’s just not very live.” Absolutely, responded Smith: “It’s our hypothesis that legitimacy is still the least understood and well-embedded of these.” Most conversations focus on policy or action, she added; yet legitimacy, which encompasses trust, is just as essential to creating a positive impact.

“And the implicit assumption is that while trust and legitimacy take a long time to build, they can be lost in an instant,” commented Peter Ong, Head of the Civil Service of Singapore. Smith agreed: “It’s the hardest thing to get and the quickest

thing to go—and when it goes, it can be a catalyst for crisis across everything else that you're doing.”

### The tactics of trust

Moving from the theoretical to the practical, the delegates discussed the tools and practices that can be used to strengthen trust in government. Tackling corruption is one obvious answer, said a delegate. Ministers must keep their promises, commented another; and that means avoiding making promises that may prove hard to keep. But they must also make the right promises, said a third: headline targets must be carefully designed, ensuring that fulfilling their criteria will meet citizens' interests and address their concerns. “We delivered X number of schools and X number of hospitals, and it's really not improved education or health outcomes,” the speaker commented. “The lesson is to spend a vast proportion of your time on getting the outcome measures right.”

Communication is crucial to this relationship; and Vincent Chin, Senior Partner and Global Leader of BCG's Public Sector Practice, highlighted a Paraguayan plan to feed information back to individuals on how the government is working to meet their needs. “If what really matters to you is education and transport, you'd tell the government that—and it would communicate back to say: ‘These are the things we're doing on those two points,’” he said. “Technology makes it possible to address the interests of particular individuals.”

Governments find it hard to retain this focus on the interests and needs of citizens, another delegate argued, because civil servants spend too much time trying to predict and meet ministers' priorities. “If you're not careful, as a leader in the public sector, one finds oneself looking upwards all the time,” he commented. “If the leadership of a big organisation starts looking upwards too much, pretty soon you've got the entire organisation looking upwards. And that's where the delivery problem starts, because organisations can never deliver anything if they're always looking upwards.”

Senior civil servants, the delegate argued, need to take a stronger line on defining how policies are delivered: “I believe that the top of the civil service needs to be much, much more robust than we have been; it's very easy to get into the habit of serving upwards and not having enough leadership and confidence of our own,” he continued. “In the end, to get implementation and delivery done, that is the domain of experience. The politicians can tell you the what, but the civil service absolutely needs to own the how—and I don't think they do today.”

### Does transparency bring clarity?

One approach touted as a way to restore trust in public authorities is that of ‘open government’: the principle of publishing as much information as possible on decision-making process and operations, thus both providing transparency and explaining how decisions have been made.

New Zealand is introducing an open government policy, the country's Head of State Services Peter Hughes explained: officials will “consistently and proactively release key government decision-making documents, publishing them on websites on a regular basis.” The “free and frank” advice given by civil servants to ministers will not be included, he explained—but the government believes that publishing cabinet papers and other documents associated with the final decision-making process will build public confidence in the final decisions.

“The power of routinising things is quite profound,” he commented, adding that when documents are “dragged out of government through the Official Information Act”, media coverage is often sensationalist. “But if you put them up on a website on a regular basis, no-one's much interested!”

Other delegates, however, raised concerns about the plan. It can lead to officials avoiding creating a written paper-trail, said one—“so advice is not frank and comprehensive; it is sanitised. And difficult issues are dealt with orally rather than in written briefings.” There is also, they continued, little evidence that publishing this material increases trust in government.

The CPI's Loos backed the principle of open government, but urged caution about its impact on public perceptions. “The goals of the open government movement start way too high,” she argued. “It's not going to provide the sort of lift that fixes the trust problem—but it's obviously still a part of the solution.”

The important thing, commented O'Donnell, is to provide information in a format that's useful and relevant to readers: “If you genuinely want the public involved, you'd have to think quite carefully about how you provide information in a way that people can use.”

### The three C's

Peter Ong, Singapore's Head of Civil Service, had a pithy approach to building trust in government. “In a very simple equation, trust equals competence plus character plus connectedness,” he said.

Of these, he explained, competence is about “performance legitimacy”: the people's belief in their government's ability to deliver outcomes. Character is about “integrity and values”: public confidence that “you're doing this in their interest, rather than your own”. And connectedness is about having “a relationship with citizens—through engagement, co-participation. If you don't have that relationship, you seem very distant.”

To meet the public's expectations on ‘competence’, CPI's Smith would add, it's helpful to have clear, relevant impact goals and realistic, public success metrics. “Everyone wants good outcomes; but if you can say how far along that journey you are, then you can begin a more grown-up conversation about the barriers to achieving your goals and why those problems remain,” she said. “It's not always easy to work these things out in public—but I think you'll be surprised how understanding people can be”.



Dr Ali Hamsa, Malaysia

## Session 4: achieving strategic coherence in government

Most democratic governments struggle to get delivery departments to work together in the pursuit of cross-cutting goals – but without such collaboration, it's almost impossible to tackle complex social problems in an effective and efficient way. Knowing this, governments have tried a wide range of tools and systems to foster integrated, coordinated cross-government action; the Summit heard from the heads of two civil services currently immersed in radical reforms to strengthen 'strategic coherence'.

### Lessons from Malaysia

First up was Malaysia: Dr Ali Hamsa, Chief Secretary to the Government, explained that historically many of the country's 25 ministries and big agencies had a tendency to work in 'silos'. "Everyone is an owner of one ministry, and they forget they're all working for the same nation," he recalled.

Then in 2009, Malaysia adopted its 'National Blue Ocean Strategy' (NBOS). Since then, key officials from across government have come together at monthly summits to develop and implement cross-cutting projects designed to benefit the nation as a whole. Over 100 initiatives have been commissioned to date, said Hamsa – all of them judged to be high impact, low cost, and capable of speedy delivery.

The NBOS programme's first success was to open up military bases for use in training police officers, averting massive



John Manzoni, United Kingdom

spending on dedicated police facilities. And the army has since allowed the prison department to set up small prison units on their bases, providing secure training and rehabilitation facilities for low-risk offenders – and producing dramatic falls in reoffending rates.

Growing collaboration has also fostered the creation of 18 'Urban Transformation Centres': one-stop offices offering 35-70 services from a range of departments and open from 8.00-22.00 every day. UTCs proved so popular that the concept has now been extended to create 11 Rural Transformation Centres, and some 213 Mini Rural Transformation Centres offering a narrower range of services. The next step, Hamsa remarked, will be to have "one front office, but back offices with different functions": the goal is to offer a single interface around complex events, such as the birth of a child, that often require citizens to interact with various government departments.

Malaysia has also made use of taskforces, recruiting businesspeople and top officials onto a panel charged with improving the ease of doing business. Meeting monthly, this group has also introduced some big reforms – such as creating a single corporate identification number, recognised across government, for each business.

Meanwhile, the government created a mixed public/private-sector team named the Performance Management and Delivery Unit (PEMANDU): setting key performance indicators (KPIs) for all senior officials and ministers, the team tries to get people across government working together on shared priorities. These "people-centric" KPIs include, for example, addressing the rising cost of living and improving education results – and the prime minister, noted Hamsa, goes on national TV every year to report on progress against them.

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“Everyone is an owner of one ministry, and they forget they're all working for the same nation.”

Dr Ali Hamsa – Chief Secretary to the Government, Malaysia



Heiki Loot, Estonia

## Lessons from Estonia

Even much smaller countries often struggle to create strategic coherence, commented Heiki Loot – the State Secretary of Estonia. An OECD report into governance in Estonia and Finland, he explained, found “a very high level of fragmentation and decentralisation of the government system” – prompting radical action by the three governments in power since 2014.

All three governments decided on between four and six strategic priorities, and attached to each a set of “concrete actions with clear responsibilities and deadlines: a deliverable, official programme which binds and guides all the ministers.” Meanwhile, Loot explained, the budgeting system was reformed – building spending decisions around these key priorities rather than departmental structures or remits.

Estonia even plans to remove departments from the annual Budget; its agencies have already been taken out. Traditional, organization-based funding allocations are being replaced in the Budget with policy fields and programmes – fostering a shift from inter-departmental struggles over cash towards a general rush to get involved in cross-governmental programmes. A good relationship between the central ‘Government Office’ and the Ministry of Finance is crucial to success here, Loot commented: “It’s very important to invest a lot in this relationship so that your priorities are not just words, but are supported by the finances.”

The country also moved to ensure that ministerial roles reflect the government’s priorities. The list of Cabinet positions used to be defined by law, Loot explained: “We abandoned the rule ‘one ministry, one minister’, and allowed two ministers to run one ministry with separate responsibilities, or one minister to have responsibilities in different ministries.” For example, a minister for public administration was appointed to the Ministry of Finance to lead on local government reform, and the minister for business and IT sits across both the economics and foreign affairs departments.

Loot now wants to remove some of the legislative barriers to departmental reorganisations, permitting government to shift functions and teams around as its top priorities change. Moving the ‘silos’ around is a “blunt weapon” in tackling the problems of silo-working, he acknowledged, “but not having it is even worse.”



Akin Ak, Turkey and Vincent Chin, BCG

And Estonia is working on plans to centralise some back office services, reducing the administrative burden associated with transferring staff and responsibilities between departments.

Another important reform involves moving four key departments into a single building, in the hope of fostering closer partnership working on policymaking and service delivery, hastening the shift to shared back office services, and exploring the potential for modern working practices such as ‘hot desking’. This project, ‘org lab’, provides “an ideal platform to experiment with these new practices,” comments Loot. “And if successful, it could be extended to the whole of government.”

Like Malaysia, Estonia also uses taskforces to tackle issues that straddle departmental responsibilities – always ensuring that they have the right accountability arrangements and budgetary influence to bring about real change. And finally, the country has introduced substantive reforms to the recruitment and management of senior officials – including fixed five-year terms, 360-degree appraisals, and the provision of carefully-tailored training and coaching designed to build both leadership skills and team spirit. The goal, says Loot, has been to create mobility across the top jobs and “overturn the so-called specialist culture, which favours the silo mentality.”

## Reactions and responses

The delegates were impressed with Malaysia’s initiatives, some of which are more innovative and established than equivalent agendas within the governments of industrialised countries. But it was Estonia’s reforms which really wowed the group, many of whom are struggling with issues that the tiny Baltic state is tackling head-on.

On Estonia’s changes to managing senior officials, for example, one delegate commented that “people in the public services are used to having a title in office, and holding that until they see an opportunity for a promotion to another title in another office. I’ve wrestled with how we break that, so that people think of themselves as working on projects” rather than for institutions.

When interdepartmental projects do get off the ground, they continued, team members often remain based within their own departments. “But it seems to me still quite important to have the human interaction,” they said. “I think we need to be spatially



*Peter Hughes, New Zealand*

a bit more flexible, and to be able to move people to teams and locations. There is something here that I think we all need to repeat, to emulate in some way.”

Another delegate was hugely enthused by Loot’s ambition – and by his success in delivering changes. “I’m sitting here in awe of you! If I could do half of this, it would be fantastic,” they said. “You’ve just spurred me on to have another go. Changing the shape of cabinet and getting the Budget lined up with agreed priorities – that would be Nirvana!”



*KONG Sophy, Cambodia*

Summing up, Singapore’s Peter Ong pointed out that “every public service is essentially an extremely large ecosystem, and achieving coherence requires the thoughtful and deliberate identification of priorities – accompanied, critically, by the alignment of human resources, budgets and accountability.”

Estonia’s and Malaysia’s presentations had “given us much food for thought, and triggered lively discussions,” he added. “This underscores the value of learning from each other at a platform like the Global Government Summit.”

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“ This underscores the value of learning from each other at a platform like the Global Government Summit.”

**Peter Ong – Head of Civil Service, Prime Minister’s Office, Singapore**



*Serge Dupont, Canada*

## Session 5: taking digital government to the next level

The day's final session kicked off with a presentation by Mikhail Pryadilnikov, Deputy Director of the Analytic Center for the Russian Government. In recent years, he explained, Russia has set up 2,600 'multifunction service centres' – each of them offering a range of services, from benefits to passport applications. Meanwhile, it has also been developing digital platforms that offer more convenient and rapid access to services. However, behind these new access points lie administrative and business processes that remain largely untouched by digital technologies: "The big problem is to get all the steps efficiently digitised," he said. "The priority is to deal with life situations: if your baby is born, you need several solutions at the same time. So one of our goals is to strengthen the common solutions from different agencies."

The government is now trying to integrate its digital services with the multifunction service centres, creating a single e-government service platform used by both federal and regional bodies. And Pryadilnikov looked ahead to a future in which, drawing on the ever-growing volume of data held on citizens, government services adapt in real time to meet people's individual needs and reflect changes over time.

Rules, regulations, even laws could "change quickly based on citizens' needs", he suggested, with citizens amending texts using a Wikipedia-style open editing forum. The new platform could even permit citizens and businesses to provide services alongside public agencies. There would, Pryadilnikov accepted, need to be "some essential moderation of this process and protection of minorities; some safeguards in the system, so that it doesn't move quickly because of an emotional reaction or inconsistent information." But the use of digital technologies, he argued, could pave the way for a radically different relationship between government and governed: "The government is trying to move out of the provision of services," he said. "It provides a platform for users to resolve issues – so there's a lot more private provision in this concept of government, and more citizens participating to solve their problems."



*Mikhail Pryadilnikov, Russia*

### Defining data

To give individual citizens personalized, responsive services cutting across departmental boundaries, government needs a single view of each citizen – but as one delegate pointed out, few governments have managed to impose a single set of data standards and definitions on all their departments and agencies. "It took us a year and a half to get a 'canonical' register of countries in the world," he said, meaning a single list used by every government body. "I really worry about this, and I just can't see my way through it."

An established, universally-recognised identity verification system is probably key to the solution, replied another delegate – and if this system holds data in a certain format, then government bodies will eventually have to fall in line around that standard. Pryadilnikov was more concerned about the risk of 'digital exclusion' facing those unable or unwilling to plug into this emerging digital world: "If everything is in the platform and we've got rid of traditional departments and some frontline delivery services, imagine the level of inequality facing those who are not on the platform," he said. "That's the real danger with this model."

Others, though, raised concerns about the public's willingness to grant governments the control over personal data required to bring this model to fruition. In the UK, pointed out Nadine Smith – Global Director of Marketing and Communications at the Centre for Public Impact – "some people still don't want their health data shared with other parts of the health service. You can't get seamless services in one-stop shops if we're not happy for services to be sharing information about us, so we have to first demonstrate the benefits and ensure that people feel in control."

### A data shared...

People will need to give their consent to departments sharing data, Pryadilnikov acknowledged, adding that the banks might prove valuable intermediaries. They could collect data from citizens, request any information required from government, and offer services such as company licenses: "Why not allow banks to provide services? They already know so much about citizens," he said.



Matthias Freundlieb, Germany

Estonia has found another solution, said the country's State Secretary Heiki Loot: each citizen controls their own data in an online platform, and they can see at a glance which public bodies have accessed the information. "This transparency has a very good preventive role, and calms fears on the citizens' side," he said, adding that after a few high-profile sackings of erring officials, public confidence in the system is strong.

In time, another delegate argued, people will have to accept some compromises in their privacy and control over personal data, in the interests of a well-functioning government and efficient public services. "I can see a world where you'll have a health card with a chip, and you won't be able to go to a hospital without it," he said. "Your privacy should not trump every other value or public policy objective; it's important, but it's not a supra-objective."

In the end, argued Smith, people will accept some loss of privacy if there are attractive benefits to using digital services. Governments are often baffled as to why citizens are happy to share purchasing information with supermarkets in exchange for small discounts, or to divulge personal information on Facebook in the hope of attracting 'likes'; and Smith suggested that the solutions may lie in expanding the benefits of using digital services whilst giving people more control over their data.

"We need to think about situations where we can make things easier for people," she argued. "When you talk about wholesale transfers of data from one department to another, people understandably freak out because – in contrast to Facebook – they have no control over their profile. But what if, when your baby was born, you didn't have to fill in endless forms and wait weeks or months to get your birth certificate from one place, your passport from another? What if you automatically received



Nadine Smith, CPI

your birth certificate and passport? Then people might be more willing to say: 'I see the benefits of government holding and sharing my information.'"

### ...is a problem halved

Attitudes will change over time, argued former UK Cabinet Secretary Lord O'Donnell: "The younger generation have a very different view about privacy in some respects," he said. "I think this will move much more quickly than we think. We'll have setbacks with privacy issues, but ultimately it will be so much more efficient that people will desire to be part of the system."

Perhaps so, responded another delegate – but they struggle to see the path leading from here to there. "The really interesting question in my mind is not so much the future – because I think we can all more or less see that – but it's how you move government from its legacy systems to that future."

The introduction of disruptive technologies in the private sector, they continued, has created many bankruptcies as incumbent firms are pushed aside by new companies with a brand new, digitally-based business model. "But we can't afford to let that happen in government; and no government is prepared to double up and build a new system whilst still running the old one. So that journey is the conundrum, not the end state."

Absolutely, responded O'Donnell. Going back to the life event of a birth, he suggested that people could be offered tailored advice and support – using data on the needs and experiences of others in similar situations to lead people towards solutions that are right for them. "But this needs departments that are very much focused around the citizen's desires, not built around our old-fashioned ways of doing things," he said. "I think that's where we'll be, but it's incredibly hard to see how we get from here to there."

“When you talk about wholesale transfers of data from one department to another, people understandably freak out because – in contrast to Facebook – they have no control over their profile.”

**Nadine Smith – Global Director of Marketing and Communications, CPI**



Peter Ong, Singapore



Lord Gus O'Donnell, United Kingdom

## Conclusions

As delegates considered their experiences at the Summit, a few key messages emerged. “It’s a huge reminder that, amidst all the daily pressures, you need to create space to think about the medium- to long-term,” said Serge Dupont, the Deputy Clerk of Canada’s Privy Council. And Elizabeth Kelly, a Deputy Secretary overseeing governance issues in Australia’s Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, praised the delegates’ breadth of experience: “The diversity of the group has provided great richness,” she commented.

“We have a very active dialogue with New Zealand, Canada and the UK, but it’s been wonderful to get that broader exposure to different systems – to Russia, Estonia, Turkey, Cambodia and Malaysia,” Kelly continued. “The idea that a government of a particular style only has something in common with other governments of the same style is redundant: across very different governments, we’ve had common issues – and this conference builds that understanding.”

Nadine Smith, Global Director of Marketing and Communications for the Centre for Public Impact, the event’s knowledge partner, had observed how useful – and how rare – it is for top officials to gather and informally discuss common challenges. “It’s hugely valuable for them to hear in a safe space – an environment that they trust – about what’s really working and what isn’t working, and the issues and challenges that they’re struggling with,” she said. “If anything, they could probably do with having that open conversation more often.”

Indeed, Mikhail Pryadilnikov – Deputy Director of the Analytic Center for the Russian Government – really valued to chance

to talk openly with his peers. “This event always connects the people who are actually doing the reforms, and not the theorists and experts and consultants,” he said. “That’s unique. In one day, you can learn more from each other than you can through reading papers or talking to consultants or doing research.” The topics were strong too, he added, and “all the participants were at the top of the field: generally this forum brings high-level people, but I particularly enjoyed this one.”

The 2017 event had, concluded Head of the Singapore Civil Service Peter Ong, been an “exceptional summit”: for him the diversity of delegates, and the quality of their “thoughtful and frank” presentations, had fostered an “open conversation, a free flow of ideas, and a robust and fruitful set of discussions”. And as people left for their homes scattered around the globe, they took with them a new set of contacts, ideas and concepts – including emerging plans for a new taskforce on strategic coherence, and at least one visit to see Estonia’s remarkable digital and organisational reforms.

“Without a doubt, this has been the best Summit that I’ve been to – and that reflects the diversity and the quality of the people in the group,” said Lord O’Donnell, the UK’s former Cabinet Secretary. The topics were important too: hearing from Germany and Turkey about their experiences of migration was fascinating, O’Donnell said, and the Estonians’ work on strategic coherence “blew us all away”.

Each country brought something to the table, he concluded. And every delegate was leaving with a set of email addresses and a to-do list, enabling them to build on their peers’ experiences – and helping them to avoid making the same mistakes. “We all come here to learn,” said O’Donnell, looking for ideas that “we can steal with pride.”

“Without a doubt, this has been the best Summit that I’ve been to – and that reflects the diversity and the quality of the people in the group.”

**Lord Gus O’Donnell – Former Cabinet Secretary and Head of the UK Civil Service, House of Lords, UK Parliament, United Kingdom**

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