

PRESS BRIEFING ON THE WEST AFRICAN EITI CONFERENCE SCHEDULED TO HOLD ON SEPTEMBER 11 & 12, 2008, AT ECOWAS SECRETARIAT, ABUJA

1. PREAMBLE

Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) is a unique, multi-stakeholder organization established to promote transparency, accountability and due diligence in the management of revenues from extractive industries in Nigeria. It is the national chapter of a global movement, Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), with a secretariat in Oslo, which is committed to making resource wealth a blessing, rather than a curse. Created in 2004, and firmly institutionalized in 2007, NEITI is far ahead many other countries in the world in the implementation of the principles of EITI. Nigeria, through NEITI, is the only EITI implementing country that has conducted a comprehensive audit of the oil and gas sector, covering a period going back to seven years (1999-2005) thus opening up a hitherto opaque industry, and throwing up immense information and data about the industry concerning its operational strengths and weaknesses. It is the only EITI implementing country that has produced a strategic framework for remedying the deficiencies in the regulation, management and control of the financial, physical, and process dimensions of the industry, as revealed by the audit process. Above all, it is the only EITI implementing country that has codified the EITI principles and processes into a national law, thus giving legal validity and force, to what began as an ad hoc voluntary process. It is also the only EITI implementing country that has established and sustained an effective permanent secretariat to provide technical and managerial support to the multi-stakeholder governing board that drives the EITI process. In short, in the area of promoting transparency in the extractive industry Nigeria, through NEITI, is clearly a world leader.

2. WHY HOLD A WEST AFRICAN EITI CONFERENCE

The West Africa EITI conference is to take place on September 11 and 12, 2008, at the ECOWAS premises, in Asokoro District of Abuja. It follows

immediately after the African Regional Meeting (ARM) of Publish What You Pay (PWYP), an international Non-Governmental Organization deeply involved in driving EITI at the global and national levels. The objectives of the West Africa EITI Conference are:

- *To disseminate information and deepen public knowledge and awareness about EITI, NEITI and the Extractive Industries*
- *To inaugurate and sustain a regular forum for sharing experiences on transparency in the governance of resources among EITI implementing countries in West Africa in particular and Africa in general*
- *To encourage the acquisition of information and data, and the development of a reservoir of knowledge, on transparency tools*
- *To establish synergy with professional and academic institutions, as well as non-governmental organizations that have objectives that either complement, or overlap with, those of NEITI*
- *To secure commitment by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to support, fund and host a unit, programme or centre on resource watch in West Africa*
- *To secure commitment from the African Union (AU) to pass a resolution in support of the EITI, and also to support the draft UN resolution on EITI, sponsored by, among other countries, Azerbaijan and Nigeria, leaders among EITI implementing countries.*

3. FUNDERS AND PARTICIPANTS

The West Africa EITI conference is being funded by the Federal Government of Nigeria, the Government of Norway, through the Royal Norwegian Embassy, the World Bank, the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom Government, through, the Coalition for Change (C4C), and the Government of the Netherlands. It has wide and extensive support from the EITI secretariat in Oslo, PWYP, Transparency International, Global Witness, Revenue Watch Institute, the Council for Registered Engineers, the civil society community in Nigeria, and the regulatory agencies in the extractive industries.

We expect the following to speak at, and/or participate in, the conference: His Excellency, President Umaru Musa Yar' Ardua, the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Ambassador Baba Gana Kingibe, Minister for Federal Capital Territory, Dr. Aliyu Moddibo, Minister for Mines; Minister of State for Petroleum and Minister of State for

Energy. ECOWAS President, Dr Ibn Chambas, Head of EITI Secretariat in Oslo, Mr. Jonas Moberg, a Minister from the Government of the United Kingdom, representatives of the Norwegian Government, the Government of the Netherlands, the Governments of Botswana, Ghana, Liberia, Guinea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mauritania, Sao Tome and Principe, as well as representatives of such international organizations as the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, African Union, and Southern Africa Development Cooperation and Coordination. Also representatives of many international and Nigerian national non-governmental and other civil society organizations will be there either as speakers or as heads of strategic break out sessions.

The end of the conference will be marked with a closing “thank you” dinner, on the 12th of September, 2008.

This Press Conference is meant to officially announce the event and to solicit support of ladies and gentle men of the mass media to please give adequate publicity to the proceedings of the conference.

4. BENEFITS TO THE NATION

NEITI will emerge from the conference, a stronger and more effective organization. Nigeria and Nigerians will benefit immensely from the knowledge that will be produced and shared at the conference. The success of the West Africa EITI conference will go a long way in increasing the capacity of NEITI to perform its functions and fulfill its mandate. And the mandate of NEITI is critical for the maximization of revenues from the extractive industries, and their judicious application to the enhancement of the welfare of all Nigerians.

Thank you for your presence, your patience and your attention
H. Assisi Asobie
Chairman, NSWG/NEITI
September 04, 2008