

# NSWG Aligns Mandate with Citizens' Welfare

After three days of deep reflection on its mandate, the recently constituted board of the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) emerged from a Strategy Retreat with a commitment to tactical initiatives tailored towards improving the welfare of Nigerians.

“NEITI will be dedicated to ensuring that revenues from the extractive sector translate to roads, water, hospitals, schools, and electricity for all Nigerians,” said Professor Assisi Asobie, the NEITI Chairperson. “This is not only the expectations of most Nigerians, it is also the only way we can add real value.”

“Recharged with this retreat, I think we are better prepared to act fast and make real impact,” added Professor Asobie at the end of the retreat, which was held from 13 to 15 March 2008 at the Mirage Hotel, Calabar, Cross River State with the support of the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

It would be recalled that the NEITI board was inaugurated on January 29, 2008 by President Umaru Yar'Adua in accordance with the NEITI Act (2007). To ensure a strategic approach to its work, the board decided to hold a retreat that would provide board members an opportunity for orientation, reflection and planning.

At the end of the Strategy Retreat, NEITI board members resolved to “cultivate a culture of transparency, accountability, due process and zero-tolerance of corruption in Nigeria’s extractive industries for the benefit of Nigerians.”

Apart from pledging to sustain the momentum generated by its predecessor, the new board also resolved to create an effective organization that would develop an independent framework for revenue determination and regular auditing, improve the institutional capacities of regulatory agencies, forge tactical synergies with other anti-corruption agencies, and strengthen the capacity of civic groups and citizens to demand accountable and pro-people governance.

Facilitated by Mr. Peter Hyson, a consultant on strategic planning, the retreat featured ten presentations on different areas that impact NEITI’s operations. The presentations included: “Promoting Transparency through Transformational Leadership,” by Dr. Berhanu Tadesse, a UNDP consultant; “Enforcing the NEITI Act: Strategies and Processes” by Mr. Emmanuel Akomaye, Secretary of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission; and “Innovative Tools for Promoting Transparency” by Mr. Aduche Wokocho of Transparency in Nigeria.

Other papers were: “Understanding and Operationalising the NEITI Act” by Mr. Festus Keyamo; “Challenges of the Audit Process” by Mr. Chris Nurse and Mr. Sam Afemikhe of the Hart Group; “Rethinking NEITI Communications Strategy” by Mr. Yinka Craig; and “History, Scope, Structure and Issues in EITI in Nigeria,” by Dr. Bright Okogu, Director-General of the Budget Office and former acting Executive Secretary of NEITI.

The presentations were followed by interactive question and answer sessions. The retreat later broke into three syndicate groups, which later reported to plenary. The syndicate sessions were on: NEITI Strategic Framework; NEITI Code of Ethics; and Effective Organizational Structure. These sessions were facilitated by professionals in the three areas.