

## NEITI Sets Up Operations Strategy Committee

The Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) has constituted a strategy committee to work out modalities that would bring its operations in line with enabling law.

The Committee set up last Tuesday by the National Stakeholders Working Group (NSWG), the governing board of the agency, at its first meeting after receiving the statutory backing, is also expected to devise strategies for increased transparency in the management of oil, gas and mining revenues in Nigeria.

Former President, Olusegun Obasanjo signed the NEITI Act on May 28, 2007 after it was passed by the National Assembly.

"With the law in place, there is need to strategize on how to move forward, while sustaining the momentum for extractive revenue transparency in Nigeria," said NEITI Chairman, Dr. Siyan Malomo, who added: "It is important to keep Nigeria in the exalted leadership position in this vital area."

NEITI is the Nigerian version of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), a global initiative aimed at ensuring that resources from the extractive industries contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development.

More than 20 resource-rich countries in Africa, Europe, Asia and Latin America have signed on to EITI so far.

Nigeria joined the initiative in 2004 and has been widely acknowledged as a model for others. With the passage and signing of the NEITI Act, Nigeria has the added honour of being the first country where EITI is backed by an enabling law.

The NEITI Act, among other things, stipulates the objectives, functions, and workings of the agency as well as the composition of its board, and sanctions for defaulting oil, gas and mining companies/agencies.

The Strategy Committee has been mandated to evolve modalities for the smooth implementation of the Act. The committee has also been charged with responsibility of reviewing the operations of NEITI so far; examine the mission, vision and strategic objectives of the agency and proposing new directions where necessary.

The committee is made up of the following members: Dr. Siyan Malomo, chairman of NEITI; Dr. Imo Itsuelli of Dubril Oil; Ms Ifueko Omoigui, Chairperson of Federal Inland Revenue Service; Dr. Asisi Asobie, President of Transparency in Nigeria; Mr. Olusegun Adeniyi, SA to the President on Public Communication; Fred Nelson of Chevron; Gbite Adeniji of AELEX; and Stan Rerri and Waziri Adio of NEITI Secretariat.

Meanwhile, the NEITI board has set aside August 22 and 23, 2007 for the North East Road-show, which will be held in Bauchi, Bauchi State, as the last of the zonal road-shows, designed to raise awareness among Nigerians about NEITI and its mandate and receive crucial feedback from them.

To further increase public knowledge and ensure national ownership, the zonal road-shows will be followed by town-hall meetings in local government areas across the country, starting from the South-South geo-political zone.

Also, NEITI is planning a roundtable meeting with key government agencies on firming up remediation efforts on the lapses identified in Nigeria's petroleum industry by the first comprehensive audit of Nigeria's petroleum industry.

Commissioned by NEITI, the audit covered the period 1999 to 2004 and was conducted by an international consortium led by the Hart Group of United Kingdom.

To ensure that the identified lapses are fixed, a comprehensive remediation programme has been drawn up and approved.

It covers five key areas: developing a revenue-flow interface among government agencies; improving Nigeria's oil and gas metering infrastructure; developing a uniform approach to cost determination; building human and physical capacities of critical government agencies; and improving overall governance of the oil and gas sector. Detailed terms of reference and work-plans are expected from the roundtable.