

**RESPONSE BY THE CHAIRMAN OF NEITI, PROFESSOR ASSISI ASOBIE, TO THE SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA, ALAHJI UMARU MUSA YAR'ADUA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE INAUGURATION OF THE NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS WORKING GROUP (NSWG) OF THE NIGERIA EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES TRANSPARENCY INITIATIVE (NEITI) ON TUESDAY, JANUARY 29, 2007.**

Your Excellency,

On behalf of all the members of the National Stakeholders Working Group (NSWG) of the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) and the staff of the NEITI Secretariat, I thank you. I thank you first for reconstituting the NEITI-NSWG in accordance with the provisions of the NEITI Act 2007. Second, I thank you for giving us an opportunity to serve Nigeria and Nigerians, as well as Africa and the world, in the capacity specified in our letters of appointment and in the law. We also use this opportunity to acknowledge the historic pioneering role played by the last NSWG under the courageous and creative leadership of Mrs. Oby Ezekwesili, and later piloted by the highly technically competent and stoutly patriotic Dr. Silyan Malomo. The leaders and members of the former NSWG put Nigeria in the lead in the global EITI movement. It is on their shoulders that we stand today to begin the process of continuing what they started.

Our mandate in respect of Nigeria's extractive industries may simply be summarized as **TADPACC**: Ensuring

*Transparency in revenue payments*

*Accountability in revenue receipts*

*Due Process in revenue payments*

*Anti-Corruption in determination of payments, receipts, posting of revenue and application of resources*

*Compliance with EITI principles*

We cannot perform these tasks effectively, if we ourselves are corrupt. We cannot fulfill our mandate satisfactorily if members of the NSWG, as well as our constituencies, and Staff of the NEITI Secretariat, are lacking in transparency, that is, if we are deficient in openness, honesty, truthfulness, and public spiritedness. In short, Mr. President, if we are to succeed in this crucial national assignment, each and every one of us here must possess and display, at all times, the highest level of integrity. We must pledge, right from the onset, not to succumb to the social malady which commonly afflicts Nigeria's public boards and committees, an ailment, which Transparency In Nigeria, has aptly described as **AIDS, Acquired Integrity Deficiency Syndrome**. I hereby pledge, on behalf of myself and all members of the new NSWG, that we shall be indisputably transparent in all our dealings; not only shall we shun all corrupt practices and abuse of power, we will

be, and will remain, epitomes of incorruptibility. That is the only way in which we can lead by example.

Our leadership shall be *transformational*, rather than transactional. We shall work to effect a fundamental shift in the deep orientation of all stakeholders in the extractive industries, in the way they see the world and the way they define the future and what is possible.

We shall implement the NEITI Act faithfully. We shall have a work plan, an action plan, which is embedded in a strategic plan. We will not however neglect outstanding issues, such as the remediation of deficiencies and incapacities of certain public agencies charged with regulating the oil and gas industry, as identified by the NEITI auditors in their reports which cover the years 1999-2005. Our operational philosophy shall be informed by the assumption that the “answer lies within”, that each one of us is the decisive element in whether we succeed or fail. It is our personal approaches that will create the climate and shape the environment within which we will operate. I believe that, individually and collectively, we possess the tremendous power to make life joyous or miserable for our people. We have a choice to be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration for Nigerian people

We shall always remember that NEITI is a national expression of the global EITI movement. So far, Nigeria has played a leadership position in that movement. To sustain that vanguard role, we are determined to ensure that NEITI translates into access to pipe-borne water, improved health services, more access to higher quality of education, more solid rural roads, steady supply of electricity, for the vast majority of Nigerians, especially those living in rural areas. NEITI is empty and meaningless unless it results in higher living standards and better livelihood opportunities for Nigerians. We are determined too to ensure that NEITI transcends periodic auditing and makes public disclosures of payments, receipts, and application of revenue from natural resources a daily, weekly, monthly and yearly regular and timely routine for extractive industries companies and Nigerian governments alike. We are also determined to ensure that the revenues accruing to the nation from extractive industries are maximize, while the costs borne by the nation in terms of expenditure on the sector, environmental damage and associated health hazards are minimized.

Once more, Mr. President, we thank you for giving us the opportunity to serve our nation in this capacity. The challenges ahead are enormous; the public expectations are very high. But I am convinced that we shall prove our mettle. We will succeed.

Professor Assisi Asobie

Chairman, For and behalf of NSWG/NEITI

29<sup>th</sup> January, 2008.