

MEDIA PRESS CONFERENCE SPEECH

BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, NEITI, Dr. Orji Ogbonnaya Orji

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STRENGTHENING TRANSPARENCY, DEEPENING ACCOUNTABILITY~THE NEITI JOURNEY

Distinguished Members of the Press, Esteemed Stakeholders, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I bring you greetings from the chair and members of NEITI National Stakeholders working group.

It is my privilege to welcome you to NEITI House today as we reflect on the progress we have made in advancing transparency and accountability in Nigeria's extractive sector. This engagement is not just about highlighting achievements; it is about reaffirming our unwavering commitment to ensuring that Nigeria's natural resources work for the benefit of all citizens.

A Challenging Beginning—Repositioning NEITI for Impact

When I assumed office as the Executive Secretary of NEITI, we inherited an institution at a crossroads. NEITI was grappling with serious operational, institutional, and governance challenges that threatened its effectiveness. These included:

- The absence of a functional National Stakeholders Working Group (NSWG)-a key requirement for sustaining Nigeria's membership in the global Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI).

- The threat of eviction from a rented office space.
- An aging, top-heavy, and disoriented workforce in urgent need of revitalization.
- Financial constraints, stakeholder apathy, and weak institutional capacity.
- Poor program content, policy focus, and declining public confidence.

Beyond these internal challenges, the global extractive industry was undergoing rapid transformation. Issues such as energy transition, beneficial ownership transparency, contract disclosure, and the implementation of Nigeria's Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) were reshaping the sector. NEITI needed to adapt—not just to remain relevant but to lead the charge for greater accountability in extractive governance.

The Journey—Key Reforms and Achievements

Faced with these realities, we pursued a deliberate strategy to reposition NEITI as a stronger, independent, and globally respected transparency institution. Some of our major achievements include:

1. Enhancing Industry Reporting & Public Disclosure

- Improved the scope, quality, and timeliness of NEITI's industry reports.
- Expanded our reporting focus to include beneficial ownership, contract transparency, and environmental impacts.

2. Strengthening Stakeholder Engagement

- Reconstituted the NEITI NSWG, ensuring high-level leadership, making it the only Federal Board chaired by the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF).
- Strengthened collaboration with oil, gas, and mining companies, reviving and reconstituting the NEITI-Companies Forum to enhance industry engagement.

3. Deepening Civil Society and Public Advocacy

- Enhanced engagement with civil society organizations (CSOs) to empower citizens to monitor and demand accountability.
- Allowed CSOs to independently elect their NSWG representative, ensuring legitimacy and inclusivity.

4. Institutional Strengthening & Workforce Development

- Secured a permanent office and relocated staff to a conducive and professional work environment.
- Prioritized staff training, capacity building, and leadership transformation to improve institutional effectiveness.
- Recruited young, skilled professionals to address manpower gaps and drive NEITI's growth plan.

5. Development of a Five-Year Strategic Plan (2022–2026)

- With funding from DFID-FOSTER, NEITI developed a comprehensive strategy that serves as a roadmap for our goals, annual work plans, and budgets.

- As the plan nears completion in 2026, we recommend an immediate review to ensure continuity and relevance.

6. Establishment of the NEITI Data Center Project

- A strategic initiative designed to centralize and automate extractive sector data, ensuring open access to industry information.

The NEITI Data Center will:

- Serve as a one-stop hub for extractive industry data.
- Enhance public access to information for research, advocacy, and policy development.
- Support systematic disclosures in line with the EITI 2023 Standards.

7. Reconstitution of the Inter-Ministerial Task Team (IMTT)

- The IMTT—responsible for implementing NEITI’s report recommendations—was reconstituted in May 2024 after seven years of inaction.
- Membership was upgraded to Director-level representation, strengthening its decision-making and policy implementation capacity.

8. Strengthening Nigeria’s Anti-Corruption Agenda

- NEITI currently chairs the Inter-Agency Task Team (IATT), which coordinates 21 anti-corruption agencies at the federal level.
- TUGAR, housed within the NEITI Secretariat, plays a leading role in implementing Nigeria’s National Anti-Corruption Strategy.

Expanding Transparency in Key Areas of Public Concern

In response to recent genuine concerns by our key partners, the Civil Society, NEITI NSWG will be considering at its next meeting the opportunities to review and undertake:

1. Strengthening Transparency in Oil & Gas Divestments

Oil and gas divestments are reshaping Nigeria's industry. NEITI recognizes the urgent need for transparency in these transactions to protect national interests, host communities, and revenue flows. To achieve this, NEITI will:

- Expand industry reports to include dedicated sections on divestments.
- Strengthen collaboration with NUPRC and NNPC Ltd. to ensure full disclosure of financial, social, and environmental aspects of divestments.
- Promote greater public awareness and engagement in asset transfers.

2. Ensuring Transparency in Forward Sales of Oil & Gas

- Forward sales (pre-sales of crude oil and gas) impact government revenues and fiscal stability.
- NEITI will intensify collaboration with NNPC Ltd. and other government agencies to disclose forward sales data.

3. Environmental Liabilities and Remediation Commitments

- Oil and gas companies must be held accountable for clean-up costs and remediation efforts.
- NEITI will work with NUPRC and the Ministry of Environment to ensure transparency in environmental remediation funds.

4. Enhancing Beneficial Ownership Transparency

- NEITI remains committed to exposing hidden ownership structures to combat corruption.
- We will obtain updated beneficial ownership data from the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) and publish disclosures on companies acquiring divested assets.

Commitment to Expanding Industry Reporting

As we commence the 2024 Oil, Gas, and Solid Minerals Reports, we will expand our reporting framework to address:

- Forward sales and pre-export financing transactions.
- Environmental remediation funds and asset divestments.
- Revenue tracking and fiscal accountability.

The Road Ahead—Sustaining Gains and Future Reforms

While we have made remarkable progress, challenges remain. Institutional constraints, funding limitations, and resistance to change

must be continuously addressed. However, we have learned key lessons:

- Transparency must be dynamic.
- Accountability must be proactive.
- Governance must evolve with emerging global trends.

Moving forward, NEITI will:

- Deepen beneficial ownership disclosures.
- Strengthen revenue tracking and contract transparency.
- Ensure full implementation of extractive sector governance reforms.

Conclusion—A Call to Action

Transparency is not just a policy; it is a responsibility. NEITI remains steadfast in ensuring that Nigeria's oil, gas, and mining revenues are managed for the benefit of all citizens.

However, achieving this vision requires collective effort:

- To the press, your role in holding power accountable is more critical than ever.
- To our stakeholders, your collaboration remains invaluable.
- To the Nigerian people, your demand for accountability is the fuel that drives our mission.

Let us continue this journey together, for a more transparent, accountable, and just extractive sector in Nigeria