

Speech by the Executive Secretary of the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI), Dr Orji Ogbonnaya Orji, at the Unveiling of the Public Accounts Committee of the 10th Assembly and a One-day Workshop on Strategic Leadership Training organized by the Public Accounts Committee on October 16th 2023 at the Reiz Continental Hotel, Central Business District, Abuja.

Protocols

I feel honoured and privileged to be invited to this Unveiling of the Public Accounts Committee of the 10th Assembly and a One-day Workshop on Strategic Leadership Training organized by the Public Accounts Committee as a special guest.

2. The event tagged “Unveiling of the Public Accounts Committee of the 10th Assembly” is apt and timely as it is organised to formally kick start and build the capacities of members of the Committee on their roles, responsibilities and functions.

3. At NEITI, we are confident that deliberations and information gleaned from this One Day Workshop will

contribute in no small measure to guide the policy thrust of the 10th Assembly towards shaping the policy decision as regards enthroning a regime of transparency and accountability in the management of Nigeria's revenues and the processes under-pinning the actions of strategic stakeholders.

4. The Public Accounts Committee of the National Assembly is one of the highly empowered Committees established by the standing orders of both houses to examine federal government accounts showing the appropriation of the sums to meet public expenditure and the Auditors report on the compliance of the MDAs on disbursement and utilisation thereon as mandated by Order XIII Rule 97(5) of the Senate Standing Order 2007 and Order XVII Rule A.6 of the House Standing Orders.

5. We are aware that the Committee's jurisdiction include examining the accounts showing the various appropriation granted by the House to meet public expenditure and scrutinised through the lens of the Auditor General's Report.

6. The Committee is conferred with the powers to summon persons, papers and records and report its findings and recommendations to the General House as well as examine statutory agencies and Boards and report to the House from time to time in tandem with the philosophy advanced by the EITI which NEITI is implementing.

7. As you are aware, the global Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), is founded on the philosophy that regular disclosures of information and data in the extractive sector will promote public debate, foster civic actions and accountability in the sector. The goal is to ensure that revenues from the sector are optimally mobilised and prudently utilised for the benefit of the citizens.

8. More importantly, EITI/NEITI sets out to ensure that the citizens have a say in the way and manner their commonwealth is being managed looking at equitable distribution of resources. The EITI is, therefore, interested in ensuring transparency and accountability in the amounts paid and received by extractive industries to the government.

9. Like the Public Accounts Committee, NEITI's mandate is backed by the NEITI Act 2007 which empowers NEITI to enthrone a regime of transparency, accountability and due process in the management of revenue flows in the sector and ensure rightful application of these revenues for national development.

10. Honourable members, you gave us this power which was accented to by the Executive. Therefore to deliver on this mandate, you required of us to scrutinise the books of the oil, gas and mining companies and the respective government entities involved in the management of the nation's extractive industries.

11. You required us to examine and disclose the total revenues received and remitted into the federation account. You also required of NEITI to conduct the Fiscal Allocation and Statutory Disbursement (FASD) audit which specifically looks into the allocation and disbursement processes as well as the utilisation of extractive revenues by the statutory recipients. More importantly is to ensure that the processes are in accordance with applicable legislations. All of these are

enshrined in Sections 3 (a-j) of the NEITI Act 2007. Of particular importance is sub-section g.

12. In Sections 4 of the same Act, the National Assembly is assigned a specific role. The Act in Sub-sections 3 demands that NEITI submit its industry reports to the National Assembly for action. In sub section (7) the Act stipulated that within three months of such submission to NASS, the Auditor General of the Federation is to publish comments or actions taken by government on the NEITI reports. This action has never happened.

13. Your roles Sir, in the implementation of EITI in Nigeria cannot be over emphasised. You make the Laws, you oversight the implementation and you represent the people on whose behalf the common wealth of the country is being managed. This role entails monitoring and oversight functions of the work that we do, debating the NEITI reports at plenary and Committee sessions, driving remediation and reforms efforts and supporting compliance and enforcements of sanctions on infractions among others.

14. So far, NEITI has conducted and published 14 and 12 cycles of reports in the oil and gas and solid minerals sectors respectively. Three (3) cycles of the Fiscal Allocations and Statutory Disbursement reports have also been conducted. The fourth FASD report is set to be released on the 9th of November, 2023. We want to use this medium to graciously request that you attend the unveiling of this report. Invitations have since been sent to your good offices.

15. Let me use this medium to urge members of The Public Accounts Committee to take serious interest in the NEITI reports and use the contents of the reports for deeper interrogation of the transactions, systems and processes going on in the sector. This is the only way that we can make the right policies that will transform the sector and make the desired impacts.

16. We humbly request that while you are carrying out your oversight functions, please see the NEITI Reports as credible sources of information and data that will help your work for the benefit of Nigerians.

17. In addition, we want to call on the Public Account Committee to review the findings and recommendations contained in the NEITI Reports, debate them at plenary and provide the political leadership and will to address the identified gaps.

18. Once again, I thank you for inviting me and wish you fruitful deliberations.