

SPEECH BY THE NEITI EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, DR ORJI OGBONNAYA ORJI
DURING HIS MAIDEN PRESS BRIEFING HELD ON THE 16TH MARCH, 2021 AT THE
BON STRATTON HOTEL, ABUJA

Protocols.

My Dear Distinguished Gentlemen and Ladies of the Press-

I am delighted to welcome you all to this formal Press Briefing by the Management of NEITI. Let me start by thanking President Muhammadu Buhari and his team in government for giving me this rare platform as NEITI's Executive Secretary.

I also want to convey to you, our friends in the media our gratitude for your wonderful support through positive publicity and constructive projection of issues, challenges, and modest achievements of NEITI in both print and electronic media.

Your engagements have no doubt contributed greatly to the modest achievements that NEITI has recorded.

To our former Executive Secretary, Mr. Waziri Adio, I wish to thank him for his service to NEITI in the last 5 years in particular and also for his valued contributions to EITI implementation in Nigeria in general. I have read his stewardship/handover notes, held discussions with him on the document and can attest that there are key achievements to his credit which we can build on, but, in Waziri's own words" the biggest room in the world is the room for improvement. I therefore wish Mr. Adio and his family, good health and best of luck in their future endeavours.

Distinguished Gentlemen and ladies of the Press,

I have invited you here to present to you, our key priorities, challenges and share opportunities to address them.

1. Linking NEITI Reports to visible impacts.

Since 2004, when Nigeria began the implementation of the EITI, the expectation was that transparency and public disclosure of information and data in the extractive sector will lead to accountability, poverty reduction and national development. This has not been the case. While NEITI has put in the public domain, accurate and verifiable information and data on the sector, the challenge as we all can see is on using the information to bring about accountability and change that would lead to positive visible

impacts in the lives of the citizens. It is time to revisit the scope, depth and dimension of our reports to deliver more impacts required to address the unfolding challenges. This is why my focus will be on the implementation of the remedial issues disclosed in the reports. The current NEITI Management under my leadership is already evolving policies and strategies that would ensure that the recommendations in our reports are followed through and statutory recoverable revenues due to government which is put at N69.51billion and \$5.31billion respectively (As revealed by 2018 NEITI audit reports) are recovered into government coffers. These recoverable revenues consist of payments on oil royalty, gas royalty, gas flare penalties, petroleum profit tax, company income tax, education tax, withholding tax, value added tax and NNDC levy. We are no longer comfortable just releasing reports. Our emphasis will be on these and other recoverable revenues due to government while ensuring that companies are treated fairly and given the opportunity to grow. NEITI will unveil a framework that will involve stakeholders in this process. Joint Committees between NEITI and respective covered entities will be established to look at the issues as it affects individual agencies. The joint committees will be similar to the one established between the NEITI and the NNPC and is without prejudice to the revitalization of the Inter Ministerial Task Team on remediation as a multi-sectoral approach.

Deeper engagement with the companies and exposure to their peculiar business models and operations will be deployed. The approach will create opportunities for NEITI to appreciate their locations, peculiar nature of their operations and workflow. The essence is to build trust, knowledge sharing and technical capability.

One important area that NEITI will focus on going forward is the mining sector, giving the global conversation on energy transition. Since the inception of NEITI audit of the solid minerals sector, there has been a steady increase in revenues accruable to the federation account from the sector. From a paltry N8.19billion recorded in the 2007 audit, to over N67billion earned from the sector in 2018, shows over a 900% increase. A mere 0.18% contribution of the sector to the GDP, shows that a lot more needs to happen in Nigeria's mining sector. We will therefore conduct fresh scoping studies on mining paying particular attention to investment opportunities in the sector. We will take the lead in assisting government to have a fallback position as renewable energy and its attendant consequences gets underway.

2. Strengthening the Powers & Functions of NEITI

It is also our priority to work with stakeholders to strengthen our laws. When the NEITI Act was enacted in 2007, the focus was on oil and gas. Between that period and now, there has been a lot of development and expansion in the scope of NEITI activities. We will be working with the civil society, government, companies and the National Assembly to strengthen the powers and functions of NEITI. This will enable us tackle the challenges in the sector, including the emerging issues in the global EITI

Equally very important is ensuring that the reports we produce lead to visible measurable impacts that would shape the ongoing reforms in the oil, gas and mining sectors.

Dear watchdogs of our society,

One issue that we all must work together to get off the table is the passage of the:

(3)The Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB)

NEITI has followed with keen interest the on-going debate at the National Assembly on the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB). NEITI has a stake in the PIB and we are therefore pleased that the political weight of the President is strongly behind the Bill. NEITI will join the debate to strengthen the voice that the future of the industry depends on the Bill. Our duty is to support the legislative process by working very closely with the relevant committees in the National Assembly, providing relevant information and data to facilitate their work.

(4) Broadening and deepening the Base of NEITI's Communications/Stakeholders Engagement:

It is very important to me that we regain our visibility, gain positive perception in the minds of the people and take NEITI to the grassroots through sub-national reporting, effective communication and outreaches. I also look forward to seeing deeper engagements with covered entities to ensure deeper disclosures and recoveries that would increase government take while making the sector competitive and encouraging enough to attract the right investments. The media is key in this drive. Similar priority and attention will be given to the media and all its affiliate groups including Media Initiative on Transparency in Extractive Industries (MITEI). This support will serve as a strong bridge between NEITI and the media. NEITI has a plan in this direction.

(5) Stronger CSO/Media Engagement/Oversight:

The role of CSOs is key and central to the EITI process. Under my leadership, NEITI shall invest more time, energy and resources to build capacity, promote and abide by the EITI CSO protocols in order to strengthen their oversight functions in dissemination, monitoring, advocacy, public education and enlightenment. The civil society steering committee when re-constituted will help us build this synergy.

(6) EITI & NEITI's International Obligations:

NEITI will remain fully committed, visible and responsive to the principles and standards of the global EITI in the implementation of the 2019 EITI Standard and the emerging issues. I have held meetings and will hold more with the International Secretariat to convey to them Nigeria's assurances for efficient communication, timely sharing of information and data, consultations and synergy. Let me assure the EITI community of a stronger NEITI built on our core values of **Legitimacy, Integrity, Partnership, Courage, Openness and Team work**. We will also remain committed to the full implementation of the emerging issues in the area of Contract Transparency, Beneficial Ownership, Mainstreaming, Commodity Trading, Environment, Gender etc.

Other areas of work which NEITI is committed to beaming its search lights on include; energy transition, climate change, improving the extractive business opportunities, aligning the EITI implementation in Nigeria with Nigeria's foreign policy, sub-national outreaches, legislative engagements etc. We will specifically seek to bring the legislature to understand our operations in order to help them carry out their oversight and legislative functions as it concerns the extractive industries in Nigeria.

(6) Staff Training & Stakeholders' Manpower Development.

Training and re-training of staff will be given the required attention it deserves. We cannot have enough training given the complex nature of the industry. The training will target at making NEITI staff jack of all trade and master of all. We shall also seek partnership with reputable training institutions in Nigeria to advance this initiative.

We are also committed to enhancing the capacity of the diverse stakeholders' groups to understand the EITI process and its obligations. You are one of this strategic

stakeholders. We are committed to extending training opportunities to the media to improve the quality of their information, dissemination activities.

Gentlemen and Ladies of the Press,

Finally, let me ask for your support and constructive advice going forward as we all collectively, work assiduously to enthrone a regime of transparent and accountable natural resource environment.

I thank you for your kind attention.