



BPSR CHARGES MDAs ON FOI AS NEITI UNVEILS NEW WEBSITE

All government agencies have been advised to embrace full Implementation of the Freedom of Information Act as an important tool to push the anti –corruption campaign to nooks and crannies of the public service.

The Director General of the Bureau of Public Service Reforms, Dr Joe Abah made the appeal in Abuja while speaking at a ceremony to unveil the FOI portal and the new website of NEITI. The website was designed by R2K, a Non-Governmental Organization with the support of MacArthur Foundation to promote implementation and compliance with the Freedom of Information Act.

Dr Abah stated that the steps taken so far by NEITI to make its operations open, efficient and accountable were consistent with the on-going public service reforms within FGN's Ministries, Departments and Agencies. The website which is FOI compliant is expected to serve as a model to all government agencies in responding to public inquiries on their operations and services to the citizens.

The Chairman of the Board of Trustees of (R2K) Right to Know and a former member of the House of Representatives, Honorable Uche Onyeagucha identified institutional secrecy as major obstacles to Nigeria's development. He said that open access to information is a major tool for free speech, freedom of association and citizens'

participation in governance, transparency and accountability. He commended the federal government's initiative for the introduction of Bank Verification Number (BVN) noting that, it has added tremendous value in reducing illicit financial transactions.

Honorable Onyeagucha however stated that for the goals of the BVN to be sustained in the fight against corruption, the government should consider urgent introduction of what he called PVN (Property Verification Number). He explained that PVN will help to identify owners of houses and similar assets especially in major cities across the country.

The Executive Secretary of the Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI), Waziri Adio reaffirmed NEITI's commitment to serve as epitome of transparency and accountability both in words and its operations. Mr Adio remarked that "the FOI portal on the website is an important tool for checking sharp practices. Promoting development and restoring the rights and powers of citizens to know, because transparency is the middle name of NEITI, we have to walk the talk." He explained that the new website which is FOI compliant is designed to provide urgent access and feedback to the public on NEITI's operations in compliance with the provisions of the FOI Act. He urged the public to use the FOI portal and the new website to avail themselves of information and data contained in the NEITI reports and other issues in the extractive sector.

Unveiling the website, the Deputy Country Director of MacArthur Foundation, Mr Dayo Olaide, gave the assurance that MacArthur Foundation is willing to work with NEITI and other agencies to enthrone transparency and accountability in Nigeria.

The website's FOI Portal will allow the public to submit online FOI requests and receive real time feedbacks.

The unveiling of the website provided opportunity for NEITI and R2K, Nigeria to jointly call on all public institutions in Nigeria to commence similar processes that would facilitate easy compliance with the provisions of the FOI Act, and help enshrine a culture of openness, facilitate public access to information and improve governance.

The two agencies said that they remain committed to promoting open and democratic government in Nigeria through advocacy for the full implementation of the FOI Act.

They jointly commended the MacArthur Foundation, for providing the support and forging the on-going partnership between NEITI and R2K, Nigeria.

NEITI is the second government agency with an FOI portal, the first being BPSR.

The unveiling of the website was witnessed by NEITI Multi stakeholders, government representatives, development partners, the media and civil society.

The new website www.neiti.gov.ng is now fully operational.

