

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF NEITI, WAZIRI ADIO,  
AT THE CONSULTATIVE WORKSHOP FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A ROADMAP  
FOR BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP DISCLOSURE IN NIGERIA'S EXTRACTIVE SECTOR,  
HELD AT APO APARTMENTS, ABUJA ON 31<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER 2016**

Protocols

I feel honoured, privileged, and thankful to welcome you all to this consultative workshop. There is a lot to be said for you being with us at this time of the day, on this first day of the week, and at this time when many things are happening as the year races to an end. Your presence here is a further testimonial to your conviction about, and commitment to, that society that works for the greatest good of the greatest number: the good society. These we do not take for granted. We are indeed very grateful.

To those resident in Abuja, to those who have journeyed here from near and far, including from different parts of the continent and from different parts of the globe, to those who have been here before, and to those coming here for the first time, I say welcome. And I say that on behalf of the board, the management and the staff of NEITI. We are indeed honoured by your distinguished presence. And we look forward to your insightful contributions to a cause we all hold dear.

Please permit me to start by acknowledging the invaluable technical and financial support of the Natural Resource Governance Institute (NRGI) to this event. We are also grateful to the EITI Secretariat in many ways, for guidance and support, including the opportunity for other EITI-implementing countries in Anglophone and Lusophone Africa to contribute to and draw from this event. I am personally grateful to the Chairman and members of the National Stakeholders Working Group (NSWG) for their unflagging commitment and guidance. I don't think one can ask for or get a better board. And to the management and staff of NEITI for all the heavy-lifting that went into this event, I say: thank you.

As you well know, Section 2.5 of the EITI Standard states that there should be a publicly-accessible register of the beneficial owners of all companies that bid for, operate and invest in extractive assets of all EITI-implementing countries. By January 2017, just two months away, a roadmap must be in place in these countries on how to fully implement beneficial ownership disclosure in the extractive sector by 2020. Nigeria, through NEITI, has some experience in capturing beneficial owners in our audit reports on the extractive sector, specifically our 2012 and 2013 reports. We did this as part of an EITI pilot on beneficial ownership disclosure.

With that experience, we could approach the task of developing a roadmap on beneficial ownership disclosure as a walk in the park. But no, we said. The pilot phase gave experience no doubt, but also exposed us to the challenges of cutting through the tangled web of companies' ownership structure, which in most cases is deliberately constructed to obscure the real

beneficiaries of extractive assets, to deny society of due and just benefits from these assets, and sometimes to disguise criminal and dangerous enterprises.

One of the lessons of the pilot is that cutting through the maze of hidden ownership will require actions in different domains and by different actors. There will be need for new regulations, new policies and new legislations. There will be need for collaboration, for harmonisation, for advocacy, for investigations, and for mobilisation. This is why we have opted for a consultative workshop for the development of this roadmap. We believe that a joined-up approach will help not only to sensitise the different stakeholders but also to allow us to draw from the collective wisdom of all who have stakes in this endeavour.

It is our considered view that ownership transparency, when pursued effectively, is in the best interest of all: investors benefit from a transparent and predictable business environment not rigged in favour of fronts of those in government; the country reaps dividends from improved investment climate and earns additional revenues that would have been lost tax avoidance and evasion, transfer pricing, over- or under-invoicing etc.; and the citizens profit from reduced corruption, increase in pool of resources available for human development, and reduction in risks arising from money laundering and drug and terrorism financing.

The approach we have chosen for developing this roadmap is a pointer to what we want to do more of: we want to consult more, we want to collaborate more, and we want to engage more. One of the lessons of our more than a decade experience of implementing EITI in Nigeria is that resource curse would not be reversed by simply doing audits and disseminating them. We need to need to increase stake-holding and we need all stakeholders, on the supply and the demand sides, to work together and to deliver their parts of the bargain. This is why we are deepening our advocacy and engagement with stakeholders by adding social and alternative media to our communication mix and introducing new products such as the NEITI Quarterly Review and the NEITI Policy Brief, the first of which focused on beneficial ownership.

In addition, NEITI will continue to push the boundary of transparency and accountability. We are already going beyond revenue transparency, on the bandwagon of ownership transparency, and do more work expenditure transparency. At a time when most resource-intensive countries are in financial turmoil on account of fall in commodity prices, it is tempting to rain on the openness parade, especially with a country that made more than N70 trillion from oil and gas between 1999 and 2014 to slump into economic recession in the second quarter of 2016. By all means, we should ask the N70 trillion question: where did all the money go? But we should never give up on transparency. At a time like this, we need more openness, not less. Sunshine still remains the best disinfectant.

Welcome again everyone. Thank you.