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GOVERNMENTS AND COMPANIES MUST DELIVER ON GLOBAL TRANSPARENCY INITIATIVE

Free-Riding No Longer an Option

Accra – Governments and companies signed up to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) must now deliver concrete results towards making revenues and payments from oil, gas and mining transparent and accountable, said the global civil society coalition Publish What You Pay (PWYP). Seven resource-rich countries were approved as EITI candidates by the EITI Board in Accra, Ghana on Friday 22 February, bringing the total number of EITI candidate countries to 22. [1]

“We will hold all candidate countries to the same standard of civil society engagement in the EITI implementation and validation process,” said Bennett Freeman, an EITI Board member representing Oxfam America and Oxfam International. “In some countries in particular, fundamental reforms will be necessary to allow civil society to play its rightful role as envisioned by the EITI.”

The seven new candidate countries are: the Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Madagascar, the Republic of Congo, Sao Tome and Principe, Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste. [2]

“Companies, too, need to step up to the plate and fulfil their end of the bargain,” said Corinna Gilfillan of Global Witness. “It is unacceptable that only 3 of the 37 oil, gas and mining companies that have endorsed the EITI have complied with the requirement to report on steps taken to meet the EITI transparency principles.” These 3 companies are Royal Dutch Shell, Chevron and StatoilHydro. [3]

PWYP called on governments to move forward swiftly with implementation, and urged the EITI to carefully monitor country progress and to provide the necessary support and technical assistance. All countries have a 2 year period in which to become validated as fully compliant with the EITI criteria or face losing their candidate status.

“The focus must be on deliverables now,” said Carlos Monge of Peruvian NGO Grupo Propuesta Ciudadana, and a member of the EITI Board. “We don’t want a situation where countries free-ride and use the EITI label to continue business-as-usual. Concrete steps should be taken towards implementation and regular monitoring of country work plans, starting immediately.”

PWYP also welcomed the creation of an EITI working group to develop effective EITI responses in instances when civil society participation is threatened.

“Transparency activists, including some EITI Board members, have faced threats, harassment and, in some cases, even imprisonment in places such as Gabon, Angola, and the Republic of Congo,” said Radhika Sarin, International Coordinator of PWYP. “Civil society participation is intrinsic to the EITI process, and the EITI must have a zero-tolerance policy on this critical issue.”

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

[1] PWYP is a global coalition of over 300 civil society organisations campaigning for transparency and accountability in the extractive industries. PWYP is represented on the multi-stakeholder EITI Board through various member organisations, such as Oxfam, Global Witness, Grupo Propuesta Ciudadana, La Rencontre pour la Paix et les Droits de l'Homme, and Secours Catholique.

[2] The following 15 countries were accepted as EITI candidates in September 2007: Azerbaijan, Cameroon, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Mongolia, Niger, Nigeria, Peru, and Yemen.

To achieve candidate status, the host government must issue a public statement of intent, commitment to work with civil society and companies, appoint a senior individual lead, and to produce a fully costed, published workplan agreed with other stakeholders.

To become fully compliant, a country needs to sign up, prepare, disclose and disseminate information on all the material revenues received by the government from the oil, gas and mining sectors with the full engagement of other stakeholders in that country. At present, no country has been formally validated as EITI compliant, though several countries have advanced processes.

[3] See the EITI website (www.eitransparency.org) for the list of companies that have endorsed the EITI and the completed company validation forms.