

MEDIA STATEMENT – immediate release

Freetown, 13th July 2011

**NACE is Disappointed: We Call on the President’s Office to Recall the Petroleum Bill
Practice of Due Diligence in Passing the Bill is absent**

NACE has been following with keen interest the processes and procedures that culminated in the passing of the New Petroleum Bill into Law. The rapidity with which the Bill was passed in Parliament underscores the numerous concerns by civil society organisations about poor due diligence and secrecy associated with the operations of the Petroleum Resources Sector within the Office of the President. The Act passed on July 12, 2011 defies the minimum procedure meant for any bill to be tendered for a parliamentary debate. NACE questions the procedure the Office of the President used to tender the Petroleum Bill for discussion in Parliament.

NACE decries the manner in which Parliament conducted the debate and hastily passed the bill into law, under a **Certificate of Emergency**. The manner in which some segment of our parliament discussed the bill is a complete disappointment and a slap to the electorate.

Given the strategic and important nature of petroleum in the global economy and noting that the occurrence of oil and gas in Sierra Leone can become a curse rather than a blessing, NACE is convinced that a comprehensive procedure in ensuring that the public is amply informed on the laws governing the Petroleum Industry should be followed.

NACE is unaware of the gazetting of the Bill which should last for 21 days and public’s attention drawn to that gazette in our local media either print or radio. Members of NACE only became aware of the bill when it was at the pre-legislative stage some five days ago.

NACE believes that the bill should be critically studied for proper understanding and thorough national debate on this very important legal instrument. We therefore call on the Office of the President to recall the bill.

In similar vein NACE is unclear about the status of the Petroleum Policy. We are not sure if it has moved from the draft state to a final version. We emphasise that best practice requires that the Policy formulated should be well publicized before enactment into law. NACE therefore demands that the Petroleum Policy be made public in the spirit of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI).

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