

# Publish What You Pay Press Release

## **PWYP commends Liberia for achieving EITI Compliant status**

**London, 20 October 2009:** Publish What You Pay has congratulated all stakeholders in Liberia's Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) following the country's designation by the EITI Board as EITI 'Compliant' on 14 October 2009.

Liberia becomes the first African country to be validated as Compliant under the rules and principles of the EITI, a global framework for increased transparency in the oil, gas and mining sectors which champions dialogue between government, civil society and the private sector.

Radhika Sarin, Publish What You Pay International Coordinator and Alternate member of the EITI Board noted: "In becoming EITI Compliant, Liberia has demonstrated commitment to revenue transparency in its extractive sector. We congratulate Liberia for reaching this significant milestone and applaud the efforts of all stakeholders in ensuring a robust multistakeholder process where debates over extractive industry revenues have taken place in a free and open manner."

"Civil society in Liberia, through the PWYP Liberia national coalition, has worked tirelessly to keep EITI high on the agenda and the government under the leadership of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has demonstrated unwavering commitment to the implementation of EITI in Liberia," said Sarin.

On 10 July 2009 Liberia passed the Liberia EITI Act which puts the requirements of this voluntary global initiative on a legal footing. Liberia has adapted the scope of EITI to its local circumstances by including forestry and agriculture in the process which are major industries in Liberia. The LEITI Act also goes beyond minimum EITI criteria by requiring reporting of payments on a disaggregated company-by-company basis, and by promoting disclosure and review of contracts and licensing arrangements which are crucial to ensuring the country is getting a fair deal for the exploitation of its natural resources.

Alfred Lahai Brownell, a campaigner with PWYP Liberia and a Full member of the EITI Board said: "This seal of approval is testament to the hard work of transparency advocates in Liberia. However, this is just the beginning and we still have many obstacles to overcome. Numerous discrepancies between company payments and government revenues were identified in the EITI reporting process - these all need to be investigated fully and independently. We also need to ensure that in future reporting cycles every single company operating in the natural resource sector reports its payments so that every dollar is accounted for."

"We hope these outstanding issues can be resolved in the collaborative way in which the EITI has progressed up until now", said Brownell.

Anthony Richter, Chairman of the Governing Board of the Revenue Watch Institute who also serves as a Full member on the EITI Board echoed the view that recommendations issued by the external Validator, and endorsed by the EITI Board, must be implemented: "Liberia has now proved itself to be at the forefront of transparency and governance efforts in the extractive sector. That is to be welcomed, but EITI Compliant status brings with it the responsibility to continue implementing high standards of natural resource revenue transparency. We welcome the commitment of the Liberian EITI multistakeholder group to act on the Validator's recommendations and hope these commitments will be honoured."

"As more companies invest in Liberia's natural resources and as revenues are set to rise dramatically in the coming years, all stakeholders will need to redouble their efforts to ensure the process remains robust and credible," said Sarin. "Civil society will continue to campaign and monitor the EITI process in Liberia which is a crucial element in ensuring the country's natural resource wealth is translated into tangible benefits for its citizens following decades of conflict and corruption over those very same resources."

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## Notes to Editors:

Publish What You Pay (PWYP) is a global civil society coalition with over 300 member groups who work together for greater transparency and accountability in the oil, gas and mining industries.

The EITI is a voluntary international framework for increased transparency in the oil, gas and mining sectors which involves cooperation between governments, companies and civil society.

Liberia became an EITI Candidate country in September 2007 and released its first EITI report covering the period 1 July 2007 - 30 June 2008 in February 2009. It was the first country to include the forestry sector in its report. Liberia was designated EITI compliant on 14 October 2009 at the 10<sup>th</sup> EITI board meeting in Baku, Azerbaijan. Liberia must be revalidated within 5 years (i.e. its Compliant status must be reassessed by 13 October 2014). Liberia was awarded a prize for the most rapid progress made by a country towards implementation of the EITI in February 2009 at the EITI Global Conference in Doha, Qatar.

Copies of the LEITI Act, Validation Report and Liberia's first EITI report can be downloaded at <http://www.leiti.org.lr/>

Related article: <http://www.publishwhatyoupay.org/en/resources/pwyp-welcomes-adoption-transparency-act-liberia>

PWYP Liberia position statement following the visit of EITI Chairman Peter Eigen to Liberia on 4-7 October 2009: <http://www.publishwhatyoupay.org/en/resources/pwyp-liberia-position-statement-following-visit-eiti-chairman-peter-eigen-liberia-4-7-octo>

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