

Publish What You Pay Africa

5 February 2009

PWYP Statement to the African Union: For an open and inclusive debate on revenue transparency

We are representatives of African civil society organisations that are members of the Publish What You Pay (PWYP) global coalition, which campaigns for the transparent and accountable management of oil, gas and mining revenues. We are deeply concerned by the increasing threats facing transparency and anti-corruption campaigners in Africa.

The past years have seen repeated incidents of intimidation and harassment of civil society leaders in a number of African countries including Angola, Congo Brazzaville, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Niger and Nigeria.

Recently, advocates in Gabon, including Publish What You Pay members Marc Ona and Georges Mpage have been the target of official harassment that culminated in their arrest and indictment. International pressure and solidarity resulted in their provisional release; however, they are still at risk of being prosecuted. We also fear for the dozens of civil society activists across Africa facing harassment, persecution and threats to their personal safety as a result of their work as civil society activists.

Transparency advocates have to work in sometimes hostile environments to promote transparency and improve governance in the oil, gas, mining and forest sectors. They bring legitimate voices to improving the management of resource wealth so that it can benefit all African citizens.

Their engagement reflects the aspirations of African governments to reach global anti-corruption and transparency standards. 17 African countries are currently implementing the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and many more have expressed an interest in joining. However, their implementation of the initiative, and the quality of their engagement, are threatened by continued violations of the right of civil society leaders to express themselves on issues of corruption and mismanagement of resource wealth and to take part in policy debates on revenue transparency. Further, the intimidation of civil society activists is incompatible with the international and regional legal obligations of African governments, including the African Charter of Human and People's Rights.

We commend the African Union for endorsing the EITI and making a commitment to support it in the Joint Africa - Europe Strategy and Action Plan that was agreed in Lisbon in December 2007.

We are convinced that civil society has a key role to play to ensure effective implementation of regional governance and anti-corruption frameworks, including the African Peer Review Mechanism and the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption. It is also committed to advancing other innovative international mechanisms such as the EITI.

We are committed to denouncing opaque management and widespread corruption in the extractive sector and advocating for fair and equitable distribution of resource wealth so it contributes to sustainable development and poverty reduction.

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We are also determined to promote a culture of accountability in our countries and the free and effective participation of independent civil society in the fight against corruption and the promotion of good governance.

We therefore call on the African Union to:

- Promote close and open collaboration between governments, civil society organisations and the private sector in the fight against corruption and for good governance;
- Enhance the political dialogue with African governments in view of consolidating democracy, good governance, transparency and the fight against corruption in all its forms;
- Encourage access to information on revenues, especially those from oil, gas and minerals exploitation and public debate on the use of these revenues;
- In collaboration with the African Commission of Human and People's Rights, implement safety and protection mechanisms for civil society actors suffering or at risk of harassment;
- Act upon its endorsement of the EITI and incorporate EITI principles into relevant African Union frameworks aimed at improving governance and accountability in the management of public funds;
- Encourage all resource-rich African countries to implement the EITI and support current EITI Candidate countries to achieve EITI Compliant status within set deadlines; and
- Commit to involving African civil society in the implementation of the Joint Africa – Europe strategy particularly on issues of transparency and public accountability.

Solidariedade para O Desenvolvimento Integrado, Angola

PWYP Cameroon

PWYP Chad

PWYP Congo

PWYP Democratic Republic of Congo

PWYP Gabon

PWYP Ghana

PWYP Guinea Bissau

PWYP Guinea

PWYP Ivory Coast

PWYP Liberia

Citizens For Justice, Malawi

PWYP Mali

PWYP Mauritania

PWYP Mozambique

PWYP Niger

PWYP Nigeria

Women's Right to Education Programme, Nigeria

Webeto, Sao Tomé e Principe

National Advocacy Coalition on Extractives, Sierra Leone

Concern for Development Initiatives in Africa, Tanzania

PWYP Uganda

PWYP Zambia