

# Publish What You Pay

## **President Sarkozy's African Tour:**

### **France should do more to increase transparency, ensure a fairer sharing of resources between companies and producing countries, and respect its commitment to accountability in the management of natural resource revenues**

**26 March 2009**

We, representatives of African civil society organisations from Publish What You Pay (PWYP)\*, a global movement campaigning for increased transparency in the gas, oil and mining sectors, are taking the opportunity of French President Nicolas Sarkozy's visit to Africa to urge France to respect its commitments to promoting revenue transparency and its support for sustainable development.

This visit offers France and its African partners the opportunity to reflect on effective strategies for managing public resources to reduce poverty and create economic growth.

Despite the considerable wealth at their disposal, a number of African countries continue to be severely affected by the 'resource curse'. The majority of people live in extreme poverty, and human development indicators are among the lowest in the world.

The endemic culture of secrecy and corruption found in our countries – at the level of the State and in multinational and national companies that are active there – is one that by its very nature does not promote the equitable sharing of national wealth to reduce poverty and develop our economies.

A weak democratic culture and the absence of transparent accounting also prevent the effective participation of an independent civil society in the fight against corruption, the promotion of good governance and, more generally, participation in the creation of development policies.

The chronic instability and armed conflicts that afflict Africa – from Chad to the Democratic Republic of Congo – are all, to a greater or lesser extent, linked to the exploitation and abusive appropriation of natural resources. They create intolerable conditions for the local populations and reduce their chances of escaping poverty.

The significance of the French presence in Africa cannot be denied. French companies in the extractive industries sector are making sizeable profits, as is the State in the countries in which they are working, yet the benefits for the local populations are far from obvious.

Apart from their questionable social and environmental impact, French investments in Africa often clearly contradict France's commitment to increasing transparency and a fairer distribution of the revenues from natural resources.

In Niger, for example, the benefits gained by Aréva and France from Uranium mining are neither matched by real development in the areas concerned nor by sufficient environmental protection. Its discriminatory policy of treating national and international employees differently is contrary to the spirit of national and international norms to which the company is supposed to comply, and generates tensions with negative effects.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, support for the peace process and the permanent nature of national borders, in particular in the east of the country, is needed for clear and constructive dialogue on transparency and the responsible management of mining resources.

Increased transparency of public accounts – in particular, income stabilisation – leading to effective allocation of oil revenues to development and to poverty reduction, and the safety and independence of civil society activists are among the challenges that need to be addressed by the partnership between France and the Republic of Congo.

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We member organisations of PWYP call on President Sarkozy to promote and build a responsible and transparent relationship between France and Africa based on equity and care for the well-being and development of the people of Africa.

Specifically, we invite France:

- to recognise its responsibilities regarding the negative effects of French activities and investments in the extractive industries sector;
- to increase political dialogue and efforts to build solidarity with African governments, with the aim of promoting democracy, good economic governance and mechanisms in support of transparency and the fight against corruption;
- to encourage the implementation of the international community's wide range of mechanisms and initiatives that contribute to establishing new rules for transparency and good governance which should benefit all African populations;
- in particular, to increase its support for the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), support its implementation in francophone Africa, and contribute to strengthening fiscal administrations;
- to oblige French companies and their subsidiaries operating in the extractive industries sector to demonstrate transparency and apply the highest environmental and social standards (as set out in the French NRE law);
- to support the establishment of a facility to help negotiate (or renegotiate) and evaluate the mining conventions and contracts made between African countries and multinational corporations, and encourage civil society participation in this process;
- to provide meaningful support to African civil society organisations to build their capacity to enable them to participate in the debate and to draw up policies in favour of good governance, transparency and the fight against corruption; and
- to promote respect for the principles of universal human rights and, in particular, for civil society's right to express itself freely on subjects such as the management of natural resources in Africa.

African civil society – and transparency activists in particular – will be monitoring President Sarkozy's visit to Africa closely. The visit represents a historic opportunity for France to contribute to overcoming the 'resource curse' and to reaffirm the importance of good governance, transparency and strengthening the Rule of Law for sustainable development and poverty reduction.

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Publish What You Pay is an international coalition of civil society organisations, active in over 50 countries, which demands mandatory publication of the payments made by companies and the revenues received by governments for the extraction of mining, gas and oil resources. The coalition also calls for the licences and contracts granted to companies in the extractive sector to be made public. In Africa, PWYP is active in over 20 countries.

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