

# OPENING REMARKS AT NED 2022

Honorable Ministers of the Federal Republic

Honorable Minister of State

Honorable members of the Senate and House of Representatives

Distinguished representatives of ministries, departments, and agencies

High Royal Highnesses

Members of the Nigerian civil society

Esteemed members of host communities of oil, gas and solid minerals in Nigeria

On behalf of Spaces for Change and the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI), I am very delighted to welcome all of you to day's epoch-making event: **National Extractive Dialogues 2022**. As I look around the room, it is quite striking to see stakeholders in the oil and gas and solid minerals industry—policymakers, corporations, regulators, host communities and the civil society—from across West Africa, come together to discuss issues dear to our hearts: **Making Natural Resource Wealth Work for All**. We thank the Ford Foundation for providing the support to Spaces for Change that made this Dialogue possible.

In Nigeria, we have clamored for reforms, especially in the oil and gas as well as in the mining industry. We are proud to witness some of the legal reforms we clamored for take place. Through these reforms, lessees, licensees and permit holders are now required to furnish and publish specified information relating to upstream petroleum operations which shall be published in the National Data Repository of the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission. Under this new legal regime, texts of any new licence, lease or contract or amendment to it shall not be confidential and shall be published by the Commission immediately following the granting or signing of such texts. Beyond making extractive contracts more open, this significant drift towards transparency will enable countries, citizens, the civil society and host communities to know the amount of revenues accruing from natural resources, make equitable demands, and hold extractive companies/investors accountable when there is non-compliance with the dictates of the contracts. In Ghana, the petroleum register established in 2018 serves as an online repository where all agreements, licenses, permits and authorizations that concern the Ghana upstream petroleum sector are kept and made available to the public. In Senegal, extractive contracts are published on the EITI Senegal website. All of these are important reforms in the West African subregion.

Through the dialogues we will be having over the next two days, we will together, assess the (policy, regulatory and institutional) progress that has been made in the subregion to improve contract transparency, benefit sharing, energy transition as well as the inclusion of host communities in these processes. Industry stakeholders from countries in the subregion, especially Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal, will learn from each other, finding solutions to common problems and identifying best and inclusive practices for improving the resilience of national economies in the face of increasing commodity price volatility around the world while preparing meaningfully for the transition to a low-carbon future.

This dialogue we are having today stems from many years of research work at SPACES FOR CHANGE interrogating policies and practices designed to entrench contract transparency and the

# OPENING REMARKS AT NED 2022

transfer of natural resource benefits to citizens, especially those living in the communities where these resources are extracted from. Since 2013, S4C has maintained a strong presence in oil producing communities in Nigeria, empowering and improving local capacities to communicate and negotiate for participation in extractive resource governance and for compensation and remediation with the oil companies working in their communities. Series of community dialogues, workshops and townhalls have been organized across all the states in the Niger Delta region, including the two oil-producing and mining states in the South-East region of Nigeria (IMO & EBONYI).

To ensure communities take part in shaping policy development and reforms, Spaces for Change developed the [handbook on the Petroleum Industry Bill \(PIB\)](#) in 2013 which contained an analysis of the provisions of the Petroleum Industry Bill relating to community participation and environmental protection (CPE). The Handbook was designed to build the capacity of oil producing communities to understand the PIB, and use its provisions to demand legal protection for their rights to a safe environment, and participation in oil industry operations. That handbook laid the foundation for various townhalls and conferences held in Akwa-Ibom, Rivers, Delta, Imo, Bayelsa and so forth.

Between 2017 to 2021, S4C conducted a study that examined how natural resource benefits are negotiated between host communities and extractive companies, and further gauged the effectiveness of the mechanisms used by corporations and governments to ensure the benefits of natural resources trickle down to the areas where minerals are extracted from. That report, [“Natural Resource and Benefit-Sharing Negotiations between Host Communities and Extractive Companies: A Case Study of Assa-North and Ohaji South \[ANOH\] Gas Development Project”](#) which we shall hear more about later today, found evidence of good practice and also obstacles which make meaningful negotiations and the delivery of natural resources quite ineffective. The report established that contract transparency lays the foundation for effective and meaningful benefit-sharing. When EITI countries—like Nigeria, Ghana and Senegal—commit to contract transparency, they accept to publicly disclose the full text of any contract, license, concession or other agreement governing the exploitation of oil, gas and mineral resources. Without knowledge of these contracts, it is difficult for the government and communities to negotiate good deals.

Building on the findings of that study, Spaces for Change has developed the [Community-Investor Guidelines](#) which will be launched today. Like the Community Handbook on the Petroleum Industry Bill, the Guidelines has been developed to support host communities in engaging meaningfully throughout the lifecycle of an extractive project, from exploration, to planning, construction, operations, and closure. Because of this Guideline, host communities of oil, gas and solid minerals will have all the information they need to negotiate better deals that benefit them and their future generations, to hold government and companies accountable, and to ensure that those most affected by oil, gas and mining projects have a say in if and how they proceed.

Joining the global campaign for a transition away from fossil fuels, we have taken steps to ensure that communities get on board the energy transition discourse. In 2021 to 2022, Spaces for Change and the UK-based Institute for Development Studies launched a collaborative study to understand and document the opinions of political, traditional and community leaders together with civic actors at the frontlines of the campaign for resource control and environmental justice in Nigeria’s oil and gas producing regions in order to compare and contrast meanings of just

# OPENING REMARKS AT NED 2022

transitions among different communities. We wanted to know whether they understand what energy transition means, whether or not they support it, and explore opportunities to engage and facilitate their inclusion in national, regional and global transition plans.

In sum, communities are asking who will clean up the environment after fossil fuels have been abandoned and corporations have gone back to their countries. Local communities are asking who will control the wealth accruing from the renewable resources under a green economy. Local communities are asking what will happen to local livelihoods that are now intertwined with the extraction of fossil mineral resources? Communities are asking whether dependencies, including subsidies, on imported energy products will persist or will be eradicated under a low-carbon economy? Installing and distributing off-grid power and renewable energy infrastructure is not cheap and often far beyond the reach of the common man. Communities are asking how they will overcome the existing limitations on access to cleaner energy solutions. The questions are legion.

Like I said before, this is just a start of a series of frank dialogues on extractive justice. We hope that the dialogues we will have today will lay the foundation for productive engagement and amongst a broad range of agents – advocates, policymakers, industry regulators, extractive companies, non-governmental organizations, oil producing communities, media, academia and other stakeholders – towards fleshing out approaches that allow collaborative problem-solving, transformative, high-impact and scalable initiatives at national and regional levels for energy transition, benefit sharing and contract transparency in the extractive industry.

We are very excited to collaborate with the NEITI to host this dialogue. I warmly welcome you all and wish all of us a fruitful deliberation.

Thank you and God bless.

**Victoria Ibezim-Ohaeri**  
**Executive Director**  
**Spaces for Change**