

A REPORT PRESENTED TO THE PERMANENT SECRETARIAT OF THE CAMEROON EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES TRANSPARENCY INITIATIVE (EITI) ON THE FLAGSHIP GLOBAL CONFERENCE

By Livinus Njume Esambe (PhD)

Founder and Executive Director of Action for Governance over Natural Resources (AGNR)
Member of Cameroon EITI Committee

Introduction

The Ninth edition of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) Conference took place on 13–14 June, 2023 at Central International de Conférences Abdou Diouf (CICAD) under the theme: ‘Transparency in Transition.’ The EITI’s flagship Global Conference took stock of progress in publishing and using open data to inform decision-making, analysis and ignite public debate on accountable natural resource management. The Republic of Senegal is a former French colony in the western flank of Africa. With an estimated population of 12.5 million, the country lies south of the Senegal River and shares boundaries with Mali, Mauritania, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau and the Gambia. The Cameroon delegation was led by the National Coordinator of EITI at the Permanent Secretariat, Agnés Solange Ondingui Owana. She was accompanied by Michel Bissue, six members of SHN, two officials from the Ministry of Mines, Energy and Technological Development, two members the Cameroon Civil Society within the Cameroon Multi-stakeholder Group (MSG) of the Cameroon EITI Committee.

Deliberations of the Conference

The Global Conference of the EITI was the first to be held in Africa since its foundation 20 years ago. It attracted more than 1,300 participants and was opened by His Excellence Amadou Ba, Prime Minister of Senegal. The opening ceremony was also attended by the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, His Excellence Mohammed Bilal Messoud. The conference saw the launch of the 2023 EITI Standard, which aims to increase understanding of the impact of the energy transition, help address corruption risks, promote gender equity, and improve revenue collection across 57 implementing countries. The event witnessed the elections of a newly-elected EITI Board. The Rt Hon. Helen Clark was re-elected to complete a second term. The EITI Board is the EITI's main decision-making body. It takes decisions on priorities for the organisation and evaluates countries' progress in meeting the EITI Standard. Among other topics, conference participants discussed win-win

solutions for resource taxation, using data and dialogue to fight corruption and deliver sustainable mineral supply chains, and using the EITI Standard to strengthen reporting on gender participation in the industry and managing its social and environmental impact.

Speaking during the opening ceremony the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the International Council on Mining & Metals (ICMM), Rohitesh Dhawan averred how he hoped the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) as an organization wouldn't be around in the next 20 years because; 'I hope for a world where transparency is the norm and corruption doesn't exist, but knowing that's a pipe dream, I'll take the second best option of a thriving EITI, which we remain fully behind.' Rohitesh Dhawan was proud to give ICMM's full throated support for the EITI. Its mission of transparency and accountability for the benefit of all stakeholders was both timely and timeless.

Another key speaker was the Founder of Transparency International and of the First Board Chair of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), Peter Eigen, on Tuesday, June 13, 2023, at EITI Global Conference in Dakar-Senegal said 'corrupt persons are not stupid; rather they are increasingly developing mechanisms to prevent anti-corruption efforts.' As a leading expert on the challenges of corruption, he provided exciting insights and evaluated the success and failure of various approaches in curbing corruption, including EITI. He argued that 'corruption is one of the biggest obstacles to development, fighting poverty, and avoiding violence in many parts of the world.' According to Peter Eigen there is a real risk of significant financial loss for individuals and organisations who are involved in corruption. 'corruption in the public sector causes death and injury, and is stealing from the taxpayer because money stolen could be spent on hospitals, schools, roads, and other vitally important infrastructure.' He commended EITI in contributing to the fight against corruption and creating 'a culture of integrity and zero tolerance for corruption in the extractive sector.' He elaborated the strategic importance of EITI, emphasizing the need to turn the table on corruption in order to promote sustainable development and poverty reduction.

The Minister of Mineral Resources, Oil and Gas, of Angola, Diamantine Pedro Azevedo on his part narrated the progress made in Angola with regard to transparency and efforts to develop the extractive sector, with a focus on prospecting and future exploitation of minerals considered critical to the energy transition. He recounted how President João Lourenço decided to apply for Angola to be a member of the EITI in 2020, creating the National

Coordination Committee, through Presidential Dispatch n. 117/20 of 1 September,. Angola he said was accepted as member No. 57 of the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative on June 16, 2022. He announced that at the end of this year, Angola is due to present its first Report that will reflect the advances in terms of transparency in the exploitation and application of financial resources from the national extractive industry.

The President and Chief Executive Officer of the independent non-profit organization, the Natural Resource Governance Institute (NRGI) Suneeta Kaimal said the revision of the 2023 ITI Standards, from energy transition, anti-corruption to gender and civil space are really important steps to ensuring that natural resources support a just transition and a sustainable development. Suneeta Kaimal argued the for EITI to translate those ambitions into meaningful action, ‘we need to support fundamental freedoms and meaningful civil participation. We need to grow the tent and bring in new voices and perspectives from the climate movement to anti-corruption agencies. And we need to ensure that EITI is powered by true champions, those upholding meaningful the principles of EITI inside and outside the initiative. We believe that the new standard holds great potentials and we are looking forward to make that this ambition a reality.’ NRGI’s objective is to secure a future where countries rich in oil, gas and minerals achieve sustainable, equitable and inclusive development, helping ensure that citizens receive lasting benefits from extractives and that the negative impacts associated with the sector are minimized. The organization operates in more than a dozen resource-rich countries in Latin America, the Middle East and North Africa, Eurasia, sub-Saharan Africa and Asia-Pacific.

The conference provided a platform for global stakeholders to exchange knowledge and best practices in promoting transparency and accountability in the extractive industries sector. Vibrant discussions took place at the 2023 EITI innovation talks, where EITI implementers share creative solutions on all aspects concerning extractives transparency. It took place under the *arbre à palabre* / palaver tree! The Government of Chile confirmed its intention to become an EITI implementing country. In a letter to EITI Executive Director Mark Robinson, Chile’s Minister of Mining, Marcela Hernando, stated that Chile’s intention to implement the EITI will form part of the country’s National Lithium strategy, launched in April by President Gabriel Boric.

The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) Chair, Rt. Hon Helen Clark also awarded, the President of the Senegalese EITI National Committee, Pr. Awa Marie Coll Seck.

Pr. Awa Marie Coll Seck was honoured for Senegal's excellent results and its highly appreciated participation in the Board of Directors of EITI. The EITI Chair's award recognizes individuals, countries, companies or organisations that have shown leadership, determination and resourcefulness in implementing the EITI. The award by the EITI Chair also goes to countries or individuals that stand out in furthering EITI implementation, adopting innovations, ensuring impact and overcoming constraints. The first country award went to Mauritania for making remarkable strides in disclosure of data by creating a data-warehouse, a key tool for systematic disclosure.

The second country award was given to Argentina for adopting a mining information system open to the public and the third went to Ukraine for defending democratic values and for keeping the EITI process on going despite the war. After recognizing the exemplary service of Hon. Awa Marie Coll-Seck of Senegal the Board Chair also recognized, Oleksiy Orlovsky of Ukraine. Hon. Awa Marie Coll-Seck was appointed the Chair of the National Committee of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative in April 2019. Formerly a Minister of State to the President of the Republic of Senegal from September 2017 to April 2019, Minister of Health and Prevention (2001 to 2003), and Minister of Health and Social Action (2012 to 2017) of the Republic of Senegal. As a specialist in infectious diseases and bacteriology-virology, MD, PhD, she was the head of the Department of Infectious Diseases at the Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar-Senegal, before starting her international career. She had served on the Board of the Roll Back Malaria Partnership to End Malaria, the Scientific Council of Cheick Zaid University (Morocco). She is currently leaves the EITI Board with a track record.

Oleksiy Orlovsky is a holder of PhD and served as a member of the Constitutional Assembly of Ukraine and Chair of the Public Council at the Ministry of Justice. He is actively involved in various consultative bodies including the Coordination Council for the of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in Ukraine. Since 2007, Oleksiy Orlovsky has been working at the International Renaissance Foundation, which represents the Ukraine office of the Open Society Foundations. Oleksiy Orlovsky played a crucial role in the Ukraine accession into the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). He was elected to the EITI International Board from the Civil Society Constituency in 2016 and was re-elected in 2019. He is finally living the Board after attending five EITI global summits since 2009. Mikhail Kamasa received the award of Ukraine and called on the international community to help her country win the Russia-Ukraine war.

The EITI Board Unveiled the Revised EITI Standard for 2023

During the conference, the 2023 EITI Standard were introduced. According to the EITI Board Chair, Rt. Hon. Helen Clark, the revised standards include updated requirements for the 2023 EITI Standard recently agreed by representatives of member countries, companies, and civil society organizations participating in the EITI Board. She averred that the 2023 EITI Standard strengthens EITI disclosures and governance requirements to improve understanding of ‘the impact of the energy transition, address corruption risks, promote gender equity and strengthen revenue collection.’ Helen Clark also said that the global shift towards a low-carbon economy would have a range of impacts on the citizens of resource-rich countries. ‘The Strength of the EITI has been to adapt to current and evolving challenges. Those associated with the energy transition are now reflected in the EITI Standard.’ she said. She commended governments in EITI member countries, companies, and civil society on working together to achieve consensus on these revisions.

Since it was first introduced in 2013, the EITI Standard has evolved through innovations at both country and company levels, with the processes for refining the 2023 EITI Standard underpinned by wide consultations. The EITI Anniversary Report charts the organisation’s journey and progress over the past two decades, demonstrating how the EITI’s disclosure framework has evolved to bring greater transparency across the entire extractive sector value chain through its multi-stakeholder approach. ‘The revised standards drew on lessons learned in the past ten years of implementation to identify relevant and timely disclosures that would inform policy and public debate, she added. The most recent revisions strengthen and clarify the EITI Requirements and identified important new areas for disclosure, including on commitments, policies and plans for the energy transition, capital and operating expenditure costs, carbon pricing mechanisms, carbon taxes, greenhouse gas emissions and subsidies.

Also, the revised standards require countries to document the rationale for any fast-tracking of extractive licenses, to strengthen safeguards in the allocation of those licenses as projected demand for minerals required for the energy transition increases. Besides, anti-corruption provisions have now been explicitly integrated into the objectives of the EITI Requirements, with all companies supporting the EITI and participating in EITI reporting, including state-owned enterprises, now expected to disclose their anti-corruption policies. In addition, the EITI Standard would encourage a minimum ownership threshold for disclosing the identities of individuals who own or control companies, and clarifies beneficial ownership disclosures

for state-owned enterprises. Such disclosures, the EITI clarified, are important for identifying conflicts of interest and the participation of politically engaged persons in the extractive sector. Revisions also promote the participation of women in the extractive sector by extending gender-disaggregated disclosures to employment and benefits from the sector. They extend disclosures related to environmental and social monitoring and impact as well as community consultations.

The revised EITI Standard paves the way to developing a leaner approach to reporting revenues and payments to manage reporting costs, drawing on lessons learned from adapting EITI reporting during the COVID-19 pandemic. The global EITI, and which believes a country's natural resources belong to its citizens, has a mission to promote understanding of natural resource management, strengthen public and corporate governance and provide the data to inform greater transparency and accountability in the extractives sector. The Group believes by becoming members of the EITI, 57 countries have committed to disclose information along the extractive industry value chain—from how extraction rights are awarded, to how revenues make their way through the government and how they benefit the public. Through participation in the EITI, countries agree to a common set of rules governing what has to be disclosed and when – the EITI Standard. In sum, the key changes has five axis; anti-corruption, energy transition, gender, social and environmental, revenue collection and impact and stakeholder engagement. It is easier to read.

The Publish What You Pay (PWYP) held its Africa Conference

Accordingly, the Publish What You Pay (PWYP) also held its Africa Conference from 8-10 June, 2023 in the city of Saly, Senegal under the theme: 'Towards a collaborative and just energy transition in Africa.' The conference was attended by 100 participants from various sectors and countries in Africa and beyond. Among other things, it was aimed to strengthen the power and capacities of PWYP members and partners in Africa to ensure transparent, accountable, sustainable and equitable governance of transition minerals and a fair phase-out of fossil fuels in Africa. Participants were to share experiences, learn and reflect on the implementation and next phase of PWYP's five-year strategy, Vision 2025. The inaugural speech was delivered by Dr. Marit Kitaw, Acting Director of the African Minerals Development Centre (AMDC), which was established in 2013 by the African Union to coordinate and oversee the implementation of the Africa Mining Vision and Action Plan.

Other speakers include NRGI, EITI Senegal, Oxfam, Ford Foundation, and EITI International Secretariat, Spaces for Change, Power Shift Africa and Policy. The Conference took place at a time the continent is facing overwhelming challenges from the climate crisis. To prevent the worst impacts, the world needs to wean itself off fossil fuels and accelerate the transition to cleaner, safer energy. The energy transition is an opportunity for the African continent. To ensure it is just, the views of vulnerable people who depend on extractives must be heard, and the impact on their lives taken into account. They need to be part of the solution; they need to be able to participate in decision making. Held every three years, the Africa Conference is the principal space for PWYP members to strategize, exchange experiences, learn from one another, and advance our collective, people-centred agenda for the extractives sector on the continent. Each delegation of three members from each coalition included women, youth representatives, and indigenous and community leaders.

The Common African Position on Asset Recovery (CAPAR) Working Group organized a side event at the EITI Global Conference

The African Union (AU) High Panel on Illicit Financial Flow (IFF) and the Common African Position on Asset Recovery (CAPAR) Working Group organized a side event at the EITI Global Conference that took place in Dakar, Senegal on the 13-14 June, 2023, under the theme: ‘Addressing Illicit Financial Flows in the Extractive Industry’. The event was aimed to raise awareness of the impact of illicit financial flow in the extractive industry in Africa and the need for widespread public awareness. They also discussed the Glencore Corruption Scandal and its implications for the extractives and commodities trading industries as well as the six victim African countries. It was also aimed to remind the EITI of its role in promoting accountable and transparent management of oil, gas, and mineral resources in order to identify effective strategies to address the challenges faced by victim nations and hold perpetrators and accomplices accountable.

The event took place for two days. The first day focused on the CAPAR and the corruption in the extractive industry and the need for widespread public awareness, enhanced transparency, stricter regulations, and increased international cooperation. The second day focused on IFFs in the Extractive Industry and its implications for the communities and African States. Participants were briefed by experts in the field. There also a series panel discussions featuring civil society organizations and the media. The sessions were interactive as participants identified effective strategies to address the challenges faced by victim nations

and hold perpetrators and accomplices accountable. The event targeted policymakers, regulators, civil society organizations, industry stakeholders, and the media. It featured keynote speeches, panel discussions, and interactive session. The event organizers compiled the recommendations that were generated from the event and presented them to policymakers and regulators.

For over two decades, the issue of Illicit Financial Flows (IFFs) has been a major concern for the Africa continent as assets and funds running into billions of dollars continue to find its way out of the continent as a result of corrupt public servants and multinational corporations. Their destination is the Western and European countries. Though stakeholders including the African Union Member-States have played significant roles in the international efforts to combat these opaque and destabilizing transfers of capital, such efforts have not yielded the desired goal. Tackling corruption, particularly IFFs, has become a matter of survival for Africa's development and must be treated with urgency. There is broad consensus that the funds being bled out of Africa could be channeled towards the continent's development if successfully retained. It should be recalled that the former President of South Africa and the Chairman of the African Union High Level Panel on IFFs, Thabo Mbeki, had stated that the African Continent suffered an annual loss of over \$50 billion as at 2015 through IFFs, which has grown to \$80 billion yearly. Mbeki had in 2022 made a spirited call for a United Nations Tax Convention to halt illicit financial flows from Africa and multinational and corporate tax abuse. He had also called for the establishment of a globally inclusive intergovernmental tax body to strengthen global efforts against IFFs.

The conference in Dakar was organized in line with African Union Decisions and Instruments adopted by African Heads of State and Government. These include the AU Special Declaration Assembly/AU/Decl.5 (XXIV) of January 2015, the Nouakchott Declaration on the African Anti-Corruption Year (June 2018) and the Common African Position on Asset Recovery (CAPAR) adopted by the AU Summit in February 2020. The Head of Secretariat of the African Union High Level Panel on IFFs and the Working Group on Common Africa Position on Asset Recovery (CAPAR), Souad Aden-Osman, emphasised the need for African Voices on IFFs and asset recovery to be heard at the global level. Speaking at one of the plenary sessions of the 2023 Global EITI Conference, Aden-Osman said it had become necessary to strengthen African Voices on stemming IFFs and recovery of assets at the international level. 'The problem with corruption is that the proceeds of corruption are stored somewhere and it is important to put the issue of IFF in the front burner to check this

menace,' she stated. She added, 'Stopping the IFFs and the recovery of African assets in foreign jurisdictions will help the development of African countries.' The Executive Director of the Coalition of Dialogue on Africa (CoDA), Aden-Osman, urged African countries to halt the increasing rate of corruption and IFFs in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal targets.

The Chair of the AU Advisory Board against Corruption (AUABAC), Seynabou Ndiaye Diakhate, called for unity among Member-States of the African Union in the realisation of stemming IFFs. 'Most of the IFFs are from the extractive industries and you will feel like crying if you see the impact of IFFs and corruption on the continent. Fighting corruption and IFFs are not a task for any institution. We need to be united and coordinate our activities in order to have impact and achieve our goal,' Diakhate said. In his submission at the IFFs and Asset Recovery Conference, a member of the African Union High Level Panel on IFFs and the Working Group on CAPAR, Barrister Akere Muna, called on the African governments to flush corruption and IFFs out of the continent. 'African countries should make it hard for the multinational corporations to take money from the continent and hide in foreign jurisdictions.' 'The poorest and weakest suffer most anywhere corruption and IFFs thrive,' he said. He further argued that at 'EITI we have seen the complicity between government officials and extractive companies, multinational corporations, to the detriment of the citizens.' He queried, 'How is it possible that a private jet is loaded with cash and flown to some countries in Africa just to pay bribes?'

The extractive industry contributes to illicit financial flow, through transfer mispricing, where companies intentionally misrepresent the value of goods or services to relocate profits to jurisdictions with lower taxes. Companies may also engage in bribery or other corrupt activities to secure mining or drilling licenses, permits, or favorable tax treatment from government officials. Some foreign companies undertake mass exports of mineral ores from African countries often disguising and grossly understating the true value of the minerals therein. Additionally, the extractive industry may utilize tax havens to minimize tax obligations and evade scrutiny from regulatory bodies. CAPAR is a policy advocacy instrument aimed at assisting AU Member-States to trace, identify, repatriate and subsequently effectively manage their assets, including items of cultural heritage, in a manner that respects their sovereignty and for the benefit of African peoples who are ultimately victims of illicit financial flows. It stands as the best tool for Africa's legal and technical framework in structuring the managing of the return of Africa's stolen assets from the foreign

jurisdictions. .

The Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI)

While in Dakar we came across the West African Regional Coordinator of Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI), Mansor Ndour who explained to this reporter that the Fisheries Transparency Initiative is ‘a global multi-stakeholder partnership that seeks to increase transparency and participation for more sustainability in marine fisheries.’ He argued that FiTI provides governments, all kinds of participants in the fishing industry and civil society with an international framework for credible quality information about national fisheries. ‘It promotes informed public debate about sector policies and supports the long-term contribution of the sector to national economies and the well-being of citizens and the viability of companies.’

The champions of the FiTI in Africa are Seychelles and Mauritania. As the initiative was launched in Africa in Mauritania in 2016 and the headquarters is based in Seychelles. According to Mansor Ndour the platform is currently made up of 78 governments. They commit to develop national action plans for enhanced transparency, accountability and participation co-developed by public officials and representatives of more than 4000 civil society organisations. The principal eligibility criteria for participation are that countries demonstrate disclosure of information essential to ensure transparency of governance and that liberty space is provided to civil society organisations. He added that Transparency in Fisheries initiative ‘started with a snapshot description of the island country in the Indian Ocean with only about 90,000 inhabitants.’ Countries that were on board the FiTI standard, he said, included Schellels, Mauritania, Sao Tome Principe, Cape Verde, Senegal, Madagascar, Guinea and Ecuador while there were plans to bring Peru on board.

According to the Coordinator at Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements, Belgium, Béatrice Gorez, there is lack of transparency characteristic of the operation of foreign fleets in the waters of West African countries. A regional public registers of fishing vessels is badly missing in order to determine beneficial ownership of vessels operating with or without licenses in the region. Among European vessels Spain, Italy and Greece continued their presence. Latvian vessels, some flying the Cameroonian flag were also operating there. Turkey had developed operations in the last few years, but China trumped them all since at

least a decade, often flying local flags or flags of convenience. Their openly fraudulent catch declarations seriously undermined attempts at resource management.

According to the Communication Officer of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, Hamada S'Neiba, the biggest challenges affecting particularly Senegal, The Gambia and Mauritania was the explosive expansion of fishmeal factories. They compete with the local food value chains and redirect increasing quantities of small pelagic to fishmeal and oil for feeds, all the while these resources are already overharvested and suffer from climate change effects. Greater transparency would be a step in the right direction. It should be recalled that in 29-30 March 2023, fisheries practitioners from the South-West Indian Ocean (SWIO) Region gathered in Seychelles to attend a two-day regional workshop aimed at enhancing awareness of the importance of transparency for sustainable fisheries management. The workshop took place under the theme, 'Promoting Transparency for Sustainable Marine Fisheries through Collective Actions in the South-West Indian Ocean (SWIO) Region'.

The SWIO Region has substantial marine resources and valuable fish stocks, contributing significantly to government revenues, food and nutrition security, as well as employment. Fisheries is a core pillar in developing sustainable Blue Economies in SWIO countries, however, recent decades have witnessed unsustainable fishing practices and overexploitation of stocks, due to – inter alia – legal overfishing as well as Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IUUF). Mansor Ndour concluded that EITI and FiTI have many areas of convergence and collaboration. Just like EITI, FiTI has developed an internationally recognised standard which serves as a framework that defines what information on fisheries management should be published.

Sharing Experiences

The EITI standards is designed to promote good governance by enhancing transparency, strengthening accountability and facilitating public debate about the management of natural resources. Since it was first launch ten years ago, the EITI standards has established a common set of miles that governs what and when government and companies should disclose. Unfortunately, while the standard has metamorphosed in its fourth edition, the Cameroon EITI is inventing its own norms. This portion of the report would attempt to X-ray the Cameroon

invented norms, à la *Camerounaise*, so to speak. In accordance of Part 2 of the EITI Standard, where it is manifestly clear that a significant aspect of the EITI Principles and EITI Requirements are not adhere to, by an implementing country, the EITI Board will suspend or delists the country, Requirement (3.3). During the last visit of the validation team in Cameroon, we were handed a matrix of fifteen corrective measures to implement on or before October 1, 2023 to carry out corrective actions regarding civil society engagement (Requirement 1.3), MSG oversight (Requirement 1.4), work plan (Requirement 1.5), contract and license allocations (Requirement 2.2), register of licenses (Requirement 2.3), contracts (Requirement 2.4), beneficial ownership (Requirement 2.5), state participation (Requirement 2.6), data timeliness (Requirement 4.8), distribution of revenues (Requirement 5.1), subnational transfers (Requirement 5.2), social expenditures (Requirement 6.1), quasi-fiscal expenditures (Requirement 6.2), public debate (Requirement 7.1) and review of outcomes and impacts of EITI implementation (Requirement 7.4). Failure to demonstrate progress in the third Validation will result in temporary suspension in accordance with Article 6 of the EITI Standard.

Thereafter, the Cameroon government took a firm engagement to catch up with these exigencies but during our last visit to Dakar June 13-15, 2023, and after sharing our experiences with others countries like; Papua New Guinea, Gabon, Suriname, Argentina, Mauritania, Ukraine and Senegal, it seems to this investigator that the government's engagement is a pipe dream. The Protocol Participation of civil society engagement stipulates that 'the civil society must fully, actively and effectively engaged in the EITI process' and 'that the government is required to ensure that there is an enabling environment for civil society participation with regard to relevant laws, regulations and administrative rules as well as actual practice in implementation of the EITI.' Requirement (3.1 a & b). According to the second validation report, page 10, the International Secretariat, recommended that, 'the civil society constituency should address the concerns regarding constituency representation, including potential conflict of interest linked to *perdiems* and ensure more effective liaison between the CSO representatives and the broader constituency.'

Instead, of respecting scrupulously this recommendation, à la camerounaise has come up with an obnoxious Prime Ministerial Text designating six civil society

organisations into the Multi-stake holder Group (MSG) with the lame reason that those designated by this degree has a wider civil society space and were founding members of EITI in 2023. While in Dakar, a member of Gabon MSG, Nziengui Marcellin who dismissed the Prime Minister's disposition of CSO representativeness as not only ridiculous but also irrelevant to EITI Standards.

In accordance to Requirement (2. 5) regarding ownership thresholds for reporting beneficial owners, lower thresholds for reporting the beneficial owners of oil, gas and mining companies enable the public to have a more comprehensive view of who benefits from natural resources. The EITI Standard now encourages countries to adopt an ownership threshold of 10% or lower. This means that any individual who directly or indirectly holds this or a higher percentage of shares of a company will be disclosed as a beneficial owner. Countries are required to request companies to disclose any politically exposed persons (PEPs) who directly and indirectly hold interest in a company, regardless of their level of ownership. To take corrective measures, the second validation report talks of self-censorship on the issue of beneficial ownership...which impeded the CSO's work on independent monitoring of social and environmental impact of mining activities, given that it could not hold company accountable and had to publish its study anonymously. Whereas, the Cameroon EITI committee has adopted these definitions but the government of Cameroon has invented its standards in the inter-ministerial guide on beneficial ownership that talks of 20% threshold and professional secrets on 'health concerns of the beneficial owner as well as security or defense,'

Requirements (3. 2 and 3. 3) of the 2023 EITI Standard shed light on companies' cost as well as higher quality disclosures on production and exports. 'Production and export data that is broken down by project or even by transaction, enables detailed analysis. It can help to identify and address risks related to revenue lost, such as underreporting of volumes or values.' On June 2 2023, the Cameroon EITI Committee made a significant progress by adopting cost oil and profit oil in its 2021 conciliatory report. What remains a steam in the tea cup is the lack of sub national transfer in the Petroleum Code. The second validation report indicates that there is self-censorship by CSOs and media on criticisms of SNH's 'direct interventions,' due to fears of accusations of treason or sympathizing with Anglophone insurgents. While in Dakar, we analyzed in a restrained group, the sales of Cameroon oil

between 2017-2020 by SNH, where the results of the study revealed that there exist ‘a lot of inconsistencies in the sales of oil in Cameroon.’

We also questioned SNH lawyer, Barrister Makon, on why sub national transfers of oil are not included in the Petroleum Code. He said, *‘ils ont enlevé, ils ont l’habitude de faire ça.’* This reporter then mounted the rostrum to question the reason d’être of quasi-fiscal expenditure where SNH defends her action based on ‘security and sovereignty. The United Nations Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel, Abdoulaye Mar Dieye said, ‘I have told Bretton Woods Institutions not to disburse funds generated from the sales of our natural resources to African governments on security concerns and repayment of debts, but they would not listen and keep on doing so.’ What guarantees security of every country is a ‘process designed to create conditions of economic and social progress for communities.’ These involves the availability of all seasoned paved roads, safe drinking water facilities, youth employment, modern health and educational facilities, electricity, as well as recreational centres. On the disclosure of gas and oil contracts, the Cameroonian stakeholders have invented the ‘confidentiality clause’ and anonymous clauses as scapegoat principles. While in Dakar, Akere Muna said the confidentiality clause as well as anonymous clause are ‘dame nonsense.’

Action taken since our return from Dakar-Senegal

While in Dakar, I received an invitation from the British High Commissioner to Cameroon H. E. Dr. Christian Dennys-McClure to attend a farewell event in honour of returning UK Chevening scholars on Friday, June 23, 2023. I had a chat with the outgoing High Commissioner, Dr. Christian Dennys-McClure who noted that, ‘working together at the international stage is very important.’ I presented a project idea on, ‘Just Energy Transition in Cameroon,’ to him who recommended that I should hand it to Martin his collaborator. The British High Commissioner to Cameroon H. E. Dr. Christian Dennys-McClure handed over his functions to the deputy High Commissioner, Guy Harrison.

I also announced my intention in meeting with a member of government during the thirteenth session of the steering committee of the public finance platform that Global Public Finance Reform Plan (PGRGFP) 2019-2021. I was granted audience by the Minister Delegate in Charge of Finance to talk about my trip to Dakar for the 2023 EITI Global Conference and the need of the Chair of Netherland Commission on Environmental Assessment availability to

work with the Cameroon government.

On Tuesday 27 June 2023, at La Falaise Hotel here in Yaoundé during a round table conference I had the opportunity to share with Senators and Parliamentarians on the mutations of 2023 EITI Standard. The round table conference was organised by the African Regional Center for Community and Endogenous Development in French abbreviation (CRADEC), as part of the implementation of the project entitled, 'Strengthening Tax Justice in Cameroon'. The project is financed by the Norwegian Development Agency (NORAD) with the support of Tax Justice Network Africa (TJNA). Participants included parliamentarians, members of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and the representatives from various press organs. The main objective is to commit the decision-makers involved in the preparation, conduct and exploitation of the DOB to improve the efficacy parliamentary debate on budgeting allocation as well as propose oral questions to parliamentarians for adoption in order to present them for scrutiny during parliamentary debate.

Conclusion

From our encounter in Dakar, we discovered the strengths of EITI Standard. The Strength of the EITI has been to adapt to current and evolving challenges. The 2023 Standard strengthens the disclosures and governance requirements to improve understanding of 'the impact of the energy transition, address corruption risks, promote gender equity and strengthen revenue collection.' It also witnessed the global shift towards a low-carbon economy, which would have a range of impacts on the citizens of resource-rich countries. We therefore recommend the Cameroon government to be fully committed with the engagement of EITI standard if they want remain in this prestigious club. All this is happening when an international money-laundering watchdog known as the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) announced recently that it has put Cameroon, Croatia and Vietnam on its 'grey list' of countries under increased monitoring. The three nations join 23 others on the list which are 'actively working with the FATF to address the strategic deficiencies in their regimes to counter money laundering, terrorist financing and proliferation financing.'