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Lawmakers from Four African Nations Gather to Build Knowledge, Share Lessons

May 11-13, 2010 – Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: African legislators, civil society and media meet to debate their role in fostering prudent governance of oil, gas and mining for sustainable growth and development.

Earlier this month, Revenue Watch and our partners gathered parliamentary leaders and other experts from four resource rich African countries for a candid and in-depth regional dialogue on the role of legislators, civil society and media in resource development in Africa.

The event took place from May 11 to May 13 at the White Sands Hotel, in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, where historic changes are underway as Tanzania prepares to implement a series of important changes to its mining law.



Above: Attendees at the Regional Conference on Africa's Oil, Gas and Mineral Resources for Development: The Role of Legislators, Civil Society and Media

The conference provided a first-time opportunity for conversation and learning among stakeholders from the four countries where RWI and our partners are implementing cutting-edge programs to strengthen the lawmaking and oversight capacity legislators in the governance of oil, gas and minerals. Participants also had the chance to explore issues of parliamentarians' collaboration with other national oversight groups such as civil society and media.

Approximately 50 delegates from Ghana, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Uganda attended the event, which was a joint undertaking of RWI and its parliamentary project counterparts [Policy Forum](#) of Tanzania, the [National Advocacy Coalition on Extractives](#)

(NACE) of Sierra Leone, the [African Institute for Energy Governance](#) (AFIEGO) of Uganda and the Africa office of the [Parliamentary Centre](#), based in Accra, Ghana.

The majority of participants were drawn from members of national parliaments, with the noteworthy participation of chairpersons and high ranking MPs from key committees such as energy and mines, public accounts and economic and finance committees. Other participants came from leading civil society organizations and media houses that are actively monitoring and reporting on the governance of extractive industries in their countries.

The conference had three objectives. We sought to provide legislators, civil society and media with expert training as well as peer-to-peer knowledge-sharing from experiences in the oversight of oil, gas and mining industries and the revenues they generate. Secondly, it created an opportunity to establish channels for collaboration between delegates of the same country and also from different countries. Finally, it served as a platform to present all groups attending with additional intellectual, training and technical assistance resources on the extractive industries.

The conference was organized around several major topic areas. The first day focused on debating and understanding the importance of the extractive industries as an engine for development. Participants were also presented with the latest trends in oil, gas and mining in Africa and discussed the key challenges and opportunities they provide for African policy-makers and oversight bodies. A lively debate took place on the role of legislators, civil society and media in monitoring government's decisions along the value chain of extraction.

The overarching themes of day two were maximizing a country's take from resource revenues and spending those revenues well. Professor Eva Thorne of Brandeis University opened the day with a technical training on fiscal terms, revenue management tools and redistribution of revenues at the sub-national level. Later, country panel discussions put the spotlight on MPs, civil society and media from Tanzania and Uganda who shared national experiences.

On the final day, legal expert Susan Maples of Columbia University presented on extractive industry contracts and their key role in sector governance. Discussion also included a presentation on the preliminary results of an upcoming RWI/Columbia University survey on public and parliamentary access to extractive contracts. Delegates from Uganda and Sierra Leone then held two debates that covered contracts and other topics. The final session provided a look ahead to additional learning opportunities and a discussion of the next steps in ongoing national parliamentary capacity building projects.

The meeting had a convivial atmosphere throughout all three days, as groups seized the chance to learn from their counterparts from other nations and disciplines. The panel discussions between country delegates were the highlight of the event. Legislators and civil society delegates from Tanzania gave a frank account of their debates and collaborations during the recent review of national mining legislation. And Sierra

Leoneans offered a similarly compelling description of dialogue between citizen groups and parliament on several issues, including the recent controversial negotiation of the Sierra Leone's London Mining agreement.

Ghanaian delegates talked about their nascent oil industry and the paramount importance of drafting and approving prudent oil legislation that will bring tangible benefits to a country where solid minerals have played too small a role in supporting national development. The Ugandan panel reviewed concerns and opportunities provided by the Lake Albert oil find, one of Africa's largest on-shore discoveries in the last decade, and the measures been taken to ensure that oil extraction is a pillar of development in this fast-growing East African nation. Civil society members stressed the need for greater transparency in the sector, including contract disclosure, as a means to dissipate growing fears and mistrust surrounding the oil industry.

With most participating countries poised to introduce new policies and legislation to govern the extractive sector, the workshop was an especially timely occasion to share experiences and address knowledge gaps. Participants departed the workshop with concrete plans on how to engage their peers from other countries in future capacity building activities that RWI and our local partners will continue to provide as part of ongoing national parliamentary projects.

For RWI and our partners, this unprecedented workshop confirmed the widespread need among legislators for practical and in-depth information to aid in the effective performance of their crucial policy and oversight functions for the extractive sector. It also demonstrated many times over that a productive collaboration between parliaments and their civil society counterparts is possible and also essential to ensuring that the extractive industries become a catalyst for economic growth and development across Africa.

For more information on the conference, including agenda and list of participants, please refer to the Policy Forum website: <http://www.policyforum-tz.org/node/7429>.

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