

Speech by H.E. Mr. Maarten Brouwer
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Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) Conference
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- I am honoured to be here at this important event, marking the continued and increasing relevance and importance of the EITI.
- Our planet's physical and social limits are coming into sight. And unfortunately the poorest will feel the consequences the most. This notion is cause for more reflection on the role development cooperation can play to help solve the major problems of our time. Central to this thinking is the fact that economic growth and employment are essential to poverty reduction; we need to focus more on enhancing countries' self-reliance.
- In order to do this, innovative partnerships can play an important role. We need to create synergy between a wide range of players that is necessary for alternative solutions. I am referring here to the 'well-informed citizens' who take their destiny into their own hands; to companies that create employment and develop products that not only sell well, but are also relevant to poor people; to NGOs that have to make interests visible; and to governments that are responsible for social policy, legal certainty and security.
- Historically, these may not always have been the most natural of partnerships and they remain fragile. However the relationship between development cooperation and the business sector has changed substantially over the years. It is generally acknowledged that the private sector has an important role to play in the fight against poverty. The business community is increasingly accepting its responsibilities. And the development world is increasingly ready to accept the private sector as a partner. To give you an example: at the recent Millennium Development Goal Summit, high-level representatives of Dutch government and businesses jointly underlined the importance of public-private partnerships in reaching the Millennium Development Goals.
- We need to continue building these partnerships, in order to stimulate economic growth and employment, and ensure that large numbers of people will be included, economically and socially, into society. There is an urgent need for more good, innovative ideas.
- The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative is one of these innovative ideas. The EITI brings together the positions and priorities of a very diverse group of actors to push forward a shared agenda, which is beneficial to all parties involved. We see this as one of the EITI's main strengths, as an important achievement. After all, to kick-start and create initial enthusiasm for such a novel process takes time, energy and

dedication. To sustain broad support and a strong momentum will perhaps prove to be an even bigger challenge.

- Over the years, momentum has increased impressively. The number of implementing countries is growing, business interest is expanding, and EITI has introduced discussions in developing countries and developed countries alike. It also features on the agenda of international fora and institutions such as the G8 and G20, the OECD, and the European Union. It is seen as an example, a fore-runner to many other transparency initiatives. And I must say that with the mere number of people attending this conference, and the enthusiasm of the many participants in the exhibition, it is difficult not to be impressed.
- Of course, there are many challenges still to overcome. For example, the EITI needs to broaden and diversify the community of implementing countries; it has to establish visible evidence of the impact and the benefits of implementation; and it has to assist and guide countries after reaching compliant status. After all, the EITI is not a goal by itself, it's a first step towards a broader agenda to increase transparency, enhance accountability, and reach stable economic development.
- With this in mind, the Government of the Netherlands has been and will continue to be a strong supporter of the EITI, through a long-term financial commitment to the EITI Secretariat and a substantial contribution to the EITI Multi-Donor Trust Fund. And as we see the support and momentum for the EITI growing, we look forward to our continued involvement in further shaping and strengthening the initiative.
- I would like to thank Peter Eigen, as chair stepping down, and welcome Clare Short as the new Chair.
- In the spirit of the importance we attach to public-private partnerships, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs has partnered with Shell and our valued NGO Cordaid to offer to host the 18th Meeting of the EITI Board this Fall in The Hague.