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Campaigners welcome Tokyo commitment on Afghanistan's extractives

Campaigners today welcomed a landmark agreement on good governance in Afghanistan's mining sector, but warned that civil society engagement, deal disclosures and inclusion of environmental and social safeguards will be critical to its success.

Representatives from over 70 countries met in Tokyo on Sunday to decide on the future of development assistance to Afghanistan post-2014, once most international forces have withdrawn from the country. The *Mutual Accountability Framework* agreed at the Conference includes a crucial commitment to develop a plan for how the country's mineral wealth will be well-managed: something which civil society groups have been calling for.

"This is an important step towards embedding accountability in Afghanistan's mining sector," said Eleanor Nichol of Global Witness. "The devil's in the detail though, and the specifics on the forthcoming plan are crucial. At a minimum, we will look for a commitment to full transparency in all deals and to consultations with local civil society."

The Conference recognised the importance of the extractives sector as a primary driver of sustainable, inclusive economic growth and job creation in Afghanistan. While welcoming this, campaigners cautioned that an emphasis solely on making money could undermine the sector's sustainability.

"We've seen elsewhere that rapid development of this sector without social and environmental safeguards abuses can stoke conflict and corruption," said Yama Torabi of Integrity Watch Afghanistan. "To avoid this scenario in Afghanistan, it is vital that the rush to exploit these resources does not happen at the expense of those living around the mines."

Campaigners also called for civil society to play a full role in developing and monitoring the anticipated plan.

"An empowered civil society can play a key role in monitoring extractive projects and ensuring Afghanistan gets a good deal for its mineral resources," said Katarina Kuai of the Revenue Watch Institute. "We are encouraged that the Ministry of Mines has publicly recognized civil society as a valuable stakeholder in the sector's development. But it remains to be seen whether good intents translate into meaningful partnership under this new framework. The international community must play its part, continuing support for the work of Afghan civil society in this key sector."

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Notes:

1) Global Witness investigates and campaigns to prevent natural resource-related conflict and corruption and associated environmental and human rights abuses.

Integrity Watch Afghanistan is an Afghan civil society organization promoting accountability, transparency and integrity in public service delivery, extractive industries and the reconstruction sector.

The Revenue Watch Institute is a non-profit policy institute and grantmaking organization that promotes the effective, transparent and accountable management of oil, gas and mineral resources for the public good.

2) The Ministry of Mines issued a response to a joint civil society letter ahead of Tokyo on the 11th of June 2012 (http://bit.ly/NdzafI), outlining what they feel the role of civil society should be in the development of the extractives sector. (See the Ministry of Mines Response here: http://bit.ly/LHAiwv).

3) Commitments to the *Extractive Industries Development Framework* can be found in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (http://bit.ly/LIWd1K) and the main conference statement can also be found on the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs website (http://bit.ly/MUR8Hp).