WELCOME ADDRESS BY ANEEJ EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, REV. DAVID UGOLOR DURING A PRE- OGP GLOBAL SUMMIT NATIONAL DIALOGUE HELD AT ROCKVIEW (ROYALE) HOTEL, ABUJA ON 14TH MAY, 2019

Protocol,

I will like to welcome you all to this important national dialogue ahead of the Open Government Partnership, OGP Global Summit. The Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice (ANEEJ) is hosting this event as part of the implementation of her Monitoring the Use of Recovered Assets in Nigeria through Transparency and Accountability (MANTRA) project.

The MANTRA project was designed to address issues of corruption within the broader objectives of the Anti-Corruption in Nigeria (ACORN) programme of the British Government's Department for International Development (DFID), which aims to strengthen the anticorruption regime in Nigeria.

Specifically, MANTRA project has clear focus, which includes;

- strengthening the capacity of CSOs and citizens to monitor the use of repatriated loot,

- embark on advocacy to improve the policy, legislative and institutional framework for the recovery and management of looted assets in Nigeria,

- mobilise collective action in demanding a cleaner society

So far, ANEEJ and its six partners have worked with over 500 monitors in 11 States, to monitor the disbursement of the $322.5m recovered Abacha loot for Conditional Cash Transfer Programme. As at December, 2018 when we carried out field monitoring of the returned loot, otherwise known as Abacha 2, a little above N6bn have been paid to beneficiaries (comprising 80% from $322.5m recovered Abacha loot and 20% from FG contribution). Through the MANTRA project and the contributions from other organisations, significant progress has been made with respect to advocacy around passage of pending anti-corruption bills before the 8th National Assembly. In the

process, we have received excellent cooperation from the relevant government agencies including Office of the Vice President host of the National Social Investment Office, National Cash Transfer Office, National Social Safety Net Coordinating Office, Federal Ministry of Justice, among several others.

The 2018 self-assessment carried out by the Nigeria on the implementation of Open Government Partnership (OGP) revealed modest progress made across key commitment areas. There have been initiatives at ensuring budget transparency and inclusion like town hall meetings with citizens, Citizen's Guides being produced by the Federal Budget Office and the iMonitor platform developed for citizens feedback on project implementation in their communities. Nigeria has moved 24 points in the World Bank Ease of Doing business index because of actions taken by the Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council (PEBEC) to improve the business environment in the country between 2016 -2017. On anti-corruption, actions include setting up an Asset Recovery Management Unit and providing a framework for CSO monitoring of the recovery and utilization of assets in its agreement between the Swiss government on the return of the Abacha loot and the National Anti-corruption Strategy. Nigeria is now a member of the Global OGP International Steering Committee, the executive decision-making organ of the initiative.

However, Government must show more commitment to the process by providing consistent leadership at the global, national and state levels. This must be backed by allocating resources to the initiative. Specific commitments can be funded under the implementing agencies budgets, but the coordinating body must have dedicated resources. The country should also prioritise meeting international commitments like actively participating in the International Steering Committee's meetings and paying its annual dues among others.

We are all aware that the 6th Open Government Partnership Global Summit will be hosted by the Government of Canada (being the lead government chair of the OGP since October 1, 2018) and Open Government Partnership international secretariat in Ottawa, Canada, from May 29-31, 2019. The Summit will bring together the 79 member countries and 20 local governments of the OGP. Participants will be drawn from governments, civil society groups, academia, private sector and beyond who will share

knowledge and together create solutions for more open and transparent governments around the globe.

At the summit, ANEEJ and MacArthur Foundation will be hosting a side event which will focus on *Asset Recovery in OGP: Peer-Learning on Recovery, Return, and Utilisation – Lessons from the Field.* The organisers of the Summit in Canada approved this session from amongst over 800 applications received from around the world. It was chosen under one of the three areas the Summit is focusing to reflect; Creating impact by investing in digital democracy: It is from the standpoint that the application of open government lens on digital change is imperative to strengthening democracy. Organisers of the Summit in Canada are of the strong view that we should be building a coalition of OGP members to help enshrine citizen's rights for digital era and to develop the rules and ethical standards around data access, control and privacy.

Going to Canada will be another opportunity to showcase the MANTRA model which is currently gaining traction around the world. Let me use this opportunity to invite all delegates from Nigeria who will be travelling to Canada from 28-31 of this month to the side event.

The OGP summit has thus come at the right time and offers a great opportunity for peer learning among implementing countries especially as the summit focusses on issues of inclusion, participation and impact. ANEEJ has conceived this pre- OGP Global summit national dialogue to create opportunity for stakeholders in Nigeria, ahead of the event, to,

- identify the potentials and opportunities for Nigeria at the summit in Ottawa, Canada;

- discuss critical areas of interest during the summit and explore further avenue for peer learning on how to improve OGP implementation; and,

- review the implementation of the first NAP and provide inputs and recommendation to guide the preparation of the second NAP with respect to the anti-corruption commitments

We are delighted that you honoured our invitation to attend this important event despite your busy schedules, as without your presence this event would not have happened. I cannot end this address without putting on record the invaluable support of everyone in the room to the implementation of Mantra project. But permit me to single out a few

Chamions of Mantra for mention; Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Professor Yemi Osinbajo who graciously launched the project last year and support he has been providing through his office. The Special Adviser to the President on Social Investment Programme, Hajia Mariam Uwais, the Honourable Attorney-General and Minister of Justice Abubakar Malami, SAN, the Special Adviser to the President on Justice Reform, Mrs. Juliet Ibekaku and the Head of Asset Recovery and Management Unit (ARMU) Hajia, Ladidi Muhammed. We love your services to our father land and we appreciate your commitment in ensuring the entrenchment of open governance in a challenging environment. We are also grateful to the Switzerland Ambassador to Nigeria for their leading role in the repatriation of looted assets in Nigeria. In the same vein, we remain eternally grateful to DFID Nigeria for supporting MANTRA and this pre- OGP Global Summit National Dialogue. Let me also single out for mention, the SRO of the Anti-Corruption (ACORN) Programme in DFID Nigeria, Ms Sonia Warner for her immense support and we actually see her as the Mummy of Mantra or put in our local parlance, MAMA MANTRA. We also wish to express our profound gratitude to MacArthur Foundation for working with us to host the side event in Ottawa, Canada. We are glad as well that the Canadian Embassy in Nigeria, and other stakeholders are part of this historic event. Let me use this opportunity to wish our Muslim brothers and Sisters Ramadan Kareem and to you **all,** who have devoted time to be here, we say thank you and God bless.