



The Honorable Bob Corker
Chairman
US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

The Honorable Ben Cardin
Ranking Member
US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
423 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Corker and Ranking Member Cardin:

As representatives of Publish What You Pay (PWYP) member organizations, and other supporting organizations, we write to express our views as you prepare to vet ExxonMobil CEO Rex Tillerson for the position of United States Secretary of State.

Publish What You Pay is a global civil society coalition that works for a more open and accountable oil, gas, and mining sector. We have over 700 member organizations spanning nearly 60 countries around the world, many of which host ExxonMobil operations. One of PWYP's core objectives is to ensure that citizens are able to follow the money paid by oil, gas, and mining companies to governments in order to fight corruption and hold leaders to account for how these vast sums of money are spent.

The United States' commitment to promote democracy and protect human rights -- including the protection of free speech and the free association of civil society -- is a fundamental contribution to our common battle against kleptocracy and corruption in the oil, gas, and mining sectors. As you know, billions of dollars flow to governments from these sectors every year, dwarfing foreign aid in many countries. As aid budgets shrink, our members and other concerned citizens, are working hard to ensure that precious domestic financial resources generated from the oil, gas, and mining sectors are safeguarded from corruption, mismanagement and waste, so that these funds can be invested in ways that effectively tackle poverty and establish stable and thriving economies. But for us and our fellow citizens to succeed in this goal, we must have the crucial weapons of freedom, voice and transparency.

Unfortunately, the space in which we are able to press for change is closing. Last month, PWYP launched a report with CIVICUS, the Global Alliance for Citizen Participation, that documents the disturbing increase in sometimes lethal risks facing citizens that tackle corruption and

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injustice in the oil, gas, and mining sectors.¹ In many countries around the world, laws exist or are being adopted which tighten controls on citizens and their ability to hold governments to account. This includes restrictions on speech, tightening controls on civic space and freedom of association, and the criminalization of activism. The report documents cases of intimidation and violence against our members, and their families and colleagues; the public vilification of those brave enough to speak out; and unwarranted surveillance. Now is the time when the United States government is needed as a voice for democracy around the world, to defend civil society activists when they exercise their freedom of speech, and their right to fight oil, gas, and mining corruption.

Under the Bush Administration as well as the Obama Administration, the State Department has played a critical role in addressing some of these threats by promoting transparency in the extractives sector, speaking out against repression, and taking actions in defense of civil society activists and journalists fighting for accountability. US embassies, as well as the Energy Bureau, and the Bureau of Democracy, Rights and Labor, have employed their diplomatic tools to protect and advocate for active citizens to hold governments to account.

Equally important is US leadership in global efforts to counter corruption in the oil, gas, and mining sectors, by vigorously promoting transparency efforts. The US has led the way since passing the bipartisan Cardin-Lugar extractives transparency provision in 2010. Thanks to US leadership, equivalent disclosure requirements are now being implemented in over 30 countries² and have set a new global standard on transparency in the sector. These transparency measures apply to the majority of the world's leading oil, gas, and mining companies, including state-owned companies from Russia, China and Brazil. These rules play an essential role in providing citizens with information on payments to governments that would otherwise be kept secret. It is also crucial that the US government continues to participate in, finance, and provide political and technical support to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). This is necessary to continue to inspire peer governments to join and to achieve high standards of transparency.

It is essential that the State Department continues to demonstrate stalwart leadership in these areas, as a weakening of the US commitment to transparency would send precisely the wrong signal to our governments, at a time when civil society is increasingly under threat. A weakening

¹ Publish What You Pay & CIVICUS, "Against All Odds: The Perils of Fighting for Natural Resource Justice" <http://www.publishwhatyoupay.org/pwyp-resources/against-all-odds/>.

² Laws requiring mandatory payment disclosure for extractive industries companies have been passed in the 28 member states of the European Union, Norway, and Canada.

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of US leadership would greatly undermine our work to improve accountability and ensure the wise use of oil, gas, and mining revenues.

We thank Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin and the members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for their consideration of the concerns we have outlined above. We hope that the United States of America will continue to be a leader in increasing transparency and accountability in the oil, gas and mining sector.

Sincerely,

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