

Communiqué issued at the end of the Second National Consultation on the Environment held in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, 25 - 26 November 2009

Civil leaders, community-based organizations, civil society organizations, development experts, the academia, legal practitioners, the media and representatives of government agencies met from November 25-26, 2009 at the Grand Montecito Hotel in Port Harcourt, Rivers State to critically examine the growing impact of fossil fuel extraction on the climate and issues around oil as a sustainable economic backbone for Nigeria.

The event, themed: "Envisioning a post-Petroleum Nigeria", was the second in the series of convergence, aimed at stimulating broad-based national discourse on the state of the environment and was organized by the Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria (ERA/FoEN) in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Environment.

In his introductory remarks, ERA/FoEN Executive Director, Nnimmo Bassey explained that the theme of the consultation was chosen as a wakeup call to all stakeholders in the Nigerian project, to address the devastating effects of crude oil on the economy and environment as well as the central need of planning for a post-oil economy.

At the end of the Consultation, participants observed that:

Global warming and other grave environmental hazards are primarily a result of extractive activities, particularly oil extraction.

Over five decades of oil extraction in Nigeria have not impacted positively on the citizenry and particularly the people of the Niger Delta, whose livelihoods have been eroded because of regular pollution of farmlands and rivers.

Women, children and other vulnerable persons in the Niger Delta and other resource-bearing communities across the country have been made vulnerable due to resource conflicts and are exposed to severe human rights abuse.

By failing to halt gas flaring in the Niger Delta, the Nigerian government has demonstrated a lack of preparedness to committing to reduce the effects of climate change even as it joins climate talks in Copenhagen

Violent conflicts and criminality in the Niger Delta region and particularly in oil-bearing communities are direct results of corruption rooted in the operations of oil industry.

Life expectancy in the Niger Delta has continued to decline yearly as a result of environmental pollution in the region and today stands at an appalling 41 years.

There is flagrant disregard for international standards in the oil industry particularly the non-observance of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) on projects with far-reaching impacts on local communities.

The Federal Government's planned deregulation of the downstream oil sector will only benefit a profiteering cabal in the country and not the vast majority of the population.

The Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) as currently prepared by the Federal Government is fundamentally flawed and is anti-people as it neither allows for communities to be notified of risks nor seeks their endorsement for environmental management plans. In addition to numerous gaps, the PIB does not offer sufficient penalties to deter infringement of its provisions.

Nigeria's oil industry is still rife with oil theft and inaccuracy in volumes of oil extracted and what is actually made public, and makes a nonsense of governments touted policy on transparency and accountability

The amnesty programme of the Federal Government is yet to address key human rights and developmental challenges in the Niger Delta and may fail with unimaginable consequences.

Ecological funds meant for remediation have been regularly diverted to other uses that do not have a bearing on impacted environments.

Massive land grabs promoted by agribusinesses and oil corporations erode traditional farming practices on the African continent.

The Nigerian government is yet to demonstrate sufficient commitment to growing the national economy by failure to fund research and qualitative education in addition to poorly thought-out policies that promote disruption in the educational sector.

There is low awareness on environmental issues in the country.

Participants therefore strongly recommend that:

All new oil finds must be left in the ground. The planned exploitation of bitumen should be halted as the extraction will inflict unmitigated disaster on communities and raise new levels of conflicts.

The Leave Oil in the Ground message should be popularized.

Gas flaring is a violation of the rights of Nigerians to life as is enshrined in the constitution and must end today

The Federal Government must take steps to ascertain and publish the volumes of oil extracted daily in the nation. As a follow up to this, it must take immediate steps to stop all forms of oil theft.

A need exists for mass awareness and mobilization of local communities to resist gas flaring and other unfriendly environmental practices in the Niger Delta and other parts of Nigeria where resource conflicts are a growing reality.

The authentic Petroleum Industry Bill must address genuine concerns of the oil-bearing communities by seeking their endorsement on environmental management plans. It must also proffer sufficient penalties for infringement of the provisions.

Any provision in the Petroleum Industry Bill that is aimed at expropriating land and resources from the people must be abrogated.

Political leadership of the Niger Delta must judiciously use the resources of the region for development.

The amnesty programme of the Federal Government should address the real issues of underdevelopment in the Niger Delta and open channels for genuine reconciliation of all aggrieved people of the region.

The Nigerian state must fund qualitative education and indigenous research to address challenges of development.

Women and the vulnerable in the society must be protected from the fallouts of resource conflicts while identified cases of violation of their rights must be adequately redressed.

All stakeholders-communities, civil society groups, government agencies, the media, among others, must work collaboratively to expose unsound environmental practices and mobilize for laws that will reverse the trend.

In conclusion, we are united in our opposition to new oil blocs and call on all progressive-minded peoples and organizations to support our call that new oil finds be left in the ground and bitumen left in the soil.

Signed:

Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria
Host Communities Network (HoCoN)
Nigerian Environmental Study/Action Team (NEST), Ibadan
Social Action, Port Harcourt
Nigeria Cassava Growers Association
African Centre for Leadership Strategy and Development, Abuja
Environment, Health and Communication Initiative
Persons with Disabilities Action Network (PEDANET)
United Action for Democracy (UAD)
Conflict Resolution Trainers Network (CROTIN)
Grace Fellowship Africa
Students Environmental Assembly
Campaigners for Justice, Equity and Fairness (CJEF), Benin City
Society for the Rights of the Girl Child
Women Environmental Programme
Journalists for Democratic Rights (JODER)
Council for Leadership and Development (CLD)
Society for Empowerment and Self-Reliance (SESER)
Youth Empowerment and Child Labor Elimination Project (YCEP)
Foundation for Conservation of the Earth (FOCONE)
Green Concern for Development (Green Code), formerly ABGREMO, Calabar
Centre for Rural Integration and Development
UGREEN Foundation
Development Information Network (DEVNET)
Child Health Organisation
Concern for Habitat Development
LEAP Foundation
Nigeria Tobacco Control Alliance (NTCA)
Niger Delta Budget Monitoring Group
Children Initiative
Centre for Development Communications (CENDEC)
National Point Newspapers
Foundation Against Social Trauma and Environmental Ravage (FASTER)
Wildlife Preservation Trust
Trade Network Initiative (TNI)
Centre for Socio-Economic Development
HRJPF
Movement for Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP)
CEHRD

Oruma Community
Ogoni Solidarity Forum
Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law
HEDA, Lagos
People Against Drug Dependence and Ignorance (PADDI)
Gender Awareness and Development Associates (GADA)
Centre for Development Support Initiatives
CUAED
Nurses Across Borders
Institute for Dispute Resolution
Kebet Kache Women Development and Resource Centre
Environ-Green Integrated Initiative
Alfred Ozo Foundation
Social Development Integrated Centre (SDIC)
Centre for Human Empowerment, Advancement and Development
Association for Promotion of Human Development, Gombe State
Bamidele Aturu & Co
Women and Children Life Advancement Initiative, Katsina State
Foundation for Sustainable Development
Care for Youth Initiative
Future of Our Environment
CIC Benin
Centre for Development Support Initiatives (CEDSI-Nigeria)
OGDEMOVE
Centre for Social and Corporate Responsibility (CSCR) Port Harcourt
Hand of Hope Foundation
Friends of the Needy and Oppressed Foundation (FONAO) Foundation
Centre for the Advancement of Children and Women Rights
Centre for Creative Arts Education, Port Harcourt
Goodwill Homage Foundation
Green Earth Links
The Olive -Child Foundation
Mag Foundation for Women
Freshfields Solicitors, Port Harcourt
Our Niger Delta
River Ethiope Trust Foundation
Gender and Development Action
Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO)
Peculiar People Foundation
Impact and Systems International, Abuja
Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC), Ijebu-Ode
Centre for Constitutionalism and Demilitarisation (CENCOD), Lagos
Imo Mass Movement
Women in Technology Education and Employment
Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC), Abuja
Basic Rights Action
Legal Hands, Benin City
Rural Women and Youth Development Initiative, Ikom, Cross Rivers State
Koyenum Immalah Foundation (Publish What you Pay)
Save Earth Nigeria
Peace and Development Projects
Neighborhood Environmentwatch Foundation
Organisation for Sustenance of the Nigerian Environment
Ijaw Council for Human Rights
Association for Responsible Citizenship (ARC) Gombe
Women Centre for Quality Living and Practice, Benin City
Campaign for Democracy
Gender Environmental and Sustainable Development Initiative (GENSDI)
ANPEZ Centre for Environment and Development

Peace and Development Projects (PEDEP)

100. African Network for Environment and Economic Justice (ANEEJ)
101. D.U Akamakusi & Associates
102. Global Youth Coalition on HIV/AIDS (GYCA)
103. Niger Delta Coastal Communities Development Association
ND-COCODA
104. Christars Global Development Foundation, Port Harcourt
105. African Center for Sustainable Livelihoods (AFRICSUL)
106. Iwherekan Community, Delta State
107. Africa Centre for Corporate Responsibility (ACCR)
108. Community Forest Watch (CFW), Iguobazuwa, Edo State
109. Singles & Success Organisation
110. Academic Foundation Network, Ete Community
111. Gender Action Group
112. Climate Change Network Nigeria (CCN)
113. Niger Delta Development Initiative (NDDI)
114. Environmental Outreach Magazine, Yenagoa
115. FISHCAREPLUS
116. Oilwatch Africa
117. Publish What You Pay