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OGONI STAR

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Ogoni Weeps As Gani Passes On

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Chief Gani Fawehinmi being presented with an Ogoni National Merit Award by former Deputy Gov. of Rivers State, Sir G. Tobi in Bori, 2003

Environmental Destruction

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NDCAV calls for immediate sack of Lukman

The Niger Delta Coalition Against Violence (NDCAV), Rivers State, has called for the immediate sack of the Petroleum Minister, Dr. Rilwanu Lukman by the Federal Government. The call was made during an extra-ordinary meeting of the body held in Port Harcourt recently towards current happenings in the Petroleum Ministry.

In a statement signed by Lekia B. Christian and James

Febebebo, President and Secretary of the body respectively, the body demanded that Dr. Lukman be relieved of his duty as the head of the Petroleum Ministry.

According to the statement, "having thoroughly reviewed how negatively Dr. Rilwanu Lukman had impacted on the lives of the Niger Deltas with his past portfolios, we hereby call for his immediate sack by President Umaru

Musa Yar'Adua, if he is sincerely committed to the current peace process in the Niger Delta region.

"That the peaceful resolution of the Niger Delta crises can never be possible with an enemy of the region presiding over a ministry that controls the natural wealth of the Niger Delta people". The body noted that their problem was not the state of origin of the Petroleum Minister, but his person.

The NDCAV stated:

"The sum of our individual, ethnic or tribal interests should not be allowed to hinder the greater need to advent a nation, where every part and every people shall be treated equally, fairly and justly", emphasizing, that time has come for the Nigerian state to show genuine commitment towards the resolution of the Niger Delta crises by Nigerianizing it.

They advised those involved in violence to give

peace a chance, saying, "Niger Delta must remain peaceful and united in our collective pursuit for justice to earn the friendship, support and trust of the greater Nigerian brotherhood".

The body stressed that the recent action taken by the South-South Governors and Senators on the issue of the Petroleum Industry Bill and the Training Institute at Effurun has showed that they understand the problems of the region, and are committed

to the prosperity and freedom of the people.

The group advised the Federal Government to implement the recommendations of the Ledum Mitee-led technical committee, saying, "The Federal Government, instead of hurrying to ensure the passage of the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB), should be hurrying to implement the Ledum Mitee-led Presidential Technical Committee's report on Niger Delta without further delay".

Just as there are continued agitations from the Niger Delta region over the negative effects of oil exploration in the region, fresh evidence has revealed that oil giant, Shell is having colossal contribution to global climate change vis-à-vis the deteriorating environment in oil producing Communities in Niger Delta of Nigeria, including Ogoni, and that it (Shell) is conscious of its actions.

Friends of the Earth, Oil Change International and PLATFORM released a new research showing that despite attempts by Shell's former CEO, Jeroen van der Veer, to portray a green image, the company has opted for a stark contradiction with the need to reduce CO2 emissions.

The report titled 'Shell's

Shell Named 'Worst' Oil Company

By Shola Oveyipo

Big Dirty Secret Insight into the world's most carbon intensive oil company and the legacy of CEO Jeroen van der Veer', also reveals new internal documents that show that Shell knew of the environmental dangers of gas flaring in Nigeria more than fifteen years ago, but chose not to stop flaring purely for financial reasons.

According to the revelation, Shell's heavy investments in the most carbon-emitting energy sources, such as tar sands, liquefied natural gas and crude oil from Nigeria - which is associated with huge levels of gas flaring - make it the dirtiest of all major oil companies with regard to

CO2 emissions.

It is against this background that the three campaign groups call on the EU and the US to stop listening to Shell in discussions on how to tackle climate change, claiming that Van der Veer personally led lobby efforts in Brussels against improvements to the EU's Emission Trading System, and threatened to move refineries out of Europe if Shell and other oil companies were made to pay for their emissions.

Paul de Clerck from Friends of the Earth International said: "Shell attempts to paint itself as a sustainable company when in reality it is the dirtiest oil

producer of all. It continues to make huge profits but still argues that it cannot afford to pay for effective CO2 reduction measures. The EU should no longer listen to Shell in talks about tackling climate change."

It would be recalled that since 1996 Shell has promised to stop gas flaring in Nigeria the biggest contributor to climate change in sub-Saharan Africa. But yet, the company has repeatedly broken its promises and rejected statements by the Nigerian government that flaring

should be stopped.

Similarly Shell refuses to implement the 2011 deadline imposed by the Nigerian government for phasing out gas flaring and is now speaking about a 2013 phase out.

Steve Kretzmann of Oil Change International maintained that, "Shell could stop flaring gas in Nigeria for only 10 per cent of last year's profit for the company. The company's new head, Peter Voser, has the power to stop gas flaring, spare Nigerians from inhaling deadly toxins, and help to curb climate

change in one stroke. The question is: will he?"

'Shell's Big Dirty Secret', is a product of a global backlash against the energy giant's abuses of human rights and the environment. On June 8, Shell was forced to pay \$15.5 million to settle an embarrassing lawsuit in the US for human rights abuses in Nigeria.

The company is also facing legal action in The Hague concerning repeated oil spills, which have damaged the livelihoods of Nigerian fisher folk and farmers in Niger Delta.

CBN Extends ATM Deadline

By Oluwaseyi Bangudu

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has extended the deadline given to commercial banks in Nigeria to move their Automated Teller Machines (ATM) from public places.

According to the CBN, the extension of the deadline is necessary "in order to ensure a success of the exercise and proper commencement of operations of the emerging appointed consortia.

"The Central Bank of Nigeria is taking appropriate steps to facilitate the appointment of a number of ATM consortia to effect the current policy of redeploying offsite ATMs and has received applications from some registered financial companies in this regard."

The circular, titled "Re: Extension of the deadline for the removal of deposit money banks' offsite ATMs", and placed on the CBN's website, is dated the August 27.

According to the regulatory body, the new deadline for the banks to redeploy the ATMs to their banks' premises is now the March 31, 2010. "For the avoidance of doubt, the offsite ATMs of deposit money banks are hereby allowed to continue operating until the deadline of March 31, 2010," the circular stated. **Fighting "a worrisome**

trend"

The initial circular was issued on the April 8 and set the deadline for June 30, 2009. According to James Olekah, director of the CBN's banking operations department, "the Central Bank had observed with concern that banks were competing with the operations of the Automated Teller Machines Consortium (ATMC) in the deployment of the machines in public places".

The backdrop of the decision was revealed as "a worrisome trend (in) the number of ATMs at airports and hotel lobbies, which, if unchecked, would soon congest these public places.

"One of the policies guiding the operations of ATM Consortium is that the ATMC shall have the sole mandate to deploy ATMs at public places while the banks shall deploy ATM's only within their premises," he said.

The circular added that this new decision would bring the total number of ATM consortia in the economy to two. "The two consortia shall be solely responsible for the deployment of ATMs in public places in line with policy and best practices," it said.

Circular after circular
Mr. Olekah had

explained that, in line with the bank's policy on shared payment infrastructure by the banking industry and the need to effectively respond to the rising demand for ATM services by the public, the bank had decided to commence the process of licensing an additional ATM consortium.

However, two months after, on the June 26, the bank was forced to issue another circular stating that there was little effort by deposit money banks to comply with the directive to establish two ATM consortia for the purpose of effective management and operations of offsite ATMs. It further extended the deadline for the removal of the ATMs by two months -from the earlier date of June 30, to August 31.

An ATM consortium is an association of two or more individuals, companies, organisations, governments or any combination of these entities, with the objective of jointly delivering ATM services.

According to the finance regulatory organisation, in April, the decision is based on its commitment to "ensuring that the deployment and management of ATMs within the economy are in line with global best practices".

Yeghe Christian Youth Inaugurated

By Christian B. Gbeneyegara

A Christian Youth Organization known as the **Bua Yeghe Christian Youth (BYCY)** has been inaugurated in Bua Yeghe Town. The inauguration ceremony which was an epoch-making event took place at the St. Peter's (Ang.) Church, Yeghe on the 5th of September, 2009 and attracted many sons and daughters of Yeghe from all works of life.

The President of the Youth Body, Pastor Mene Deekor while presenting a welcome address at the occasion, expressed appreciation to God Almighty for lives preserved and the success granted the body in spite of the various encumbrances and challenges they encountered. In the address, he disclosed that the formation of the Youth Organization to perform effectively, require both spiritual and philanthropic embrace from all Christians faithful since it is the first of its kind in the history of non-denominational Christian Youth movement in Yeghe.

Pastor Deekor also indicated that it is the vision of the body to re-orientate and empower its members on programmes and skills that will engage them

meaningfully so as to curb out the unwholesome cases of militancy, kidnapping, raping and robbery that have so much ravaged the community in recent times. He however used the medium to appeal for financial support from all and sundry while calling on other Christian Youths in the community to identify themselves with the movement.

Also speaking, the chairman of the occasion, Mr. Moris Mato enjoined members of the body to have unity of purpose governed by the fear of God which according to him; can guarantee the success of the body in Bua Yeghe and Ogoni in general.

Moreso, the special guest of honour, Mr. E.D Gbueba while speaking at the inaugural ceremony, chronicle the life of a Christian Youth as the *'Living Style of the less mature follower of Christ'*

which according to him require a tactical and careful control of one's action to avoid failure and frustration in life.

Furthermore, the guest preacher, Ven. U.B Eebee who delivered the sermon at the inauguration ceremony on the topic captioned; *'Christian Youth Arise and Face your Challenges'*, charged members of the organization to be bold and courageous in tackling life's challenges and not forgetting to put on the gentle, milk and mild nature of Christ in whose name all life challenges can be overcome.

Other highlights of the day were special rendition from the Youth Choir and the unveiling of the organization's Bill-Board bearing the name, logo and motto of the body.

Also in attendance were Mr. T.T. Kinate, Mr. Ereburu Erenu, Pst. Barr. B.Z. Gbaragbo, Mr. G.M. Naluba and Mrs. Grace Ngbononee.

Shun Violence!

EU to Develop Niger Delta Region

The European Union (EU) is to spend 68.9 million U.S dollars in nine states in the troubled Niger Delta region of Nigeria under its Micro Projects Program (MPP), the News Agency of Nigeria reported on Saturday.

The Ogoni people under the auspices of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) have deeply mourned Chief Gani Fawehinmi who passed on last Saturday September 5, 2009.

Describing him as a greatest Nigerian of our age, the Ogoni people said they received with grave shock the news of the passing away of Chief Gani Fawehinmi a Senior Advocate of the Masses and S.A.N.

In a press statement signed by the President of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), Ledum Mitee, the people said Chief Gani Fawehinmi was an indefatigable fighter and idol for justice, the protector of the masses, a tireless prick in the conscience of the oppressor and a beacon of hope for the down trodden.

"As the undoubted protector of the conscience of our nation, where the majority of the people are economically poor, educationally backward and politically deprived and unconscious of their rights, Gani championed an unrivalled legal activism that focused not on dispute adjudication but on preventing illegality and injustice. His unparalleled use of law as social engineering through public interest litigations contributed more to securing national cohesion and security by opening the needed window for the ventilation of grievances within the justice system than the billions of dollars wasted on unsupervised security votes every year.

"As a deeply committed philanthropist who committed his personal resources to helping the very poor of every clime, he stood a far and away from the crowd of most of our country men and women to whom philanthropy has become more of political image and wealth laundering.

MOSOP President noted, "to us the Ogoni people and indeed most deprived Nigerians, his passing away is an irreplaceable loss of a pillar of support and succor. It is indeed unthinkable and unimaginable the fate that would have befallen us especially in the dark days of the Abacha era without the tireless support of Chief Gani Fawehinmi and his team.

"As we mourn this great Nigerian and winner of

Denis Thiulin, the head of the EU delegation to Nigeria, said at the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the regional bloc and southeast Nigeria's Bayelsa State government on Friday that the expenditure is to

assuage militancy in the region.

Thiulin listed the benefiting states as Bayelsa, Rivers, Delta, Edo, Akwa Ibom, Ondo, Abia, Cross River and Imo.

He said the EU approved the MPP9 program in

September 2008 to support the Niger Delta communities after the successful completion of the earlier MPP3 and MPP6 programs.

"The aim of the project is to institute reforms, resulting in local governments and state authorities increasingly

providing infrastructure services, income generating options, sustainable livelihood developments, gender equity and community empowerment," he said.

"This is done through offering models of transparency and participation," he added.

Thiulin said out of the total amount, about 4 million

euro is channeled to accelerate social and economic development and to assist in resolving the conflicts in the state of Bayelsa.

"We are going to finance about 130 micro projects in that area; as you know we cannot deal with everything in that area because it is a small amount but our purpose is to encourage states and local governments to work with the communities to restore trust," he said.

"Already, the MoU has been signed in Cross River, Delta and in the next few weeks we hope to sign with the remaining six states and the program is financed by the 27-member states of the EU under the European Development Fund (EDF)," he added.

Responding, Nigerian Minister of National Planning Commission Shamsudeed Usman said the implementation of the MPP9 in the Niger-Delta became imperative to ensure sustained poverty reduction in the area.

Usman said the program would be successful using the approach developed by previous micro programs and projects.

The minister said the program would run from 2008 to 2010 to restore hope in the region and that it would engage local governance to ensure best practices and sustainability.

Ogoni Weeps As Gani Passes On

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* *Holds Memorial Service in his honour Sept. 25, 2009*

of the highest Ogoni National Award, we send our condolences to his family and friends. Although the cold hands of death has snatched him away but his undoubted legacy of equity and justice not only lives but would continue to be a challenging aspiration especially to those of us who have worked closely with him. Our reassuring consolation is that even though dead, death can neither kill his works nor his name!

It would be recalled that Chief Gani Fawehinmi (SAN) led other lawyers as counsels to Ken Saro-Wiwa and other Ogoni patriots murdered by the Nigeria State on November 10, 1995.

Chief Gani who has a forensic eye on the law, saw what was wrong with the manner the Ogoni activists were being tried by the Anta Tribunal warned and withdrew from the case. He outrightly warned justice Anta and the Nigeria Government of the consequences of not giving Justice to the Ogoni heroes.

To further demonstrate their concern over the death of Chief Gani Fawehinmi, the Ogoni people, in a special Steering Committee meeting convened by MOSOP Tuesday September 8th in Port Harcourt, Observed a minute silence in honour of the departed compatriot.

Also, responding to the formal announcement of Gani's death by the MOSOP President Ledum Mitee at the meeting, the people resolved to fully participate in the burial programme of the late legal icon holding in Ondo State Tuesday September 15, 2009.

The MOSOP chieftains noted that Chief Gani, while alive, stood with the Ogoni people and was a source of support and courage ever in the darkest days in the history of the Ogoni Struggle.

While at the formal, the people resolved, Ogoni people will show enough visibility as they will all be dressed in Ogoni (MOSOP) attire, lay wreath at the grave side as may be approved by the burial planning committee.

In addition, some skilled drummers will be included in the number of participants that will be drawn from each

of the Ogoni Six Kingdoms that will make the trip to Ondo.

Similarly, the MOSOP Steering committee also resolved to hold a special memorial service on September 25 in Ogoni in honour of the late comrade and pillar.

Meanwhile, a condolence register has been opened at the Inata Chambers, 20 Station Road Port Harcourt for people to pay tribute to the fallen hero.

Explaining this, the MOSOP President said this was done on the mandate given by the burial committee. He therefore enjoined people to pay their last respect to the Senior Advocate of the Masses with

their tributes.

It would be recalled Fire-eating lawyer and Nigeria's foremost human rights activist, Chief Ganiyu Oyesola Fawehinmi is dead. The news of the death of the Human Rights crusader hit the Nigerian nation early Saturday morning, September 5, 2009.

Gani, who has been fighting a terminal illness over a period of time has championed human rights activities in Nigeria for decades and led the legal team in most of the nation's celebrated cases.

Ganiyu Oyesola Fawehinmi was born in April, 1938, he dedicated his whole life to the defence of human rights and condemnation of

all ill government polices, fought the military junta with all that he had. arty in 2003.

22 April 1939 - Abdul-Ganiyu Oyesola Fawehinmi, popularly called Gani, is born in Ondo State.

1947 - 1953 - Gani has his early education at Ansar-Ul-Deen Primary School, Iyemaja.

1954 - 1958 - Attends Victory College Ikare, a Christian School under the leadership of the Late Rev. Akinrele where he sits for and passes his West African School Certificate Examination in 1958.

8 December 1958 - He is given a letter to his late father by the principal of the college, Rev. Akinrele. In it, the principal advises that Gani must be encouraged to study Law as a profession.

Contd. On Page 6

MOSOP Pledges Support to Police on Crime Prevention

While welcoming the stance in waging war against crime in and outside Ogoni, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, MOSOP has pledged its total support and cooperation to the Police and other law enforcement agencies in ensuring a crime free-society.

"Whilst we regret the embarrassment that has been so caused the police especially the DPO, we would on behalf of the Ogoni people reassure the security outfit of our support and co-operation in enhancing effective policing of our communities", MOSOP stressed.

MOSOP observed that the Police have done significantly well in the area of tracking down incidents of kidnapping, hostage taking, cultism and armed robbery in the Ogoni area. "The high rate of social vices in Ogoni was of concern but with the efforts put in place by the Police, we have now hived sigh of relieve", it noted.

MOSOP has therefore dissociated itself from reports in some local tabloids credited to some persons calling for the removal of the Divisional Police Officer (DPO) in charge of the Police Divisional Headquarters, Bori, Mr. Egwu Otu.

MOSOP, in a statement signed by the Information

Officer, Bari-ara Kpalap, describing the reasons giving for such demand as baseless grounds, said, ordinarily, they would have ignored the report especially as it emanated from "dubious and unqualified quarters but for the wild and frivolous allegations capability of poisoning the minds of unsuspecting Ogoni natives and our friends".

The Ogoni Movement explained that from their investigations, the appalling picture painted was contrary to the truth, and that a group, which 'lawlessness has assumed notoriety' had attempted to illegally take possession of the offices of MOSOP at the Ogoni Peace and Freedom Centre, Bori and were advised otherwise by the DPO since the matter Diigbo filed in court was yet to be determined, and also to enable peace to reign.

The DPO's good advice and position, according to the statement, did not go down well with the gap who made overtures to the DPO in an attempt to lure him into compromising his position. Having failed, he resorted to blackmail, publishing unfounded stories and petitioning the commissioner of police in an attempt to mobilize sentiments against the DPO to merit infliction of punitive sanctions on CSP

Otu.

Narrating the incident, the MOSOP Information Officer disclosed that on August 29, 2009, at about 9am, a group of hoodlums allegedly led by one Mr. Asorgo Nwinawa, claiming to be acting on instructions and numbering about 100, armed with dangerous weapons including machetes, axes and iron bars invaded the Ogoni Peace and Freedom Centre, Bori, housing the National Headquarters of MOSOP.

He said rather than respond to their provocation, "our staff at the centre reported the incident to the police in Bori. It took the combined efforts of MOPOL 56, Saakpenwa and the Divisional headquarters, Bori to quell the invasion".

The statement recalled that on June 18, a gang reportedly commanded by Goodluck Diigbo unleashed violence at the premises of High Court I, Bori, and apart from inflicting serious bodily injuries on innocent victims including Messrs. Monday Miidom, Moses Damgbor, Fegalo Mitee, Popnwin Taoh and Madam Jessy Nubani and their belongings looted, the violence disrupted court proceedings. The matter was reported to the police and some of those arrested are standing being tried in a Port

Harcourt Magistrate Court.

"MOSOP vehemently dissociates itself from this gang of outlaws. We would like to confirm that these people are not members of MOSOP and as such, they and their activities have nothing to do with MOSOP". It said, while calling on the Ogoni people and the general public to discountenance the reports as they contain no iota of truth but mischievously concocted to achieve sinister and parochial goals.

Meanwhile, in demonstration of its peaceful disposition, the leadership of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People has protested to the Commissioner of Police over the matter and what it considered as actions which not only threaten but actually undermine peace and security in Ogoni.

MOSOP wondered why people engage in such acts at a time when Ogoni is experiencing relative peace and all lovers of peace and stability in the area are co-operating with the police and other security agencies to sustain the development, saying, "we are deeply concerned about this intolerable outlaw behavior, hence we are seeking your intervention to avert its deterioration".

Nigeria may break up, Oberabor Warns

Dr Mike Oberabor, Executive Secretary, "Delta Elders, leaders and stakeholders forum" has criticised politicians who do not see nothing wrong in rigging and thuggery.

He believes that the country is backward democratically because the people are not practising democracy in the best way.

Oberabor, a Warri based medical practitioner also opines that the people must have a plank on which to stand and define values as a nation, insisting that the Independent National Electorate Commission (INEC) should be disengaged.

According to him, for amnesty to work effectively, the military must be withdrawn from the Niger-Delta and develop the region as a true oil producing area.

He lauds the petroleum Industry bill, describing it as a unifying factor, but maintains that certain areas that are inimical to the progress and development of the Niger-Delta be expunged.

Oberabor, a close associate of Chief Edwin Clark speaks further on some national issues. Excerpts **The petroleum industry bill**

Well, the petroleum Industry bill is a welcome development. But the only problem is that parliamentarians from the South-South, infact from the entire Niger-Delta region are not up to their responsibilities. Infact, they lack the capacity to monitor what is going on in Nigeria. If they were very conversant with what is going on in the country they would have at

least seen the hidden agenda in that bill.

Frankly speaking there are so many laws guiding the oil industry before now. But as a unifying law it is welcome, because it has revealed some lapses. At any point in time, they make one law or the other. Infact, the oil industry has so many laws than any other sector in Nigeria. However, it is imperative for our legislators to always read through these things and consult with the people they are representing and feel their pulse when a bill of this nature arises.

Areas inimical to N/D cause

There are certain areas that are inimical to the progress of the Niger-Delta in that bill, especially responsibilities and the rights of the oil bearing communities which need to be fine tuned and properly addressed. Apart from that, the bill is a good one.

Abrogation of land use Act

To me what we should really talk about is the continuous use of that land use Act. That is the one we want amended. This is the law that disenfranchises all of us, whether we have oil, yams and other items. No matter what you have and so long that the land use act is still there whatever you have belong to the federal government and when it is convenient for the government they apply whatever law they deem fit.

What I believe we should actually do is to make sure that there are steps towards amending the land use act, which has disenfranchised everybody in this country and not the petroleum industry bill.

From Emmanuel Ogoigbe Warri

Besides, there are a lot of other things that are wrong with the body polity of Nigeria. Imagine, nobody expected justice Mohammed Uwais to produce the kind of report he submitted to President Umaru Yar'Adua. It was a fine and lovely report that will guide electoral reform. You see if our votes counted; when things are going bad, we know that at the next ballot we will vote the people out so that things will be okay and that is the beauty of democracy.

Barack Obama's Africa tour

You cannot expect Obama to visit Nigeria when you are not democratic. Remember, when the foreign Affairs minister said Obama was coming to Nigeria but the very next day they debunked that assertion saying that Obama had no plan to visit Nigeria. Let me tell you, Obama is very angry with Nigeria, the supposed giant of Africa who was unable to go through simple balloting. It is a big shame because if he (Obama) were to be a Nigerian, he will not even win local government chairman's seat.

He is not happy with Nigeria and his native Kenya. So you can see the shame and disgrace our dear country is facing before the international community.

Holistic approach

It is now clear that we need a holistic approach to address all these worrisome issues because fiscal federalism is not enough. The ability of all us is to sit down and address all the issues that is needed. The fact is that the petroleum Industry

bill can come later, but let us address the issues of the moment.

You see, as at today, the reforms that justice Uwais propounded in his recommendations have permeated all sections of this country. I mean the villagers, the illiterates and the ballot are sacrosanct because it is going to decide whether you will win election or not. Without the people, you cannot be there. It is unlike the military that have no basis of coming to power. Imagine, when the time was up nobody tells them before they left the scene because their time was over

Dwindling democratic system

Why Nigeria is failing is that our politicians are not serving the god of democracy. I wish this country well. But without basic and fundamental electoral reforms before 2011 elections, only God knows what will happen in this country. I am seeing violent breakup of this country if the elections are not properly conducted.

How can people sit in their rooms and compile list and they will say it is an Intra-party affair and a family affair, yet we are practicing democracy. You sit in your room and compile list of delegates.

Delegates start from day one; and if I may say the American presidential primaries took almost two years because it was done democratically. For things to be okay for us, we should have a transparent election and that is why 1993 election



Dr Mike Oberabor

that was annulled will always remain a watershed in the history of Nigeria. Let Nigerians know that the era of looting is over, and nobody wants to receive looted money. Is it not a shame that having looted money, you send it abroad where it will be secured

What I am talking about is that we must have a plank on which we stand and also define our values as a nation. We must define those things that will propel and uplift us as Nigerians because we cannot continue living like this.

Constitution Review amendment

Yes, I think over a period of time our constitution was not really written by the people but was written and imposed, on the people.

It is supposed to be a continuous process, and as we are seeing challenges, we must develop the constitution to reflect the challenges, because you must amend parts of the faulty areas in the constitution.

Technical Committee on N'Delta

You see, even before the technical committee was inaugurated, there was a plan for a summit. But the people of the region saw that this summit was one too many. We already have a lot of documentations about the Niger-Delta. I tell you the problems in the region have always been there and they remain the same.

They are not new, and you don't need a new committee or summit to bring all these about. But let me tell you, after all said and done, the government of the day lack the political will and it is not interested in implementing anything that concerns the advancement and the development of the Niger-Delta region.

Previous reports

There are a lot of reports and recommendations about the Niger-Delta since Independence. But they have been confined to the dustbins. The Nigerian state believe that nothing good will come out of the region. Infact, you will not hear of ledum mitee technical committee report.

Slipping Into Darkness: Nigeria on the Brink By Michael J. Watts

When Secretary of State Hilary Clinton and her entourage touch down this week in Abuja, the bright new capital of the Nigerian federation, their hosts will try to put the best face on what is the gravest political crisis the country has faced since the civil war ended almost four decades ago. The uninspired government of President Musa Yar'Adua, who took office in 2007 on the back of elections massively fraudulent even by Nigeria's appallingly low standards, is confronting a dual political crisis of considerable gravity. In the oil-producing Niger delta a long simmering military insurgency has crippled the oil and gas industry which accounts for over three-quarters of government revenues and virtually all of Nigeria's exports. A counter-insurgency by federal forces launched in May 2009 produced a ferocious response by the insurgents including in July an audacious attack on key oil installations in Lagos, the economic capital of the country. Oil production has collapsed, spectacularly, to barely 1 million barrels per day (at least a million barrels a day are shut-in). Shell, the largest single operator, has closed its Western operations entirely, and its Eastern operations are barely functional. 12,000 oil workers have been made redundant, having fled the rigs, platforms and other facilities due to security problems.

In the north of Nigeria, the Muslim heartland and the base of the powerful ruling northern oligarchy, a Taliban-styled Islamist group Boko Haram was brutally repressed by government security forces in early August. Massive bombardment of the movement's compound resulted in large numbers of casualties, and culminated in the extra-judicial killing of the movement's leader Mohammed Yusuf in Maiduguri at the hands of the police. In short, two of the most strategic economic and political regions of the Nigerian federation are in effect under lockdown.

President Yar'Adua, a bland and unimpressive former teacher from Katsina, has been disastrously ineffective and indecisive since assuming power failings compounded by his own ill-health. After two years of drift and serial ineptitude, Nigeria now stands at a tipping point. The international community seems largely uninterested in the deteriorating conditions or at the very least unprepared to consider any constructive role in Nigeria. Murdered activist Ken Saro-Wiwa's dark premonition - his 1990 prediction of a "coming war" unless the needs of the oil producing communities were met - hangs like a pall over contemporary Nigeria.

Nigeria is an oil-rich petro-state but its developmental record in one of catastrophic failure. According to IMF, the \$700 billion in oil revenues since 1960 have added almost

nothing to the standard of living of the average Nigerian. Eighty-five per cent of oil revenues accrue to one percent of the population and a huge proportion of the country's wealth perhaps 40% or more, has been stolen. Over the last decade GDP per capita and life expectancy have, according to World Banks, both fallen. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP), ranks Nigeria in terms of human development - a composite measure of life expectancy, income, and educational attainment on par with Haiti and Congo.

Nigeria has become a vast shadow economy and shadow state in which the lines between public and the private, state and market, government and organized crime are blurred and porous. The coastal waters of the delta are, according to the International Maritime Bureau, a pirate-haven, comparable to the lawless seas surrounding Somalia and the Maluccas. A new study, *Transnational Trafficking and the Rule of Law in West Africa* by the UN Office for Drugs and Crime, estimates that 55 million barrels of oil are stolen each year from the Niger delta, a shadow economy on which high ranking military and politicians are deeply involved. Amnesty International's report *Petroleum, Pollution and Poverty in the Niger Delta* released in June 2009 grimly inventories the massive environmental despoliation caused by 1.5

million tons of spilled oil, describing the record of the slick alliance of the international oil companies and the Nigerian state as a "human rights tragedy".

The raw and undiluted realities of contemporary Nigeria are on full display in the Niger delta crisis: a wholly unaccountable oil revenue allocation system, structural corruption especially at the state and local government levels, a history of massive electoral fraud and political thuggery, and a state-sanctioned lawless oil frontier in which politics has come to mean nothing more than a vicious struggle, waged by any means necessary, to capture oil rents. Vast quantities of oil are stolen organized by a syndicate of 'bunkerers' linking low-level youth operatives and thugs in the creeks to the highest levels of the Nigerian military and political classes and to the oil companies themselves. A former Managing Director of Chevron Nigeria once observed that he had "run companies that have had less production than is being bunkered in [Nigeria]". The stolen oil, siphoned from the manifolds and flowstations, shipped onto barges and transported to tankers off shore, is a multi-billion business run through the state. The cess-pool of what passes as government is presided over by powerful and typically corrupt state governors and influential political godfathers. As former anti-

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Families of Seafarers exposed to high HIV Risks

Being married to a Filipino seafarer for 12 years, Edna (not her real name) has grown accustomed to numerous difficulties when her husband sailed out to the sea.

She managed to endure long months of separation and to singlehandedly raise two toddlers, but she felt helpless after her husband contracted the HIV and passed the virus on to her.

Breaking HIV Death Sentence in Niger Delta with N900m

By Ignatius Chukwu

Latest surveys indicate that the oil-rich Niger Delta region is now home to one million persons living with the dreaded HIV/AIDS. This leaves the rest of Nigeria to host the remaining 2.5 million persons living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA). Sentinel survey statistics indicate that HIV seroprevalence increased from 1.8 per cent in 1991 to 4.4 per cent in 2005, with commercial sex workers now posting a sector rate of 65 per cent. This kind of workers are in abundance in the region. Experts say the situation has approached epidemic proportions in a region of about 20 million population.

Accusing fingers are, as usual, pointing at the presence of oil companies and multinationals, for introducing lavish lifestyles and for luring teenage girls with expensive gifts that change their lives for better or worse. Experts at Shell Petroleum Development Company in Port Harcourt have denied this. Head of SPDC's health unit, B.A. Fakunde, said recently there was no evidence of this.

He told BusinessDay after a seminar in Port Harcourt that "one cannot give what he does not have", explaining that surveys had indicated that very negligible number of Shell staff had HIV/AIDS.

Despite that, Fakunde said at the seminar that SPDC has of late paid great attention to the health condition of the host communities and is spending over N900 million to combat HIV/AIDS in the region, something unique in the oil sector.

The region is at present rating six per cent above the national prevalence average of 4.4 per cent. This has forced SPDC to set aside \$4.5m on infrastructure and \$1.56m on drugs and services. Family Health International (FHI), an international NGO, is contributing \$750,000 in addition.

At the moment, over 100,000 persons

require urgent treatment in the region, but health facilities that can offer ready help are hardly available in the rural areas. The ones in the cities such as UPTH in Port Harcourt are overstretched with demand. Surveys show that less than 10 per cent of those needing attention get it.

Studies show that several factors including shortage of health personnel, low community education, etc, have combined to kill hundreds of thousands of the people in the region.

This may have made SPDC management in partnership with FHI into offering intervention. Now, there are 27 community health facilities supported by the oil company and HIV/AIDS is treated in five places located in Otusegha Cottage Hospital in Bayelsa State, Erhoike in Delta, Oben in Edo State, Edagheri in Ahoada, Rivers State Owaza in Abia State. The centre at Owaza particularly recorded a feat recently when an oil worker almost eaten up by HIV/AIDS, one Emma Obi, got remedy and is alive again. Obi has since joined the rescue army by volunteering to save others.

In his written testimony, Obi said he was a wealthy man until he fell ill and after nine months, lost his job. He said he spent his entire resources in hospitals over the 'strange' disease until he was taken and abandoned in a part of Owaza to die. There, the HIV comprehensive care and treatment (HCT) team located him and his life changed for good.

Obi is part of over 6,431 persons that have received counseling and testing in SPDC's five centres in the region and one of 1,163 that were implicated. Now, he is one of the lucky 590 that are on anti-retroviral (ART) application for live under the scheme. Those who have found new life through the rescue efforts in the region including Obi have come out to appeal to their kith and kin to come out of shame and get tested. They said hope is not lost for victims and that "HIV is no more a death sentence".

The 38-year-old wife said her husband might have been infected in a casual and unprotected sex with women in Latin America. In 2004, he was declared unfit to work and she became the sole bread earner in the family. Three years later, she was also tested positive for the HIV.

Edna is one of the estimated 1.7 million women in Asia who are living with HIV/AIDS. A study released by UNAIDS estimates that 90 per cent of these women were infected by their long-time boyfriends or husbands.

"The confluence of 'mobile men' with money away from family and social connections and with interaction with local communities and other mobile populations make for a heightened HIV-vulnerable setting." Asian Development Bank Vice-President Ursula Schaefer-Preuss told a recent AIDS congress held in Indonesia.

Even though the bank puts more emphasis on construction workers and long-distance truck drivers, seafarers are nevertheless classified as part of the "mobile men with money." Government data show that about 350,000 Filipino seafarers are deployed overseas, accounting for 20 to 40 per cent of all seafarers in the world.

Returning overseas contract workers have become a major source of HIV infection in the Philippines. The country's National AIDS Council reported that around 35 per cent of the new HIV infection cases last year were overseas Filipino workers, mostly seafarers.

About 90 per cent of the HIV infected Filipinos got the virus through sexual contact. In fact, sex workers tag foreign seamen as ideal

customers, health experts said. Having multiple partners and not applying proper protection, these seafarers make themselves and their home-staying spouses vulnerable to the HIV/AIDS.

The United Nations estimates that about 5.4 million people live with HIV/AIDS in the Asia-Pacific region, with 640,000 dying from AIDS-related diseases.

International agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the Philippines have launched programs targeting Filipino seafarers throughout their mobility, pre-departure, on ship activities and upon return. Programs that deal with spousal infections are also under evaluation.

Lectures on HIV/AIDS were given; condoms were handed out; HIV voluntary counseling and testing services were provided upon recruitment.

But Edna's problem has yet been dealt with. "When will my husband be allowed to go back to work?" she asked.

Most shipping companies, as in other businesses, ban the employment of people who live with HIV/AIDS.

After repeatedly being turned down, Edna's family was forced to live on selling groceries and helping people re-load their mobile-phones.

"But the income is only a fraction of what he used to make as a seafarer," Edna said. "I just hope that a policy will also be written about allowing infected seafarers to go back to work."

People with HIV living longer-Study

By Michael Kahn, Reuters

An AIDS International Candlelight Memorial in Belgrade May 18, 2008. People with HIV in the developed world are no more likely to die in the first five years following infection than men and women in the general population, British researchers said on Tuesday.

People with HIV in the developed world are no more

likely to die in the first five years following infection than men and women in the general population, British researchers said on Tuesday.

The risk for people infected through sex creeps up after that, according to the study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association that highlights the power of AIDS drugs introduced in the mid-1990s.

The findings did not include men and women infected through injected drug use, and their death risk remained higher in the five years after infection, said Kholoud Porter of Britain's Medical Research Council, who led the study.

"This is looking really good that life expectancies are becoming close to the uninfected population," said Porter, an epidemiologist. "It also underscores the importance that people are identified and treated early."

The advent of combination drug therapy in the 1990s called highly active antiretroviral therapy, or HAART, has greatly extended the lives of many HIV-infected people, particularly in developed countries.

There is no cure or vaccine but the drugs, which interfere with HIV at several levels, can keep people healthy for years even if they never eradicate the virus. This means people must take them for life.

Leading manufacturers of AIDS drugs include GlaxoSmithKline, Gilead Sciences Inc, Roche, Pfizer, Merck Inc, Bristol-Myers Squibb and Abbott Laboratories.

The British team compared the death risk in the five years following infection



Photograph by: Alexa Stankovic/AFP/Getty Images.

of 13,000 men and women to uninfected people of the same age and gender who were living in the same country at the same time.

Before 1996 when the drug cocktails were not widely available, the heightened death risk ranged from nearly 8 percent to 20 percent depending on age before falling each year to zero in the year 2000 for all age groups, Porter said.

The risk rises again after five years, possibly because people become less likely to take the drugs regularly or maybe because they are less able to tolerate the drugs, Porter said.

"From a practical point of view, people with HIV infections want to know how long they can expect to live for," she said in a telephone interview.

The youngest group - people aged 15 to 24 when infected - had a 5 percent higher risk of dying at 10 years following infection and a 7 percent greater risk at 15 years than average healthy people.

For people over 45, the raised risk was 5 percent at 10 years and 12 percent at 15 years, Porter said.

The AIDS virus infects an estimated 33 million people globally, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa, and has killed 25 million.

Life-saving Childbirth Drugs 'could affect Breastfeeding'

By Gregory Tindle, Western Mail

DRUGS routinely given to women immediately after the birth of their child could reduce their chances of breastfeeding, according to the findings of a major research project.

A study of 48,000 new Welsh mothers has suggested the drugs, which can be life-saving, could also be linked to reduced breastfeeding rates.

Researchers from Swansea University believe the drugs, which are used to prevent bleeding after childbirth, may be the reason why so few mums breastfeed, with only 45% continuing within a week of the birth.

The analysis of the records of women who gave birth in South Wales found the use of the blood-clotting and other drugs were associated with a 7% decline in the proportion who started breastfeeding within 48 hours of giving birth.

Researchers believe the drugs may impede a woman's ability to produce milk and say new mothers may need greater time and support from midwives if they wished to breastfeed their baby.

Dr Sue Jordan of the university's school of health

science, who led the study, said: "Our results highlight the need for further research and clinical trials. What we would like to see is extra help for new mothers trying to establish breastfeeding by making sure to allow enough time for the effect of drugs given in labour to subside.

"Our new findings could contribute to meeting the government targets of reaching that extra 2% of women breastfeeding per year."

The study is the second link the research team has drawn between breastfeeding rates and drugs given during or after labour. Their previous research confirmed the link between epidurals and reduced breastfeeding rates which prompted revised guidelines for the NHS on the use of the drugs in labour.

Dr Jordan, however, supported the current medical practice regarding the use of the drugs saying: "The potentially life-saving treatments to prevent bleeding after birth must not be compromised on the basis of this study, but further studies are required to establish ways to minimise any effects on breastfeeding rates."

Of the women involved in

the study, who all gave birth between 1989 and 1999, 65.5% of those who did not receive drugs to prevent bleeding after the birth started breastfeeding their baby within 48 hours of giving birth.

This dropped to 59.1% among those given an injection of oxytocin, a hormone that stimulates contractions and plays a natural role in labour, and to 56.4% of women given an additional injection of ergometrine, given to stop bleeding after the birth.

In the study 79% of women received either oxytocin, ergometrine or both, as is routine in the NHS.

"The decline of 6-7% in those being breastfed could lead to up to 50,000 fewer British babies being breastfed every year than might otherwise be possible," said Dr Jordan.

UK health surveys claim the results of bottle-feeding can lead to obesity and asthma as youngsters are not getting the natural benefits of a mother's milk. Bottle-feeding has also been linked to an increased number of mothers being affected by breast cancer.

Rosemary Dodds of the National Childbirth Trust said:

Older People more prone to Cancer, Skin Problems

Scientists from University College London have found why older people are prone to cancer and infections of the skin.

They have shown that defective immunity in the skin is caused by an inability to mobilize essential defenses that would otherwise recognize threats and clear them before irreparable damage is done.

According to the researchers, this discovery could be important for preventing, managing or treating many age-related skin health problems.

"Older people are very prone to having infections generally and our studies in the skin of such subjects

identifies one reason for this," said Professor Arne Akbar from UCL, who led the study.

"It's actually incredibly difficult to get to the root of exactly which mechanisms cause the diseases that show up as a factor of old age. We wanted to uncover the workings of skin health in order to see why older people don't deal well with skin infections and are prone to skin cancers also," Akbar added.

It has been known for some time that older people have compromised immunity and therefore defend themselves less well against infection and disease than younger people.

In the past, the reduction in skin health was put down to

potential defects in the white blood cells called T-cells that would usually help to identify and clear infection.

However, when experiments were carried out with healthy young individuals under the age of 40 years and older individuals over the age of 70 years in this study, it was shown that in fact there is nothing wrong with the T-cells in the older group; instead it is the inability of their skin tissue to attract T-cells where and when they are needed that is the source of reduced immunity.

"Knowing this now raises the question of whether the same defect also occurs in other tissues during ageing. Is it possible that, for example, lung tissues also fail to give

out the right message to T-cells to bring them into the tissue to do their job? This may explain, in part, the higher rates of lung cancer, chest infections and pneumonia in older people, perhaps," Akbar said.

"We also, obviously, would like to know if it is possible to reverse the skin defect in older people. We've done some experiments that show that, at least in the test tube, it is possible to make older skin express the missing signals that attract T cells. This indicates that, in principle, the defect is entirely reversible. Once we get to the bottom of exactly which part of the signal to T-cells has gone wrong we might then be in a position to intervene to boost skin immunity in older people," Akbar added.

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Nigeria on the Brink

corruption czar Nuhu Ribadu put it, before he was fired and hounded out of the country on Yar' Adua's watch, the state is "not even corruption it is organized crime".

The turn from peaceful non-violence of the sort advocated by Ken Saro-Wiwa to armed struggle, culminated in the dramatic appearance in late 2005 of a new group the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta - who launched a frontal attack on oil installation in the name of 'resource control' and a 'new federalism'. In three years they have in effect brought the oil industry to a standstill. Hostage taking not only of oil workers, but also politicians, even children has become a major growth industry. Many international oil and oil service companies have simply withdrawn personnel and shut-up shop.

The federal government has failed conspicuously to grasp the gravity of political sentiments across the multi-ethnic oilfields. A large survey of Niger delta oil communities by the World Bank in 2007 discovered that an astonishing 36.23% of youth interviewed revealed a "willingness or propensity to take up arms against the state". Government sees the problem almost wholly in term of criminality. But history teaches us that any insurgency is a complex mix of greed and grievance - and one person's criminal or terrorist is another's liberation fighter. The recent survey poll released in 2009 report shows clearly that local communities have no faith whatsoever in the state and local government but government acts as if they do. The incontestable fact, as Ledum Mittee the Ogoni human rights campaigner has noted, is that there is overwhelming popular sympathy across the Delta for what the militants are doing and saying. This is no less the case with Haram Boko, a movement anti-Western sentiments speak powerfully to a generation of Muslim for whom modern development and education has brought poverty, unemployment and a souring of the very idea of secular national development.

President Yar' Adua announced an amnesty plan for the Niger delta militants on June 25th and released Henry Okay, an important leader MEND leader, on July 13th 2009. Good news in principle. But there are two things to be said here. First, an amnesty may well draw the criminals and political thugs out of the creeks (people who were put there in effect by their political Godfathers in the 2003 and 2007 elections). But this assumes that the problem is largely or wholly criminal - which it is not. Those with a political project will not be so easily convinced. And second, why should they? The history of state promises has been one of duplicity, violence and repression. Trust in government are words rarely heard in the creeks. An amnesty is hardly a solution. As Okah himself said upon his release: "no one is fighting for an amnesty". The amnesty is simply an opportunity for "frank talks" and discussions of "root problems". But there is precious little of this in the offing right now.

Second, many of the militants began their lives as thugs deployed for the purpose of electoral intimidation. With the same political godfathers readying themselves for the elections in two years, the promise of an amnesty offers no assurance against a grotesque replay of politically-sponsored violence in the next electoral cycle.

Radical change - and enormous political courage - will be required if there is to be lasting peace. Large-scale training programs and mass employment schemes, major infrastructure projects, and environmental rehabilitation, will take many years, perhaps even generations. For the present the temperature within the Delta must be reduced and a meaningful peace process established. It is not too much of an exaggeration to say that the future of Nigeria rests on how government responds to this window of opportunity. Another failure of will, at this juncture, could prove to be catastrophic.

The government amnesty covers the period August 4th to October 4th: the MEND ceasefire, in principle, ends on September 15th. Something bold has to happen soon. Any comprehensive approach to resolving the crisis in the Niger Delta can only be built on the ruins of two decades and more of broken promises, suspicion, and violence. Serious dialogue and the central involvement by a credible third-party mediator perhaps Senator Feingold or the Elders will be indispensable to any forward movement. It will not be easy but it is imperative. Secretary Clinton should convey this message in the strongest terms but also highlight two important opportunities. First, the Nigerian senate is in the middle of debating a new petroleum bill capable of addressing some of the core concerns of Niger delta activists. Already there are signs that the new bill will ignore the voices of the oil communities. Second, the government commissioned a forty-three person Technical Committee to provide a strategy for the future of the Niger delta. The report has languished since its release in November 2008 in spite of the fact that it contains a clear blueprint for moving forward. Here at least is a place to start.

Michael Watts is Director of Institute for International Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. His books include: *Reworking Modernity*, Rutgers University Press, 1992; *Silent Violence*, University of California Press, 1993; and *Liberation Ecologies*, Edited with Richard Peet, Routledge, 1995.

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January 1959 - He moves to Lagos to live with his uncle, the late Mr. Olu Akinfe. He gets his first job as a Clerk in the High Court, Lagos.

29 April 1961 - He leaves Nigeria by sea on the M. V. Aureol Passenger Ship for the United Kingdom.

12 May 1961 - He arrives in Liverpool and travels by train to London arriving at Victoria Station in the evening of that day.

September 1961 - He enrolls in the Holborn College of Law for the LLB degree of the University of London (External).

5 February 1963 - His father dies. The death leaves him with no financial source. He is forced by financial circumstance to drop out of the Holborn College as a full time student.

February 1963 - **August 1964** - He takes a full

Ogoni Weeps ...

time job as a toilet cleaner in Russell Square Hotel in Southampton Row, London. He did other cleaning jobs which included working as a sweeper in the old Gatwick Airport. He literally teaches himself Law for parts II and III of the LLB degree course and sits for and passes all his examinations.

September 1964 - He returns to Nigeria. On his arrival in Lagos, he enrolls in the Nigerian Law School in Lagos for a compulsory three months course which he successfully completed.

15 January, 1965 - He is called to the Nigerian Bar.

1986 - While Gani Fawehinmi is the late Dele Giwa's lawyer, the latter is killed in a bomb blast under suspicious circumstances.

1993 - Gani is awarded the biennial Bruno Kreisky

Prize. The prize, named in honour of Bruno Kreisky, is awarded to international figures who advance human rights causes.

1994 - He and some other notable Nigerians form the National Conscience Party of Nigeria which exists till today.

26 August, 1994 - His office at Anthony Village is violently attacked and invaded by persons suspected to be government security agents.

1995 - He heads a team of Lawyers in defence of Saro-Wiwa and other Ogoni activists.

1998 - Receives the International Bar Association's Bernard Simmons Award in recognition of his human-rights and pro-democracy work.

Nigeria's Daily Oil Production increases to 1.7million

By Elizabeth Archibong

Crude oil production in Nigeria is finally in sync with the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), quota, at the current level of 1.7 million barrels per day, Riwanu Lukman, the Minister of Petroleum Resources has said.

Mr. Lukman, who disclosed this recently in Abuja, at the end of the 33rd Federal Executive Council (FEC) meeting at the State House, attributed the increase to the success of the amnesty offered to militants in the Niger Delta region.

He admitted that crude oil production had nose-dived to about 1.2 million barrel per day in the spate of attacks on oil facilities in the oil-rich region.

The Central Bank of

Nigeria (CBN) in its monthly report in June, hinted at difficulties in meeting the OPEC quota, which became effective in January, owing to the decline in global crude oil demand.

The minister also said that additional investments by the Federal Government in infrastructure had increased oil production capacity to 3.4 million barrels per day and 700,000 cubic meters of condensate (gas).

Industry challenges

In spite of these increases, Mr. Lukman however, said the industry is still faced with challenges including pipelines vandalism, delay in the passage of the Petroleum Industry Bill and the need for increased budgetary provision to consolidate the gas monetisation projects.

He said: "The attainment of the 6,000 megawatts of electricity is predicated on sufficient gas supply, which is expected to be sourced from the following areas Okoloma, Utorogu, Escravos, Oben-Sapele, NPDC, Pan Ocean, Ughelli, Alakiri and Obigbo North. The reform programme contained in the bill is before the National Assembly, hoping to get concluded by the end of the year.

"Arrangements have been concluded with the World Bank to secure gas supply to government-owned power plants. This is a major breakthrough in the development of gas supply for power. A gas pricing structure has been concluded, which represents a roadmap for domestic gas price to attain export parity within

four years, while recognising the capacity by the different domestic sectors to pay," he said.

Mr. Lukman further explained that sequel to this, the Gas supply agreement had been finalised by the end of July. "This means that for the first time, there is a bankable agreement, which pins the huge investment the International Oil Companies have to make in supply/development in the domestic market.

"On some of the projects being undertaken by the ministry and its agencies, the percentage achievement indicates that they have attained 20 percent completion and it is expected that by the end of the year, it will record 100 percent completion," he added.

Militancy and Oil Violence in the Niger Delta *By Victor Ojatorotu*

The crisis in the Niger Delta of Nigeria is increasingly attracting international attention due both to the growing security threat it portends for the Nigerian state and, particularly, due to its impact on international oil prices. Although the Niger Delta problem has been around for several decades, the emergence of organized and militant pressure groups in the 1990s has added a new dimension to the crisis. Protests and the threat of outright rebellion against the state are now ubiquitous. Environmental activism and militancy are a direct response to the impunity, human rights violations, and perceived neglect of the region by the Nigerian state on the one hand and through sustained environmental hazards imposed on local Niger Delta communities as a result of the oil production activities of multinational oil companies on the other.

From a contemporary global perspective, the dramatic upsurge in violent confrontation and protest against the state and oil multinationals in the 1990s coincided with the end of the Cold War. In essence, 'soft' issues such as the environment, gender equity and equality, human rights, democracy and good governance have attained primacy on the international agenda. International concern over the crisis in the Niger Delta, including its attendant social and humanitarian implications, should be viewed within the context of this global attitudinal shift.

The internationalization of the Niger Delta crisis derives partly from the systematic publicity and struggle of the environmentalist, the late Ken Saro-Wiwa. Saro-Wiwa not only succeeded in directing the attention of the international community to the plight of the people of the Niger Delta but also through his advocacy paved the way for robust international/civil society engagement with the issues at the core of the crisis in the region.

More recently, the crisis has taken a new turn with an increasing criminalization of the conflict leading to questions as to why the problem is seemingly spiraling out of control. The spate of criminality (and possible external links to this phenomenon) has given rise to the question around the implications that the Niger Delta problem has for both international and regional peace and security. Also worth probing is how the Nigerian government can re-gain the initiative in finding sustainable solutions to the problem.

Resistance groups in the Niger Delta

Civil society is recognized as an agent of transformation in Africa in the post Cold War era. Over the years civil groups have been suppressed by authoritarian civilian regimes and military dictatorships but the global wave of democracy has allowed these groups to re-emerge as important agents for change actor in politics and governance. While others would argue that state repression under successive military regimes prevented the development of civil society, its landscape has been solid and has accounted for the scope of democratic transition in Nigeria. It is wrong to assume that these civil groups emerged with democracy although democracy may have expanded their political space for more involvement. Their emergence was met with antagonism from the state; the central hypothesis of civil society is that it is the force for societal resistance to state excesses and the centerpiece organizationally, materially and ideologically of the social movements and protests for reforms and change. It must be pointed out that it is not only the state that opposed the development of civil society but also private corporations.

In third world countries like Nigeria where powerful multinational corporations hold rein, collaboration between them and the state may constitute a situation of double jeopardy in terms of repression of civil society. The emergence of social movements in the Niger Delta (as elsewhere) can be placed within a theoretical construct which helps explain the basis of their existence as well as their modus operandi. Expressed differently, social mobilization theories attempt to explain the emergence, objectives, methods and tactics of groups opposed to either the government or transnational forces. Often, these social groupings forge relationships across national frontiers with a view to internationalizing their activities and/or the issues they are seek to address. Given that social movement activity transcends national boundaries, four modes of action define these social networks' overall character. These are: movement diffusion (i.e. temporary interactions that generate similar movement in another state); transnational issue networks (enduring information exchange between main actors within the social movement circle); political exchange (the networking of social groupings in a number of societies); and transnational social movements (interactions between groups with shared visions and ideals). This typology approximates the character of social movement activity in the Niger Delta.

Generally, the emergence of social movements and the internationalization of their activities stem from a number of factors. These include but are not limited to democratization, the ascendancy of liberal ideological issues pertaining to the environment, human rights and minority rights, and the revolution in information and communications technology

with its attendant integration of the world economies. These variables, which also underscore the collective actions of civil society have combined with local factors to engender the formation and continued existence as well as the transnationalization of social movements in Nigeria. With regard to the Niger Delta, the grievances of the oil communities against the government and multinational oil companies has provided the impetus for social mobilization often but not always along ethnic lines. This found expression in an increase in minority political activity at the elite level, the emergence of different lobbies, the formation of political coalitions, and local community agitation. Cumulatively this lead to a call for more revenue from the nation's oil wealth on the one hand and for more resource control on the other.

Local people's determination to pursue these issues arose from the increasing de-nationalization of the state on a global scale which has seen the rise of sub-state identities as the fulcrum of group rights and citizenship claims. The result is that social movements in the Niger Delta have emerged as a result of environmental degradation and the political insensitivity of the Nigerian state. Most of these movements targeted Shell Oil as a means of forcing the Nigerian state to change her policies in the region.

These movements' positions were underpinned by the fact that Shell is the biggest and the most visible foreign oil multinational onshore. Once they could wrestle Shell, other oil companies operating in the region would follow and this underlined the activities of Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) and Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) in the early 1990s. There were numerous social movements that emerged in this period including the Urhobo Progressive Union (UPU), Isoko Development Union (IDU), Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA), and Council for Ikwerre Nationality among others.

In order to capture the attention of the international community, MOSOP, one of the early social movements in the region had to use the language of "rights" and built in international fora an image of the Nigerian state and Shell as violators of human rights. The movement also established offices in Europe and the US facilitated visits by researchers and journalists to Ogoni.

Apart from the people of the Niger Delta, there are other segments of the Nigerian populace that aligned with the Federal Government to argue that there is no basis for conflict in the region. However, an in-depth analysis has shown that these oil-bearing communities have been crucial in holding the fragile unity of Nigeria as nation together for over four decades. They have sacrificed in terms of resources and rights in the face of environmental and ecological hazards. Their involvement in this conflict was to force the federal government and the multinational oil companies to acknowledge their plight. The frustration arising from the forceful approach of the federal government and oil companies to bring them to submission underlines their quest for self-determination and autonomy. All they were interested in originally was to be part of the Nigerian state where their rights of existence including opportunities would be guaranteed.

The government's perception of these struggles generated hot controversy to the issues at stake. These conflicts are very sensitive issues that demand a diplomatic approach towards settlement. Unfortunately, the government had been only forthcoming in making sure that its hegemonic status was forcefully imposed and maintained in order to sustain their revenue interests. These factors were borne out by the authoritarian manner the state has used in promulgating decrees aimed at stripping communities of any rights over the land and its resources. On another level the multinational oil companies did not accommodate the interests of the oil-bearing communities on capitalist grounds. They continue to be viewed as protecting their capital and interests above all else. They have in most cases influenced the oversight of government institutions charged with environmental protection thereby giving them almost unrestrained access to the resources of the region.

State & oil company response to resistance groups in the Niger Delta

Nigeria today faces considerable pressure from both local and international sources over its policy response to the Niger Delta crisis a subject of intense debate and heated controversy. It is therefore advisable to consider some of the state and oil multinational responses to the crisis intended to ensure uninterrupted oil activities. For the purpose of sustaining the flow of oil across the region the Nigerian state (in collaboration with oil companies) have both regular security arrangements and special task forces. These steps lead to the establishment of the brutal task force known as the Rivers State Internal Security Force, a paramilitary force created on the eve of MOSOP's protest against oil production in Ogoni. Similarly, the core states of the Niger Delta also formed their own special security forces with different names e.g. "Operation Salvage" (created by Bayelsa State to protect oil installations) and "Operation

Flush" (established by Rivers State).

The Nigerian state and oil companies have at different times emphasized their commitment to the forceful protection of oil companies' activities and installations. This underscored state leaders' pronouncements of warning against the disruption of oil production since oil is the lifeblood of the country. Indeed the former Petroleum Minister during the Abacha regime, Dan Etete, at various times spoke against violent protest from the local people, insisting that the Abacha administration would not tolerate a situation where every political grievance is taken out on oil installations and operations of oil companies and that 'community leaders should restrain their youths from such acts' as reported by Human Right Watch in 1999. Similarly, Etete stated in 1998 that the destruction of oil companies' property would meet the full wrath of the law since the state was (and still is) in a joint partnership with foreign oil companies. Since the death of General Sani Abacha in 1998, ethnic youth militant movements such as MEND have threatened at different times to shut down oil installations, to violently disrupt the operations of the MNOCs and, if necessary engage the state security forces in armed encounters.

Regardless of its original justification, the current militancy in the Niger Delta appears to have been perverted, misdirected and criminalized by opportunists. It appears that the recent upsurge and attraction to armed conflict and violence by ethnic militias, may have been motivated by crass economic opportunism and profiteering, through hostage taking for ransom and through illegal oil bunkering with external commercial networks. Aside the militarization of the region by the state and oil companies to sustain the uninterrupted flow of oil, the state also initiated or established institutions to address the demand of the people. The question is how effective are these institutions?

The reaction of the state and that of effected communities can be generalized as follows:

Violation	Oil Company Response
Water Pollution	Launch community development project(s)
Farmland Destruction	Supply small arms to government for protection of facilities
Destruction of Aquatic Life	Non-responsive
Wildlife Destruction	Non-responsive
Poor Living Conditions	Offer of part-time employment to community members
State Response	Community Response
Militarization of communities	Make representation/grievance to government
Divide community groups	Advance dialogue with government
Separate settlement with community elites	Public demonstrations
Offers Weak institutional response	Hostage Taking has occurred
Interventionist agency response: OMPADEC NDDC	Armed confrontation/Outreach to International Community

Source: Compiled Data by the author. (2005)

Security implication of the Niger Delta crisis

With the end of the Cold War, there has been renewed academic interest to conceptualize the concept of 'security'. This allows policymakers and scholars to think about security as something more than the military defense of state interests and territory. Second, military threats have been the dominant focus of security to the neglect of other areas. Leading this new approach at considering issues of security in a new light is the scholar Barry Buzan. He puts forward the idea that security should encompass military, political, economic, societal and environmental aspects.

So what is human security? It is said to have two main aspects. It means first safety from such chronic threats as hunger, diseases and repression. Second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life whether in homes, in jobs or in communities according to UNDP. A 1994 UNDP report further defined security as having four essential characteristics of human security. These are:

That human security is a universal concern. The notion of human security is not limited to the poor or rich counties. It recognizes that there are common threats to all people including unemployment, crime, pollution, drugs and human rights violations

That the components of human security are interdependent. Components of human security are not territorially limited anymore. Famine, floods, pollution, terrorism, ethnic disputes and social integration can no longer be considered isolated events confined within national borders. They have global impact

That human security is easier to ensure through early prevention than later through intervention. When balanced, the cost of preventive measure are less than the costs of dealing with the aftermath of a security breach. For instance, rather than trying to stem the tide of death and diseases after a disaster, prior emphasis placed on primary health care may lessen the potential damage to the population

Contd. Next Edition

The Niger Delta and Education By Pat Utomi

Whenever I am asked the solution to the problems Nigeria faces, I always say that no one has the solution, but there is something we can easily do to ease our nations burdens, and that is focus on education. Painful as it is to say, the average Nigerian is not educated and as such has not really developed his/her mind to an extent where he/she can reason objectively. Consequently a lot of us are slaves to our emotions and can not empathize or put ourselves in the other man's shoes.

As most of us live on less than a dollar a day, an effective way of checking this is via education and nutrition. If the government can ensure mandatory primary school enrollment and summon the will to provide one free nutritious meal per day to EVERY primary school pupil, we will ensure that our future adult population are educated and have properly developed brains and bodies, essentials needed to grow an economy.

We should not tolerate children being out of school and hawking on the streets. Left to me we should provide very free and basic primary education and have a task force that enforces this by rounding up any child found on the street during school hours and penalizing his/her parents and guardian. A nation can never become great by what is under the ground such as oil, but by what is between the ears meaning the quality of the brain of its young people. We need to educate our future working population so that we can become a knowledge worker driven society in the years to come and break our dependence on oil which is not sustainable and which is leading to desperation in Nigeria.

Look at the situation in the Niger Delta which has escalated to a state of near civil war. The Federal Government has become desperate and the militants are also desperate and the desperation of both sides is fueled by a total dependence on oil revenue!

How did we come to this?

In pre-independent Nigeria none of the regions were dependent on oil and yet they functioned properly to the extent that they accomplished several firsts. The Western region for instance was able to afford free education for all its residents. But now the Western region like all other regions (now states) is unable to provide free education even with a monthly share of the free oil wealth. Also the North is dependent on oil not because the North chooses to be, but because of the arrested development the North suffered when its major Philosopher king Ahmadu Bello, was killed. His plan for the North as evidenced by his actions was to lift the populace by uniting them irrespective of tribe and religion and using the rich agricultural based economy of the North to make it the greatest part of Nigeria. He was a visionary. One North was his philosophy and he lived it. He was a great man who surrounded himself with other great men from the North irrespective of tribe or religion. For instance one of his very

closest aides was the late Sunday Awoniyi who was a Christian as well as a Yoruba, and rose to become Malam Bello's confidential secretary. But when he was killed Nigeria was not able to sustain his leadership abilities and subsequent Northern leaders allowed the oil wealth to slowly but surely weaken the fabric of Northern society which hitherto had hard work and industry as its back bone. Now instead of one North, we have core North, Middle Belt and regular North.

The South too has become extremely hedonistic and has an insatiable desire for everything foreign. You may also call the South dependent on the North because we depend on the North and imports for our food security. Any matured person knows that money that comes easily such as oil rent income is likely to breed corruption hence the term easy come, easy go! And the type of corruption we are witnessing in Nigeria is one without proportion. For instance we have been witnesses to governors of dirt poor states accused of stealing 30 billion Naira only to turn cry babies when arraigned in court, of serving governors collecting 200 million Naira pensions, of economically backward states buying 57 cars for royal fathers or of sons of former Northern rulers flying polo horses in chartered jets to Switzerland for treatment when they are surrounded by millions of desperately poor peasants. And the educated elite too are also affected as we saw with Professor Grange and the ministry of health scam and the case of a very educated former ambassador who was involved in a desperate scandal involving billions and rituals.

Back to the Niger Delta issue, students of history will agree that the killing of Ahmadu Bello led to the anger that resulted in the counter coup, which led to the pogrom and then the civil war which set Nigeria backwards and cost over 1 million lives and sowed such a seed of discord that we are still reaping till today. The death of one great man enraged the North and set it backwards because of the leadership it deprived the North of. If you had read Gen TY Danjuma's last interview in The Guardian, you will understand that there is still a lot of angst over this issue. That interview was laced with venom.

In the same vein, the killing of Ken Saro Wiwa had the same result in the Niger-Delta as the killing of Ahmadu Bello. Before his execution the term Niger-Delta militants did not exist. Ken Saro Wiwa was an intellectual who authored several books and produced a satirical comedy on Nigerian television called 'Basi and Company'. He had a vision of a peaceful agitation for resource control and was effective at that and that was what led the regime of Sani Abacha to set up a tribunal that sentenced him to death and as you know being an intellectual that 'those who make peaceful change impossible make violent change inevitable'. By killing a man of peace, the government created a vacuum which was filled

by men of violence. That singular action was the genesis of militancy in the Niger Delta struggle.

As such if the Federal Government wants to end militancy in the Niger Delta, the current bombardment is not the way to go. We need to begin with the end in mind and how do we do this? First, we need to ensure that there is a genuine electoral reform in Nigeria that will allow people to vote for their leaders in free and fair elections. If the Niger Delta people had been allowed to choose their leaders in free elections for instance, those leaders would command the respect of the people including these militants and they would be listened to when they exhort their people to do away with militancy. But how can leaders who were rigged into office with the aid of these very same militants command any respect especially with the militants?

Secondly we need to practice democracy and not pay lip service to it. If for instance people have confidence that the National Assembly is capable of resolving those deficiencies inherent in our constitution then communities dissatisfied with the current constitution will lobby the national assembly to amend the constitution or make new laws for the good government of Nigeria. But we have been witnesses to the pettiness displayed by our current legislators who quarrel over who should be called chairman of the Joint Constitution Review Committee and abandoned the process due to this disagreement all the while collecting tens of millions every quarter for services they have refused to provide. If these legislators were chosen in a free and fair election, they would not behave in this manner, but many were selected by egotistical Godfathers and cabals and those are the people they owe their loyalties to, not to you and I, the electorates. How sad. How can those in the Niger Delta who feel shortchanged by the current status quo take their case to the current National Assembly and expect to receive succor? Indeed how can any Nigerian have confidence that this current National Assembly can address the problems they face?

Like Ghana and Zimbabwe recently did, we need to rebuild the Nigerian nation from the bottom up via people power by letting people choose their leaders. I dare say that had we done this in 2007, there would not be the need to bombard civilians in the Niger Delta and if we can reform our electoral practices before 2011 we would save ourselves bigger problems not just in the Niger Delta but elsewhere in 2011 and beyond.

The truth is that the Nigerian system that emanated after the fall of the first republic is a system that will corrupt even an angel and it does not benefit anyone, is unsustainable and should be reformed. We need to break the so called North-South dichotomy. There should be and there really is one Nigeria. I can go further and say there should be one Africa and one black race. The sooner we accept ourselves as one, the sooner we stop wasting energy in resisting each other and can then harmoniously pool resources into building a country that will be worthy of the title 'Giant of Africa'.

Ogoni: Federalism, not Amnesties is the Solution

An amnesty is not enough to solve Niger Delta crisis according to The Guardian, which calls for true federalism to be implemented.

Below is an article published by The Guardian (Nigeria):

As the deadline given to the Niger Delta militants over the amnesty offer by the Federal Government draws close, I actually wonder if the end of the crisis plaguing the region is at hand and yet looking closely at the facts in issue and the history of the agitation in the oil rich region, I honestly do not think so.

When I heard about the amnesty deal from the President in the month of June [2009], I realised that as a country we were yet to learn from history. The 60-day deal was almost like patting a person with gnawing hunger on the back and telling him to go to sleep. For me, it was an inadequate solution to the problem in the Niger Delta. It was also quite interesting to hear people's views on the matter and the newspapers were even more informing as Nigerians expressed their views on the "olive branch" offered to the militants in the Niger Delta.

The move by the Government to offer unsolicited amnesty is being critically appraised all over the world, some laud the government's approach but on this other side of the divide with a lot of Nigerians, I shake my head. Let's look at the history of the Nigerian economy critically. Nigeria is a country abundantly blessed with people and natural resources, a country that focused on tilling its rich soil until agriculture became an important sector of the economy accounting for more than one half of GDP and more than three quarters export earnings before gaining independence in 1960

Then the nation discovered oil in the Niger Delta in 1958. And pronto, the country ushered in a new era, it began exporting its newly discovered "black gold" and by the 1970s the agricultural sector was completely disregarded and discarded as businessmen and the entire citizenry focused on the new source of wealth. A country that previously had a derivation formula of 50-50 suddenly had the bright idea to centralise resource control. Then without warning the country moved from a position of self-reliance in basic food stuffs to one of heavy dependence on imports and sluggishly lumbered two steps behind the same country that only yesterday came to collect palm nuts from it as the third largest producer of palm oil as Malaysia became the leading producer.

As for the Niger Delta, this is an area of dense mangrove rainforest in the southern tip of Nigeria comprising nine states out of the thirty six that make up Nigeria - Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers. The same region that accounts for more than 20% of GDP, more than 97% of total

export earnings and over 70% of all government revenues, a region that is responsible for producing the country's main source of revenue as studies have shown that Nigeria's economy is always directly affected by international prices of petroleum so that the budget which is based on projected earnings from petroleum exports is inevitably affected when oil prices surge or collapse, a region that remains poor despite its rich oil deposit.

Never has there been an outright degradation of the environment and subjection of the people to the worst form of existence in their own homeland no thanks to incessant oil spills, gas flaring, national neglect and corrupt leadership. We have seen the government's lackadaisical approach years after in handling the Niger Delta as it does a dim-witted dance of indecision round the subject of the Niger Delta. We lived through the warnings of writers who foresaw a possible conflict in the region if government continued to neglect the people.

After all it was Ken Saro Wiwa who wrote an article titled "the coming war in the Delta" published in the Nigerian Sunday Times in the 1990s. We lived through an era of lip service by the oil companies involved in oil activities in the region, even playing an indirect role in the killing of the Ogoni Nine and joining the government to ensure that it only parleys with indigenous collaborators who are all too willing to enrich themselves and their families at the expense of the majority who bear the burden of poverty and lack of infrastructural development.

We have seen the rise of militancy in the region which veered off track into the dark woods of kidnappings and murders. We have seen strong advocacy for the development of the region while the government looks the other way and continually enriches itself and the oligarchy that has managed to entrench itself in the modern reality of the Nigerian economy and politics.

We lived through all these ills until the waking call came in the series of pipelines bombings, failed military operations in the region and unnecessary loss of civilian lives.

Then the Federal government began to take reconciliatory measures to curb the Niger Delta "evil" after several punitive measures seemed to be heading nowhere. The first public gesture was seen in 2004 when the Federal and Local governments paid as much as 2,800 USD for each surrendered weapon by militants regardless of quality or condition. At that time, a new AK 47 cost 350 USD. So it was a lucrative time for the militants who sold just one weapon for enough cash to buy eight new ones. The unrest continued till the invasion of the region again by the Joint Task Force to flush out militants and end militancy in the region. It is not that this writer is blind to the fact that the struggle in the Niger Delta

has been hijacked by criminals seeking to gain from the crisis. But it must be borne in mind that had the government listened to non-violent protests in the region in decades past, Nigeria would not have been faced with this unwholesome problem.

The President needs to consider his decision to offer amnesty carefully so that his efforts are not mocked by his inability to effectively address the issue of gross underdevelopment plaguing the region. In concentrating on militancy and amnesty, the government is losing sight of true development in the Niger Delta. If the Government is sincere, let there be true federalism and popular democracy not the jaded democracy "of the few, for the few and by the few" as practised in Nigeria. Let the government take a definite stand against the activities of oil companies in the region who engage in practices that are not allowed in their home countries. Not only is the government allowing foreign companies to get away with environmental degradation and unemployment of the youths in Niger Delta, it is allowing its own people to be enslaved in their own lands. Whatever happened to national pride?

Is amnesty enough? I do not think so. The government must take a dispassionate look at the problem of the region and distance itself from sycophants who claim to be the leaders of their people but do not represent the collective interest of their people. It should desist from name calling as there are people who don't see themselves as militants but emancipators of the region. It must show sincerity in tackling the problem once and for all. For a government that seeks to find a solution to the crises, it must take out the log in its own eyes before trying to remove the speck in the eyes of the fighters and take responsibility for its own actions in the past and now. In my opinion, amnesty is not the final solution to the Niger Delta crises.

If the government does not approach this issue objectively, there is likely going to be another uprising in the Niger Delta. The agitation for resource control by the people of the region must be listened to. The people want to take responsibility for the development of their land since the government has failed to. The President must be transparent in seeking to end the problem suffered in the region once and for all otherwise his efforts will be undermined. Decentralisation of resource control should be considered and the derivation formula increased to give room for true fiscal federalism. Degradation of the environment must stop and the government must be committed in allowing the other sectors of the economy grow otherwise the region will continue to hold Nigeria to ransom and push us off the goodwill list of our industrialised customers as we help oil prices escalate out of control.

Like some others then, it was obvious that she was not a fan of Kenule Saro-Wiwa. Still it may not expressly or necessarily mean that she doesn't love Ogoni, or treasured the Ogoni agenda or notion and vision of MOSOP, which Saro-Wiwa was unarguably a foremost architect and at the helm of the affairs of the Ogoni movement. Presumably, she may have subscribed to what a small group of Saro-Wiwa's critics had alleged as "impulsive monopolistic rising influence" on Ogoni affairs. Or hated to credulously embrace the Saro-Wiwamania or join the bandwagon of MOSOP. Either way, in Ogoni her reputation was at great risks, since Saro-Wiwa's ingenuity has captured the imaginations of vast majority of Ogoni population and beyond. He was prevalently viewed among Ogonis as an extraordinary God-sent moral leader and a messiah: above any other before him and during his life time and that popular perception has brought everyone else below Saro-Wiwa. Consequently, those that parted way with Saro-Wiwa in those hay days had hard time in the mainstream of Ogoni society so their congeniality and reputation were swept away with the wind of the ancient past. But things have since changed for the better, thanks to Ledum Mitee's MOSOP leadership for mending the once deeply divided Kingdom through vigorous reconciliation, rededication, inclusiveness, forgiveness and unity of purpose.

I am not an overzealous fan of Dornu Kogbara, but as an Ogoni with stupendous Western education [at a time when Western educated Ogonis were very few], coupled with vast experience and great repute in her profession, career and public exposure, at a point I became fascinated and proud of these qualities and her achievements. That appeal soon made me a regular reader of her articles and listener of her opinions: some of them luscious, sometimes acidulous comment that could, no doubts stir up intense mixed feelings. In another sense she was a lone and proud voice of Ogoni, who refused to succumb to gender, stigma and inequality or any form of complex. To a larger extent she was not only a great asset but importantly an impressive source of inspiration to Ogoni women, who were vastly disadvantaged educationally.

Ostensibly intense bitterness is fading away, and so soon shall divisiveness and individualistic tendency gradually diminish to a tolerable minimum, I hope, and Ogonis would learn how to disagree to agree. There have been some systematic changes in attitudes and dramatic shifts on issues within Ogoni and nationally; that have significantly narrowed the gap of polarization and inspired clemency, genuine reconciliation, evenhanded tolerance and mutual understanding. Although in order to survive the perilously surging political trend and volatility in Nigeria, Ogoni people must strive to adjust and drift reasonably and aggressively not only to overcome the immediate and foreseeable challenges but continually so to sensibly and realistically advance Ogoni agenda based on logical consensus and ultimately viable plan for a civil society and nation of their dream.

Once again Nigerians have been thrown into a state of profound speculations as Dornu Kogbara recently (in July) resigned from the Oil and Gas Sector Reform and Implementation Committee chaired by Dr. Rilwanu Lukman, the Federal Minister for Petroleum Resources. It is obvious how sometimes intricate it is or risky to rescind a previous decision. In doing so one is faced with questions and sometimes harsh criticisms from critics as well as fans who would demand answers or explanations. According to THIS DAY (July 29, 2009), Ms. Kogbara's resignation is predicated on what she described as 'professional, personal and social reasons'. Ms. Kogbara pointed out that Niger Delta was poorly represented on the committee and the people were tactically denied their rights to proper enlightenment and adequate contribution to the process. "I demanded that they should organize road shows in Rivers and Cross River States to sensitize the people on the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) as well as have their input". She argued. Her observations are legitimate concern to the people, well articulated and relevant to the committee in order to serve the people well. By Nigeria formula there is high probability or reasonable doubts that Ms. Kogbara was not under intense duress to do things the "Nigerian way", in order to accomplish the premeditated agenda of a lackadaisical committee or an unwilling government as supposedly against her conscience.

But we must begin to ask whether her resignation was justifiably a laudable decision at this crucial moment? Definitely yes. What impact, pressure or influence will her decision provoke? Not sure! Do Nigerian authorities care about one's valid point of view or public opinions other than government premeditated agenda regardless of any illogical conclusion? Absolutely not, because minds set of Nigerian leaders are unreasonably impermeable. The democratic experiment in the country is static, lethargic and intolerant to constructive views, or doing so is merely a Western mentality. Alas, Nigerians believe that doing thing in a

Dornu Kogbara's Experience

Tom Bari G. McFini writes from Connecticut, United States.

modern, civilized or enlightened fashion is either being American or British and thus is very un-Nigerian or such practice is not feasible in Nigeria.

Invariably, by Nigerian scornful and secret protocol government appointees are usually required to compromise there principles and values and trade them in for covert government scheme by using surreptitious means in carrying out government stratagem. That is what Ms. Kogbara did not realized, or probably took for granted or maybe her optimism and dependence on her good rapport (with people in high places) and professional proficiency overwhelmed any pessimistic factor.

I learnt that Ms. Dornu Kogbara was a part of the Ogoni delegation that met with the Minister of Niger Delta Affairs, Obong Ufot Ekaette, in Abuja sometime in May, 2009. The Ministry created in September, 2008 was 'to lead and coordinate environmental and youth empowerment policy initiatives as well as reinforce the government commitment to the overall development of the region' and these are the ethics she has demonstrated she treasures and stand for. The source also confirmed that she was keenly devoted to ensuring that Ogoni agenda and Niger Delta question should be taken seriously and not lay waste on the Minister's desk or dossier chamber or worst disappear into the unknown as usual as well as doing everything within her reach to ensure that the ministry is practically meaningful to lives of the people of the region.

Also in another recent development, Princewill former Chairman of the Vision 2020 Subcommittee on Niger Delta expressed no regret but vindication, satisfaction of his conscience and proud of his decision to disengage himself from an assignment destined to fail. He lambasted the government for the obvious dearth of interest to fashion out genuine solutions to the problems in the region. "I feel vindicated by the actions of recent weeks when I decided to resign the office of the Chairman of the Vision 2020 Subcommittee on Niger Delta". "..... today, I am not only vindicated but also proven that I had the foresight to highlight their lack of respect for the Niger Delta....." (THIS DAY, July 29, 2009).

In retrospect, during his military rule, General Ibrahim B. Babangida appointed Kenule B. Saro-Wiwa as Director of Mass Mobilization for Self Reliance, Social Justice, and Economic Recovery (MAMSER), which was inaugurated July 25, 1987, by President Babangida's military administration based on recommendations of a Political Bureau headed by Samuel J. Cooney. The Directorate was to direct exercise in political orientation to sensitize, mobilize and cultivate general support for the proposed transition program to a democratic rule and also an avenue to educate and encourage the citizens to embrace locally made goods and Nigerian products in order to reduce dependence on foreign made products. The underhanded motives of the 'evil genius' and his ruling gang was speculative, as Nigerian wondered why Saro-Wiwa accepted an appointment from an uncivil regime he has severally censured and referred to as illicit regime. Saro-Wiwa resigned from MAMSER few months later. Yet IBB was not done with him: a known foremost critic of military dictatorship, injustice and other social issues that affect Nigerian population. Nigerian leaders do not like to be criticized irrespective of how constructive, legitimate or relevant your concerns may be. He would later pay with his blood for walking the path no one ever dared to.

June 12, 1993, the people of Ogoni through MOSOP unfalteringly boycotted Nigeria's presidential election between late Chief Moshood K.O. Abiola of the Social Democratic Party and the National Republican Congress', Alhaji Bashir Tofa. The boycott was a significant strategic decision by the Ogoni people to declare their frustrations; anger and disagreement with the dire danger minority ethnic groups are faced with, disapproval of subjective government policies, despicable laws and irresponsible government in the country. The Ibrahim B. Babangida's despotic military administration at the time ignored the legitimate point of reasoning of the Ogoni people. That wasn't all, as the then National Electoral Commission (NEC) colluded with some vulnerable and flappable individuals to counterfeit election results in Ogoni area, where obviously there was no voting. That tells how insensitive, downhearted and cataleptic the country leaders are or irresponsible the government is.

Those who knew Ken Saro-Wiwa and cherish his philosophy would love to see his dream actualized, encourage his supporters as well as his heir, Ken Jr. to truly and courageously stride in the likeness of the "Saint" in whose shadow he walks. The world is yet to see that trait. Since Ken Jr. was appointed (appeased?) June 2006, as Personal Advisor to former President Olusegun Obasanjo on

Peace, Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation; and transition to President Yar'Adua administration as Special Assistant on International Affairs to the president his position on the Ogoni agenda and Niger Delta seemed to have been softened, weakened or compromised. His subservience and continued commitment to serve in governments that persistently suppress and deny the people of the Niger Delta suggests a perilous concession and systematic growth from personal comfort to complacency.

No doubt, Ken Jr. is a smart, intelligent and distinguished Nigerian of Ogoni descent. He may be doing something to keep his father's dream alive, but for the fact that he is in a troubled ship in turbulent waters (dishonest administrations) his efforts are not good enough. Moreover, his continued commitment to irresponsible regimes without realizing the dishonesty, guile and unwillingness of the governments he serves indicates that something is wrong. To avoid sharing the shame and blames of this mock and repressive democratic regime, it will be honorable for Ken Saro-Wiwa, Jr. to act quickly and perceptibly in a manner that will rekindle the hope his father discovered, evoked and promised or quit.

At the G20 Summit in Europe earlier this year US President Barack Obama charged world leaders and heads of governments to acknowledge the complexity of the world we live in today and pay attention to the wind of change. He warned that era when the leaders of the United States President and Great Britain would sit over bottles of Champaign and decided the destiny of the world was over. He said, now things have changed and leaders need to congregate to discuss, engage the governed and decide what is good for citizens of their countries and make the world worth living. Sadly, it is the antiquated methods that Nigerian leaders still prefer in this 21st century: that few individuals (aristocrats) reserve the exclusive rights to decide (according to their selfish curiosity) the destiny of all Nigerians. Nigerian authorities believe by concentrating, inducing or pacifying few individuals or inconsequential group in the society the rest of the country's population means nothing, which is why the problems in Nigeria will continue to rise, expand and last longer than imagined. In fact, it's no mistake to assume that Nigerian leaders see the rest population or those outside the ruling cabal as merely imaginary objects or non-existent, and so can be conveniently manipulated at will or preferably do without them. This is unacceptable in modern age. No government or country can survive the wraths of the people if the people are not engaged, involved and or do not freely contribute to the process of governance.

With this atrocious philosophy and sadistic mentality still dominating the political structure and leadership in this 21st century the country can never go forward or emerge from the prevalent national uprising plaguing the country.

Existing or previous infrastructures are being abandoned or in dilapidation; because corruption is not only a practice but a deeply rooted system that is covetously protected by higher authorities and the powerful in the country, every successive administration is therefore driven by disproportionately cupidity and so embarks on politically motivated gigantic projects and symbolic gestures (recipes for high profile corruption), which are used as platform to misappropriate public funds or embezzlement. The authorities employ intimidation, denial, estrangement to cause discomfort and confusion in the country and these strategies have effectively and successfully worked for Nigerian governments for years and shall continue for many more to come, unless civil-minded citizens will engage in something more drastic and determinedly assertive to take the country's leadership from these crooks and public bandits and change the political topography and the system.

Within few months on the stage Ms Kogbara had had more than enough reasons to be evidently convinced that Nigerian government is not willing to address the question of Niger Delta, and both Ms Kogbara and Princewill have exemplified leadership quality needed to rejuvenate people's consciousness.

Dornu Kogbara's journey from her London base to Nigeria with the hope to serve her country and help to assuage the agony of her people and her abrupt disappointment is a teaching experience, especially for those living outside the country.

While I absolutely agree with Ms. Kogbara on her well articulated line of reasoning and courageous decision, I am gravely perturbed about what next is in for Ogoni and rest of Niger Delta.

I had an intra personal contention on whether to leave the above title as a question or as a statement. Me think the statement have more import than the question. If stated in the question form it may as usual elicit a half hearted careless yes or no even when what it relates to is not known. Most Nigerians do not have patience for details, whatever is not intended for comprehension can be left without details. They will never make extra effort to discover beyond what is said. But as a statement, it calls for a retrospection, deeper analysis and conscionable consideration into the issue and perhaps earns responses where possible. What are we really talking about? What do we mean by the statement above? What will go wrong? And how will whatever went wrong affect us?

Nigeria was recently classified among nations with failed state characteristics. I had always had grouse with international appraisals especially when it concerns Nigeria. It has been impressed on the mind of average patriotic Nigerian that the western world and their media hates us and tend to run us down at the slightest opportunity using their numerous appraisals mechanisms ranging from Corruption Index, Transparency international and others as mediums. Their crime, I later reasoned is their prompt and factual reportage of events which the government had refused public access and classified for security reasons. There is no denying the fact that personal judgments can influence and determine the content of the report. Until recently, I had always wondered at the efficacy of the criteria that are only known and determined by them. How can we rule out subjectivity occasioned by sentiments and racial prejudice in choice of criteria? This reason has long been our consolation and a cloak under which governance is continually conducted in a reckless manner.

Unarguably, Nigeria is blessed beyond comprehension and do not deserve to be so classified. Recently, I discovered empirically determined indicators and characteristics which were clear signals that we are at the precipice of collapse as a nation? Ours is a complex situation. The country is endowed with complacent agitators who only remark about ill governance but put in no extra effort in desiring change. Sometimes I attribute it to our seemingly national religiosity. We are easily consoled which is why obvious government actions that amount to abuse of the sensibility and civility of her citizens are handled with coward tolerance. Successive leadership has failed Nigeria as a Nation and subjected our polity to an item of social political experimentation. We have become sample survey for research and the results are very convincing. These social-political and economic criteria enumerated below are realistic indicators upon which a country is appraised whether or not it is a failed state.

- Social indicators**
- 1. Demographic pressures:** including the pressures deriving from high population density relative to food supply and other life-sustaining resources. The pressure from a population's settlement patterns and physical settings, including border disputes, ownership or occupancy of land, access to transportation outlets, control of religious or historical sites, and proximity to environmental hazards.
 - 2. Massive movement of refugees and internally displaced peoples:** forced uprooting of large communities as a result of random or targeted violence and/or repression, causing food shortages, disease, lack of clean water, land competition, and turmoil that can spiral into larger humanitarian and security problems, both within and

GenerationNext Agenda

With
Elvis Lebura Ikoma
ikomalebura@yahoo.com.
+234 8033524485



Until Things Go Wrong

between countries.

- 3. Legacy of vengeance-seeking group grievance:** based on recent or past injustices, which could date back centuries? Including atrocities committed with impunity against communal groups and/or specific groups singled out by state authorities, or by dominant groups, for persecution or repression. Institutionalized political exclusion. Public scapegoating of groups believed to have acquired wealth, status or power as evidenced in the emergence of "hate" radio, pamphleteering and stereotypical or nationalistic political rhetoric
 - 4. Chronic and sustained human flight:** both the "brain drain" of professionals, intellectuals and political dissidents and voluntary emigration of "the middle class." Growth of exile/expat communities are also used as part of this indicator.
- Economic indicators**
- 5. Uneven economic development along group lines:** determined by group-based inequality, or perceived inequality, in education, jobs, and economic status. Also measured by group-based poverty levels, infant mortality rates, and education levels.
 - 6. Sharp and/or severe economic decline:** measured by a progressive economic decline of the society as a whole (using: per capita income, GNP, debt, child mortality rates, poverty levels, business failures.) A sudden drop in commodity prices, trade revenue, foreign investment or debt payments. Collapse or devaluation of the national currency and a growth of hidden economies, including the drug trade, smuggling, and capital flight. Failure of the state to pay salaries of government employees and armed forces or to meet other financial obligations to its citizens, such as pension payments.

Political indicators

- 7. Criminalization and/or delegitimation of the state:** endemic corruption or profiteering by ruling elites and resistance to transparency, accountability and political representation. Includes any widespread loss of popular confidence in state institutions and processes.
- 8. Progressive deterioration of public services:** a disappearance of basic state functions that serve the people, including failure to protect citizens from terrorism and violence and to provide essential services, such as health, education, sanitation, public transportation. Also using the state apparatus for agencies that serve the ruling elites, such as the security forces, presidential staff, central bank,

diplomatic service, customs and collection agencies.

- 9. Widespread violation of human rights:** an emergence of authoritarian, dictatorial or military rule in which constitutional and democratic institutions and processes are suspended or manipulated. Outbreaks of politically inspired (as opposed to criminal) violence against innocent civilians. A rising number of political prisoners or dissidents who are denied due process consistent with international norms and practices. Any widespread abuse of legal, political and social rights, including those of individuals, groups or cultural institutions (e.g., harassment of the press, politicization of the judiciary, internal use of military for political ends, public repression of political opponents, religious or cultural persecution.)

- 10. Security apparatus as 'state within a state':** an emergence of elite or praetorian guards that operate with impunity. Emergence of state-sponsored or state-supported private militias that terrorize political opponents, suspected "enemies," or civilians seen to be sympathetic to the opposition. An "army within an army" that serves the interests of the dominant military or political clique. Emergence of rival militias, guerilla forces or private armies in an armed struggle or protracted violent campaigns against state security forces.

Some components of the indicators above are familiar to our polity even though not to an extreme situation. Importantly it is a pointer to the reality that Nigeria is beginning to share the features of a failed state. This is to put it mildly; it is assumed that we are getting warning signs of an impending danger. What ever is the consideration, it is enough signals for the Nations Leadership to have a rethink. This business of chasing rats when the nation's roof is on fire is dangerously diversionary. We must learn to set priorities and set it right. A careful study of the features outlined above need put Nigeria on toe knowing that we have a fragile demarcation between our extent of decay or state of health as a nation and an outright failure as a nation state.

Do we wait until things go wrong before we repair? Is it not popularly said that prevention is better and cheaper than cure? It has been our tradition to wait until a dilapidated high way claim lives (most times lives of or relatives of prominent Nigerians) before it is fixed. We wait till an epidemic has broken, owing to lack of portable drinking water before palliative measures (water supplied by rusty water tankers) will be adopted. We wait until a prominent Nigerian die at a dysfunctional medical centre before contracts are awarded for the purchase of medical equipment which becomes useless because of operational incompetence on the part of the staff. We wait until poor quality obsolete airplanes claim lives of school children before life saving aviation policies are formulated. Etc. We may not get sustainable infrastructure as long as services are palliative and emergent.

We can afford to lose some lives as the most populous black nation with these sectarian Boko Haram and Niger Delta pogrom but can we afford to lose a nation state with a failed state gamble? It is incontrovertible that we risk social, political and economic catastrophe if we continue the way we are. Our problems are endemic, agreed. But if we sincerely and genuinely concert effort to save and redeem Nigeria, I can assure us that it is a redeemable feat. Let us not wait till things go wrong.

Focus

Non-implementation of Report: The Case for Niger Delta Technical Committee Report

By Nwaorgu Faustinus Chilee

There are only two truly infinite things, the universe and stupidity. And I am unsure about the universe. - By: Albert Einstein"

It has always been said that the Nigerian government has good policies, programme or plan for its citizenry but what is lacking is the will to implement them to a logical conclusion. It is based on this backdrop that this piece is being done.

Perturbed by the intractable Niger Delta crisis, typified in hostage-taking, oil bunkering and the bombardment of oil pipe lines the Federal Government (FG) of Nigeria constituted a 45-member Technical Committee in September 2008 to collate and review all existing reports, literature, recommendations and attempts made in the past in order to solve the teething problem in the oil rich region.

The Niger Delta technical Committee was also setup in reaction to the wide condemnation of the appointment of Professor Ibrahim Gambari to chair the Niger Delta Summit, which was expected to come up with a workable plan on how best to tackle militancy and development needs of the region. The summit did not sail through as Gambari was criticized for his untoward comments he made in the past about late Kenule Saro Wiwa, a renowned Ogoni Activist and the role which the former (Gambari) played in the extra judicial execution of the Ogoni five during the heydays of General Sani Abacha.

The committee which was headed by the leader of the

Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), Ledum Mittee had 10 days to present its initial report to the President, Yar'Adua.

Mittee assured Nigerians and particularly Niger Deltas then that the committee will not disappoint the nation and added that the committee does not have the absolute power to implement the report. According him: "Above all, I can assure you that this committee will not fail the nation as we would produce a report that has such measurable and relevant recommendations that there will be little room for them to prematurely join previous volumes on the shelves".

It is almost getting to one year now since the above committee submitted its reports to the FG. It seems the FG does not have the political will and sincerity to adopt the reports.

Apart from the creation of the Ministry of Niger Delta Affairs, the granting of amnesty to repentant militants, the Federal Government should know that the implementation of the reports will go a long way in fast-tracking peace and development in the region. The FG should not create any loopholes for the repentant militants to pull out from the amnesty deal by not implementing the reports for the militants are well aware of its existence.

It will be a great disservice and betrayal of trust reposed in the FG, if she does not execute the reports' recommendations which these seasoned sons and daughters of this nation worked

hard to put together.

Only time will tell whether the reports of the Niger Delta Technical Committee will be implemented, or untimely join former volumes on the shelves. The time is ticking, tick-tack.

Nwaorgu Faustinus Chilee, a Scio-political commentator writes in from Igboeche, Port Harcourt, Rivers State.



Ledum Mittee, Chair NDTC

Implement Niger Delta Masterplan, Crisis Will Level Out - Ojo

Sam Okadoro

ALPHONSUS OJO, member, Delta State House of Assembly, representing Ukwuani Constituency, was engaged in his medical practice in Port Harcourt before returning to contest election into the present position. In this interview with Correspondent, SAM AKADORO, he speaks on some issues including the Niger Delta crisis.

Excerpts:

As a medical practitioner, how do you think you fit into law making?

Law involves articulation of intelligence. You do not really need to be a lawyer before you can make laws after all. Most of us are family members, you make laws in your home, and I am sure that those laws are effectively executed. If I can run my home effectively, I know if I go there, I can equally contribute my quota into effective law making. It is a group affair. I make my suggestion, you make your suggestion. With our brain, common sense and the rest you know what is good from what is bad. All these things we put into practice. You see our governor is a medical practitioner. He is not a political scientist. He is my professional colleague. Dr. Peter Odili the immediate past Governor of Rivers State, Dr. Ifeanyi Okowa, who is the SSG of the state are all there doing well in governance as medical practitioners. Even while we were in medical school, we took some courses in law: Medical Jurisprudence, Medical Psychology etc. When you combine all these knowledge, we can harness them into politics and legislation. I do not think there is anything so special that you must go to law school before making good laws for the people. Even most of the renowned leaders we have today are not lawyers. We make laws on health and medical matters.

Politics often times is referred to as dirty game, as a Medical Doctor, how do you think you fit in here?

In the first place, I disagree totally that politics is a dirty game. How would you say politics as a defined strategy on how best our environment is been managed is called a dirty game? If you say politics is a dirty game then the act of living equally is a dirty process. It all depends on individual perception. Politics can be used to create a better and cleaner society.

May be, it is the way some authors operate the process of governance hence it is referred to as being dirty.

That is not enough to say it is a dirty game. In every aspect of life, there are some complications, shortcomings; that does not make life a dirty process. If there are some dirty practices in politics, which is one of the things existing on earth, equally there are also dirty practices in other things. Even in medical practices, sometimes there are some sharp and quack practices in it. That does not mean that medical practice is a dirty process. If there is quackery in politics that does not mean politics is dirty. It all depends on the individual. May be a particular person is practicing his/her own in a dirty way, that does not mean that politics is dirty. My practice and many people that are in politics are refined. And they will practice in a refined manner. So let us not generalise and say that politics is a dirty process. There are clean people and clean practice in politics, as far as I am concerned.

Comment on 10 years of democracy in Nigeria.

Democracy in Nigeria as a developing environment is in a rudimentary level. When you are developing there could be one

or two shortcomings, but that does not mean you are not moving ahead. I must confess that we have been faced with a lot of problems, necessitated by some of the practices that exist, but I must confess that those abnormal practices dominate the good practices. I must confess, also that we are not really growing rapidly in democracy and I know with God we will certainly get there. I however want to implore everybody to be patient, and be committed, since all of us are part of the government. We should contribute meaningfully to the development of the country. Like most of the things happening in the Niger Delta, those things will retard the progress of democracy and we should do things in dialogue. Equally I am appealing to the Federal Government to be sensitive to the critical demands of our people because those are the things that make out environment all right. If it dialogues with you, the environment will be all right.

For example, the Federal Government does not want to look at the demands of ASUU for now. It made promises to ASUU and it does not want to listen to them. I want to advise that the government should be sensitive to the plights of the people they are really governing.

Secondly, the people they are governing should channel their grievances in a diplomatic way, which is dialogue, so that we will improve on our growth in democracy. I will say God is with us. America and all these developed countries passed through this stage. We will certainly be there one day.

What are the strategies you have marshaled out to empower your constituency?

My people invited me into the political system because probably they found discovered some qualities in me. First, I am a very good listener, and I am calm, I welcome all criticisms both constructive and negative and I filter them, and I ensure that I use those that will better the lives of my people. I also make my legislation a people oriented one where I identify their problems. I have a formidable group too from this same people who always advise me on how to go about all things. These are experience politicians that have made it in their live, in their private endeavour and political endeavour. I also have other groups that are ready to go from place to place. If I am not opportuned to go and censor the feelings of my people they report back to me. I sit down on a round table conference with my core strategists that are worthy of experience in politics, and have succeeded in their personal endeavour. I used their wealth of experience, add to my own and we mapped out strategies that moves my environment forward. Among these advices, are what I am trying to implement now, and because of their contribution, and I say okay, we need to do this and know it will go a long way. I am optimistic that many are coming. I am not yet up to a year of my mandate.

Niger Delta is boiling, please articulate a possible solution.

Like I mentioned earlier, there is a fundamental problem in Niger Delta. You are in the midst of plenty and you still suffer from abject poverty. You are inside the water and soap is trying to enter your eyes, when there is supposed to be enough water. The essence of the crisis is because of marginalisation and absolute neglect of the Niger Delta and that is where the resources are coming from. A lot of proposals and strategies brought forward for them to implement, but they are just in the form of a paper there. During the colonial era, there was this 'Willink

Commission' that looked into the topographical abnormality and the things needed to help develop the Niger Delta environment. They made some recommendations, but were not implemented. In subsequent government, Saro-Wiwa and others also made their proposals and that bold attempt landed them into their premature deaths. All other people have been coming, now some youths felt that dialogue has not been providing solutions, so they now go into this violence, and you see men and other organisations fighting for the emancipation of the Niger Delta. The way they are approaching it, is some how crude. But sometimes an angry man would loose sense of control and do certain things nasty. If you neglect the people where the resources are available and you go to another area that depends on this resource, (all the amenities are available for their use, this things touches the mind and somebody's heart).

I want the government to be sensitive to the yearnings of the people in the Niger Delta and look for a way to implement most of these recommendations in this Niger Delta masterplan that was recommended. If they implement those things, it will go a long way to solving the fundamental problem of the region, but unfortunately, they will only set up intelligent and formidable committees, to come out with something and spend money to setup committees, when they make their recommendations, let them go and implement them and you will see things working out for good. They are shouting amnesty, if they plough those money directly into developing Niger Delta region, it will go a long way to solve our problems. If they do this, you will see most of these people will sheath their swords, and if they do not, you will now know that they are fighting selfish battle. Then the government can now use their might to crush those people having met certain percentage of the recommended conditions by most of these committees. It is only then they can be justified for using their might to crush them. So my recommendation is that let the governments ensure that they start implementing most of the recommendations.

Ukwuani people are rejoicing for the present empowerment you just gave out to them. What next would they be expecting from you after this?

I am their representative, and like I told you, my representation is people oriented. We go to our communities to find out their problems, and see how we can be useful in solving those problems. Like you people are aware when I came in, and no sooner than I came in, I made promises to my people during my campaigns and I told them that my word is my bond I have started implementing my promises one after the other. Besides these ones you people are seeing, we have commenced the educational endowment fund, which I initiated, where scholarship would be awarded to 20 students, we have distributed note books to all the public schools in this constituency. We have even embarked on registration of people to ensure that illiteracy would be eradicated from Ukwuani come 2020. The government is trying their best but we have to compliment their effort. Like I said, I do not really have to wait for the government before I help my people. We must assist from the little money we can lay our hands upon and the token we can, that is essentially what I am doing. I actually came in to represent them to see how I can impact positively on their lives. I am not there to make things for myself. Like I told you, before I came in, I have already been established and that is enough for me.

President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua rules out Amnesty Date Extension

From Madu Onuorah, Inem Akpan-Nsoh and Precious Otuekong (Uyo)

President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua yesterday in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, warned that government would not extend the deadline of October 6 for militants in the Niger Delta, calling on them to embrace the amnesty now.

"Those who refuse to take advantage of amnesty will be on their own after October 6, 2009," the President, who was represented by the Minister of Defence, Major General Godwin Abbey (rtd), at the opening ceremony of 2009 Chief of Naval Staff Annual Conference in the state, said.

While on a courtesy call at the state Government House, he declared that the ultimatum would not be shifted, stressing that amnesty was one of the development plans for the Niger Delta region.

The President said the Federal Government was sincere with the exercise, appealing to the militants to surrender their weapons at the designated areas. The region, he stressed, would soon experience massive development.

He expressed satisfaction over the ongoing infrastructure

development in Akwa Ibom, adding that it takes a government with vision and action to achieve people-oriented programmes.

Earlier, Governor Godswill Akpabio said there were no militants in the state, noting that guns that may be found in the state are those from areas involved in communal clashes.

He urged such communities to lay down their arms in order to benefit from the amnesty.

Akpabio said work was ongoing at the relocated Federal Prisons along Abak/Ikot Ekpen road in the state and would be completed by December 2009.

And speaking at the opening of the Chief of Naval Staff Conference 2009 held at the Meridian Hotel, the President also decried what he called the poor perception of National Security.

Yar'Adua, who x-rayed the security challenges facing the nation, said the perception that

it was a state matter alone was a major misconception.

He stressed that contemporary wisdom dictated a broader understanding of the essence of national security.

"National security transcends the requirement of military capability as a visible instrument of state power but is borne from the ability of a nation to evolve relatively stable patterns of social, political and economic growth and development", he said.

The President, who spoke through the Minister of Defence, explained that his administration's Seven-Point Agenda took cognisance of the importance of security and thus accorded it priority.

Describing security as the essential requirement of development planning and implementation, the President told the audience of top military officers, including the Chiefs of Naval Staff of Ghana (Rear Admiral Mathew Quarshie) and South Africa (Vice Admiral Joe Mudimu) that this was the

major philosophy behind the declaration of the amnesty.

According to him, the government's initiatives on the resolution of the festering Niger Delta conflict are clear indications of "our commitment to lasting peace and security in the region."

He remarked further: "The declaration of Presidential Amnesty for Niger Delta militants' accords with this underlining philosophy. It is heartening to note that the implementation of the Presidential Amnesty is well on course and I am confident that the resolution of this conflict is finally within sight."

He noted that the aim of Nigeria becoming one of the world's 20 economies by the year 2020 required focus on key sectors of the economy, as well as the unqualified support and contribution from all segments of the country.

The President explained that Nigeria's maritime sector had a dominant impact on the economy and held the key to

the realisation of Vision 20:2020 goals.

"It is, therefore, imperative that we develop clear, concise and actionable maritime strategies to make the sector a dynamic contribution to the desired economic transformation. Additionally, we must develop our potential to contribute effectively to sub-regional maritime security," he said.

He said contemporary concepts of maritime security recognised the fundamental role of naval power.

"More importantly, we need a Navy with the capacity and capability to contribute to the long-term economic aspirations and the overall development of the nation. It is for these reasons that I find the theme of the Chief of Naval Staff Annual Conference 2009 'Enhancing Nigerian Navy Operations toward Realisation of Vision 20:2020' timely, relevant and significant".

The President also asked the Navy to "evolve strategic framework for effective international co-operation of

naval forces and maritime authorities in the Gulf of Guinea for mutual security and development as a way of providing the maritime security needed for national development."

Chief of Naval Staff, Vice Admiral Ishaya Ibrahim, who announced that the Navy was set to open a new Base in Ikot Abasi, Akwa Ibom State, said that the service had in the last one year received into its inventory a total of four 17-metre Mantra Class boats, two 38-metre patrol vessels, two Shaldag Israeli boats and two 109A helicopters.

He credited the acquisition of the platforms for "significant achievement in reducing cases of illegal bunkering and oil theft" in the Niger Delta.

However, Akpabio said the need for the Navy to protect the oil and gas sector and the maritime economic potentials of the Gulf could not be overstressed.

He said the state has the longest stretches of beach in the world and the richest coastline

House Wife Cruel Action: The Fate of Little Eunice

Little Eunice is an 11 year old girl-child born to Mrs. Beatrice Omeh. Eunice resides in Obigbo with her maternal uncle Mr. Favour Kalu who is a mason by profession. About the year 2007,

she was supposed to have. At this realization, Eunice became afraid to go home because she knew that her aunt would punish her. She stood outside until about 8:00pm when it dawned on her that there was no other way out but to submit herself to Chinonyerem. Expectedly, Chinonyerem was infuriated at the shortage of N170.00 and Eunice received the merciless canning of her life.

As Eunice's uncle came home that night, he was told what happened. Mr. Kalu pleaded to the wife not to beat the little girl again. She promised to make up for the loss of N170.00 to her.

my house locked and on enquiry, I was told what happened. I went to Obigbo Police Station to visit Chinonyerem.

One the day Chinonyerem was arraigned in court, I was there. Nobody asked me what my opinion is. They said it is now government matter. I need help to get my wife released from prison custody and at the same time, I need money to offset Eunice's medical bills. My in-laws have refused to come to my assistance, especially in the area of releasing their daughter, who happens to be my wife. I have forgiven Chinonyerem for what she had done and the matter should be left to God. I do not want my wife to be prosecuted because I am a man of peace.

A Neighbour's Version

When Chinonyerem's neighbor used a bucket of water to put off the flame on Eunice, Chinonyerem was enraged at this show of mercy from the neighbor and got into a quarrel with the woman. Other neighbors and by-standers who witnessed the incident decided to give Chinonyerem the beating of her life. Her clothes were shredded by the angry mob and an old man who lives along the street came to her rescue and locked her in his house. The mob infuriated by his action transferred their aggression to the old man and started to beat him, demanding that he release Chinonyerem to them.

On the following day being Friday May 22nd 2009, Mr. Kalu in keeping with his promise, gave One Thousand (1,000) Naira to his wife and pleaded that she should take the money as a satisfaction of the N170.00 unaccounted for by Eunice. He further appealed to her not to beat the little girl again. After this, he left for the day's work.

Chinonyerem called Eunice inside the house and started beating her again. She poured kerosene on her, struck a match stick and set Eunice ablaze. Eunice rushed out of the house screaming and in excruciating pain. A neighbor saw her and poured a bucket of water on her to put off the flame. She was rushed to the hospital by kind-spirited neighbours.

Mr. Favour Kalu's Version

I thank God that Eunice survived the ordeal. Otherwise, the incident would have had an unforgettable on me and my children. I cautioned Favour not to beat Eunice again but unknown to me she had made up her mind on what to do.

When I came back from work on the 21st day of May 2009, I was told that my wife had given buns worth One Thousand Seven Hundred (N1,700.00) Naira to Eunice to hawk. The little girl could not account for One Hundred and Seventy Naira of the entire stock. This infuriated Chinonyerem and she flogged Eunice. On the following day being 22nd May 2009, I gave N1,000 Naira to Favour and told not to beat Eunice again.

When I came home at the close of work, I saw the door to

The WOR/NBA team of lawyers, while implementing the Project on Child protection with support from UNICEF Zone A Field Office Enugu, visited the prisons to conduct counseling/ interviewing session for inmates of the Port Harcourt Prisons. During the visit the team met Mrs. Chinonyerem Favour Kalu, aged 27 years old lady from Umuahia in Abia State and their wedding was celebrated on the 4th day of December 2005. Mrs. Chinonyerem Favour Kalu resides with her husband along Nweke Street, Obigbo.

Chinonyerem's Version

She informed the team that on the 21st day of May 2009, Eunice Omeh, her 11 year old house maid came back late to the house at about 8:00pm. She scolded the little girl, dabbed a little quantity of kerosene on her dress and applied naked flame from a match stick to it. She meant no harm (she said) but was only trying to teach the little girl that it was wrong to come home late at night. On the 22nd day of May 2009, one of her in-laws visited and on seeing Eunice, he left to go and get medical help for Eunice. However, he alerted the public telling them that she poured kerosene and put matches on her. Chinonyerem said that she was almost lynched by an irate crowd but for the intervention of kind-hearted people who took her to the Obigbo Police Station. On the 29th day of June 2009, she was arraigned before the Magistrate in Obigbo Magistrate Court. She appealed to the team to help in her matter and ensure her release from prison custody. She assured the team that they should help her as the bodily injury on the child was very little.

The team visited the child-victim who is on hospital admission at Divine Grace Hospital located Off Obigbo Express Way Road to ascertain the extent of injury. Below is the sight the team saw;

Eunice's Version

Little Eunice said that she hawks buns for her aunt, Mrs. Chinonyerem Kalu, after school hours. On Thursday 21st day of May 2009, Eunice came back home from school and was, as usual, sent out to hawk buns by her aunt, Mrs. Chinonyerem Favour Kalu. At the end of her sales, Eunice realized that she had One Hundred and Seventy (N170.00) Naira less than what



Little Miss Eunice



Chief Gani in a warm embrace with the MOSOP President, Ledum Mitee during the Ogoni National Merit Award presentation Ceremony in Bori, at the 2003 Ogoni Day.



Chief Gani having a handshake with an Ogoni Son, Hon. Kenneth Kobani on arriving Bori to receive an Ogoni National Award.



Chief Gani in MOSOP Cap, showing solidarity to the Ogoni Struggle. On his right, former Deputy Gov. Sir G. Tobi, Colleagues on his left.



Chief Gani making solidarity speech after receiving Ogoni National Merit Award in Bori in 2003