

**Joint Statement by the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) and
African Indigenous Foundation for Energy and Sustainable Development (AIFES)
15th Session of the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP)
UNOG, Switzerland
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Item 8 – Impact of Development Projects on Indigenous Women

Mr. Chairperson,

Thank you for giving me another opportunity to address this august assembly. I am Saro Legborsi Pyagbara presenting this joint statement on behalf of the *Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) and African Indigenous Foundation for Energy and Sustainable Development (AIFES)*.

I am from Ogoni in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. The Niger Delta is situated in Southern Nigeria open to the Atlantic Ocean and is Africa's largest delta, covering about 70,000 square kilometers, and with about one-third of it made up of wetlands, and the third largest world mangrove forests. The Niger Delta is unique in Nigeria because it is the belly of Nigeria's oil industry, with its attendant environmental hazards such as water, land, air pollution.

Ogoniland and by extension, the Niger Delta is the epicenter of the global rat-race for fossil-fuel extraction. Today, the Niger Delta hosts almost all the multinational oil corporations in the world. ExxonMobil, Shell Oil, Chevron, Total Energies, Agip, ELF etc.

The development intervention of the oil industry have led to gross destruction of biodiversity, coastal and river bank erosion, flooding, oil spillage, gas flaring, noise pollution, sewage and waste water pollution, land degradation and soil fertility loss and rapacious deforestation.

Ogoni women's livelihood, health and social well-being is built around their relationship with the Earth and its systems hence a pollution of the earth pose great challenges to their survival and sustenance. The role and importance of women in relation to environment and development in Ogoni is crucial because women depend on the environment for their daily needs such as water, fuel, food. Women not only endure the most of environmental degradation, but also play a vital role in environmental management.

The Ogoni ecology largely determines women's economic endeavors, the rural women in particular. Women in the Ogoni mangrove forest ecosystem engage themselves in mainly fishing and gathering of seafood. A dense vegetation of mangroves in their marine and brackish habitats found along numerous rivers and creeks have become dependable sources of fuel wood for domestic and small-scale food processing as well as income generation. Similarly, the fresh water swamp forest ecosystem occurring around fresh water creeks and lakes support women's fishing activities, gathering of sea foods, fuel woods, gin distillation from raffia palm trees (*Raphia vinifera*). In the mangrove and fresh water swamp systems women engage in farming, mainly for subsistence and depending on the availability of arable farmland. In the tropical rain forest, women's major economic activity is farming. Collection of snails and other nontimber products, weaving, fuel wood gathering, tapping of rubber trees, etc are other sources from which women generate revenue and derive their livelihood.

The destruction of the environment reduces the quality of life of women and the entire human population of Ogoni.

Mr. Chair, it is in this regard that I wish to call on the panelists to:

1. We call for the establishment of a dedicated fund within the UN System for Indigenous women to access for alternative livelihood development.
2. Call on companies to establish a special funding mechanism for women livelihood activities and health needs.
3. Oil development destroys the environment totally, nothing is spared, air, water, land and soil. We call for the payment of adequate compensation to Indigenous women wherever development intervention is taking place.
4. Let us call for a moratorium on fossil fuel extraction all over the world.

Thank you.