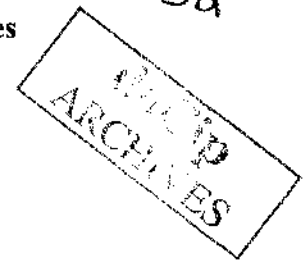


**Third Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
United Nations Headquarters
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Item 4A-Economic and Social Development**

Item 4a 18/05
#32



Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address this august assembly. I am Legborsì Saro Pyagbara speaking on behalf of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) representing the six Kingdoms of Ogoni and the Ogoni Volunteers Indigenous Humanitarian Organization (OVIHO).

1. Failure of the Nigeria government to abide by the decisions of International Human Rights Organizations
2. The role of International Development Organizations in subverting the socio-economic development of the Ogoni People.

Failure of the Nigeria government to abide by the decisions of International Human Rights Organizations

Almost nine years after the hanging of the late Ken Saro Wiwa and eight other Ogoni activists, the Ogoni people are once again on the same familiar road as the present regime of General Obasanjo seemed more determined to crush any voice of dissent against his increasing descent into the club of civilian dictators.

Mr. Chairman, three years ago, the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights returned a stunning decision on Communication 155/96 holding the Nigeria government accountable for the gross violations of the economic, social and cultural rights of the Ogoni People-Their right to food, right to health ,right to adequate housing and right to a clean environment linked to the operations of the multinational oil giant, Shell and made recommendations to the government for improvements in the situation of the Ogoni People.

In spite of their commitment to the African Charter, the government has consistently refused to enter into any dialogue in relation to the recommendations of this commission and has recently hinged our benefiting from government development programmes only on our agreement that Shell P.D.C. resumes oil exploration activities in Ogoni which the company abandoned some years ago. This is development racism.

The role of International Development Organizations in subverting the socio-economic development of the Ogoni People.

Mr. Chairman, our experiences in Nigeria as an Indigenous Minority is beginning to make us to doubt the sincerity of United Nations Agencies who come here to give glorious pictures of their activities in the world especially as it relates to Indigenous communities but behave more like our local oppressors at the national level.

Despite the community complaints that have been raised about the West African Gas Pipeline Project in West Africa, it is inconceivable to believe the role that the World Bank has been playing behind the scene to promote this project in the face of the glaring environmental consequences of the project on the local population.

Over the years Mr. Chairman, Shell P.D.C has come under intense scrutiny about their environmental excesses in Ogoni and other parts of the Niger Delta. The increasing spate of violence in the Niger Delta despite the companies' claim to be adhering to the provisions of the Global Compact in its community Development Programmes leaves much to be desired.

Yet, it is painful to hear that an organization like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is considering partnering with this environment destroyer by way of giving it some loan facility in recognition of its improved behavior in their operations in recent years. One wonders how UNDP comes by this judgment of improvement in good behavior of Shell without involving the host communities of Shell in their assessment.

The increasing corrupt scandal rocking UNDP projects in Ogoni has made us to see this partnership with Shell as actually partnership of two friends for their mutual benefit and not that of the benefit of Indigenous communities in the Niger Delta.

An example is the UNDP project in Bori-the headquarters of the Ogoni People that involves the building of a Local Government Training Centre which does not work and yet is quoted to have consumed an interesting amount of money.

This is the same story with The Food and Agricultural Organization who recently extolled Nigeria government food programme yet the masses see no food programmes on the ground deserving of such commendation except sponsored trips of government officials to Brazil to study the Brazilian Cassava industry yet has nothing to show the local population and farmers.

In the light of the foregoing, we recommend as follows:

1. That the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues put more scrutiny on the activities of United Nations Agencies and their relationship with indigenous communities in the respective nation-states
2. That the Permanent Forum urges United Nations Agencies to increase their engagement with Indigenous peoples. It is unfortunate that most U.N.D.P Country offices does not even know there is a UNDP Policy Note on Indigenous Peoples.
3. That the United Nations Pressure the Nigeria government to respect its international obligations especially as it relates the Right to Development of the Ogoni People
4. That the Nigeria government ensures that appropriate environmental and social impact assessments are prepared for any future oil development and that the safe operation of any further oil development is guaranteed through effective and independent oversight bodies for the petroleum industry
5. That the United Nations strengthens the monitoring capacity and intervention mechanisms of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to enable it intervene in critical situations affecting indigenous peoples in the respective nation-states.

Thank you.