

Item 4 b. Utilisation of Indigenous peoples lands by non-indigenous authorities, groupes or individuals for military purposes.

Position paper read by Adeewale .Adeoye, **Green Peoples Environmental Network, GREPNET-Member of the International Alliance on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forest, IAITPTF. Grepnet2003@yahoo.com**

Good day the chairperson. I feel honoured to be called upon to address this wonderful congregation of beautiful and peace loving peoples from all over the world. I stand before you to speak on the hundreds of indigenous peoples in my country. Permit me to remind you that my country has a very significant place in global political economy, being the 8<sup>th</sup> largest producer of oil in the world and the largest black nation on the continent. Every one out of 5 African is a Nigerian. However the situation at home does not call for joy. My country is one of the poorest nations on earth yet some of her few leaders are some of the world's richest with the best of houses in Europe and America.

Permit me to say that Switzerland, the soil on which we all stand today will be having in her banks not less than SOOmillion dollars of Nigerian stolen public funds. In recent times, the Swiss government had helped to repatriate stolen public funds in the range of over 400dollars kept by greedy leaders that have dominated Nigerian political space for several decades. Apart from being the axis of corruption and ineptitude, Nigeria is a kingpin in the dehumanisation and degradation of indigenous peoples and their homelands. The new civilian regime that came to power in 1999 has not changed the gory equation. Since the civil war that ended in 1970, indigenous homelands, mainly in the SouthEast and the SouthSouth, the producers of Nigeria's oil mainstay have been perpetually militarised by the authorities. Several military infrastructure have been cited to aid and abet the persecution of indigenous peoples in Nigeria who today are agitating for ethnic autonomy under the Nigerian garrison state.

This agitation has been reinforced with the increasing relevance of oil as a weapon for sustaining the affluence of the few oppressors and their international collaborators. At present, the greater part of the Niger'delta are completely militarised with new military brigades being established to checkmate the continued agitation of the oil producing communities for self actualisation. New weapons are being procured from Israel to fortify the Niger-Delta Military Task force nicknamed *operation restore hope*. now permanently fixed in the oil producing Niger"-Delta and some parts of Eastern Nigeria, where the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra, MASSOB has been calling for a separate Republic, born out of frustration in a country where leaders consider human life not worth that a coach roach on the sidewalk.

The creation of new military formations in the South East and Niger-Delta has brought in its wake the violation of human rights, the raping of women, the mass murder of civilians, as it is the case recently in Anambra state where several members of MASSOB were killed and buried in shallow graves. In Ijaw territories, the military invasion has become part of the common-day language of the people. This invasion has led to the complete militarisation of the zone and a lot of young people now have arms, the state having lost the moral legitimacy to give social and political security to the people. The hopelessness of the people has pushed them into armed attack on state infrastructure and personnel, kidnapping of foreigners, proliferation of small arms, armed banditry and even plans by many nationalities in Nigeria, to declare their own sovereign state outside of Nigeria. Instead of the state to seek for dialogue, the government has responded with military onslaughts and air raids of indigenous communities. The state continues to assure the international community that haven will not fall, when to many rationale Nigerians, a violent break-up of the country remains a major scenario.

The indigenous peoples of Nigeria, are today calling on the international community' to ignore the lies and propaganda of the Nigerian state that peace is still. At best what Nigerians witness today is nothing but the peace of the graveyard. And we continue to advise that a break-up of bottled up disenchantment of indigenous communities in Nigeria will have dire and catastrophic consequences for West Africa and African regional security. The true message is that if the International communality does not rise up to the Nigerian challenge, a humanitarian crisis is in the offing.

Unfortunately in Nigeria, the voices of the traumatised majority are stifled through a combination of western power-s nonchalant attitude and the share emphasis placed on Nigeria as an oil-hub than on human liberty and freedom of the perpetually chained indigenous communities.

We call for the appointment of a Special repertoire to visit Nigeria so as to ascertain the real situation. We call on the Nigerian government to hearken to the clamor for a Sovereign National Conference that will address the legal and institutional framework that keeps indigenous peoples in perpetual bondage. We can make the hay only when the sun shines. Like the proverb of my people: *A dog that is destined to go crazy will never listen to the whistle of the owner*. Time is running out, we must all act to save Nigeria and her glottonic leadership from the pathway of self-destruction, if only for the sake of the poor majority.