



Environmental Centre for Oil Spills and Gas Flaring (NACGOND)

NACGOND'S STATEMENT TO COMMEMORATE WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY 2020 TAGGED "TIME FOR NATURE"

As Environmental Centre for Oil Spills and Gas Flaring better known as NACGOND commemorates the World Environment Day 2020 tagged "Time for Nature", it is a good opportunity to reflect on our commonality. Years of oil and gas exploration in the Niger Delta region have rather led to unquantifiable levels of environmental degradation and violence in our communities. Our environments and livelihoods have never been spared from prolonged cases of environmental degradation. From Ogoniland in Rivers State to Gbaramatu Kingdom in Delta State, and all over the Niger Delta, the story is the same. Pollution from oil and gas activities have undermined nature.

NACGOND frowns at the state of the Niger Delta environment where biodiversity is eroding and the life-supporting ecosystems are massively devastated. This has continued unabated thereby delimiting the ability of biodiversity to support life and human development in the region. A classic example is the Ogoni remediation project, which supposedly should form one of the pillars of climate action in Nigeria. In every environment where oil spills have been reported, the soil cannot sustain life including the microbial life; the rivers cannot sustain life including the seafood we relish (e.g. the periwinkles – a critical livelihood venture for the local population). These have led to untold hardship and poverty, which has driven hopelessness, anger and agitations.

However, over 3 years into the operationalisation of the clean-up exercise, neither access to potable drinking water nor sustainable livelihood structures have been developed in the region in the face of increasing contamination of their traditional water sources. Worse still, nor sustainable livelihood structures have been developed in the area. As a result, the artisanal oil mining industry is growing as unemployed youths seek both legit and illegitimate livelihood means. Thus, the destruction of biodiversity, terrestrial and aquatic habitat loss and pollution by human activities (e.g. life forms by opera-conventional and artisanal refining of oil) would continue in the region except drastic steps are taken. NACGOND calls on the states and federal government, oil and gas companies as well as local communities to take responsibility in conserving and preserving nature – as this is the only way nature biodiversity can sustain life and human development on earth.

As a people, we cannot afford to continue failing in taking responsibility to preserve nature. What legacies are we leaving behind for our children? What structures are we building to protect their livelihoods? What legislations and policies are we initiating to preserve nature? As we ponder on these questions and many more at a time when the siege of Corona Virus pandemic is ravaging our land, we should recall that, we are custodians of nature. It is time for us to join hands together to protect our environment for the sake of the future. NACGOND is therefore requesting the governments at all levels to show ingenuity to conserve and protect biodiversity and the habitats that support them. This would require:

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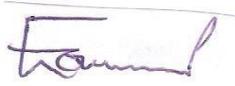
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- Stringent policies to end gas flaring
- Road map for a paradigm shift to renewable energy
- Genuine commitment to remediate all polluted sites in the Niger Delta starting from Ogoniland
- Sustainable waste management approaches
- Mapping and conservation of wetlands, streams and rivers, and which are ecosystem sanctuaries

NACGOND would continue to lead environmental education and awareness in the Niger Delta. It is our desire that all stakeholders will take responsibility to protect nature so that biodiversity would continue to sustain life and human development in the Niger Delta region and the country at large.

Given in Port Harcourt to be released from 12:00 a.m. on the 5th day of June, 2020.

Sign:



Rev. Fr. Edward Obi, MSP, PhD
National Coordinator of NACGOND

Sign:



Professor Nenibarini Zabbey,
Deputy National Coordinator of NACGOND