

BID ROUNDS FOR NIGERIA MARGINAL FIELDS: CAVEAT EMPTOR!

A Call to Stop the Irresponsible Auctioning and Exploitation of the Resources of the Niger Delta and Reckless Destruction of the Environment and Ecosystem by the Federal Government

The Ijaw people of the Niger Delta have watched helplessly in the past 60 years as they have been dehumanized, exploited, terrorized, humiliated, discriminated against and disrespected by the Federal Government through the auctioning of exploration licenses to oil companies who mindlessly rape the Niger Delta Region through the exploitation of hydrocarbon deposits. The oil producing companies wantonly destroy the environment and ecosystem in the process thereby spreading hardship, underdevelopment, poverty, sickness and disease in the region.

The injustice perpetuated by the Federal Government through claiming ownership of the resources of the region without a valid root of title can no longer go unchallenged.

For too long has the Federal Government carted away the resources of the region without consideration for the people and environment of the oil bearing communities. It has become a regular occurrence for the Federal Government to auction the resources of the region to exploiters who destroy the environment and ecosystem in the name of oil exploitation without retribution from the Federal Government that has the constitutional responsibility to protect lives and properties in the country. The whole of the Niger Delta has been turned into a vast wasteland and needs urgent action to turn things around for the better.

The oil bearing communities of the Niger Delta can no longer continue to bear the brunt of oil exploitation without adequate compensation and protection of the environment and ecosystem. It is inhuman and criminal for the Federal Government to claim ownership of the resources of the region without taking responsibility for the well-being of the people and their environment. If the Federal Government must claim ownership, it must also live up to its constitutional responsibilities. Government is quick to collect revenue from the resources of the region but slow to take responsibility for the destructive activities generating the revenue.

For over fifty years the Federal and State Governments have remained aloof while the oil producing companies mercilessly exploit and destroy the people and environment of the region without taking steps to remediate the environment or compensate the people and communities for the great harm done to them.

There are too many examples of the anguish our people have suffered from the oil and gas industry. For forty eight years the Federal Government through the oil companies has polluted the Brass Community and surrounding sea by discharging toxic effluents everyday through a canal at the Brass Oil Export Terminal without remediation of the environment or compensation to the people. Also, there is the recent phenomenon of masses of dead fishes washing up along the coastline from Odimodi area in Delta State stretching through Bayelsa State to Bonny and Andoni in Rivers State and coastal communities in Akwa Ibom State, suspected to be due to discharge of contaminants by oil producers in the Forcados and Escravos axis. In Idu in Rivers State and Gbarain in Bayelsa, just like countless communities in the region, massive gas flares continue to smoke the communities and devalue their quality of life for decades. The case of Polobubo in Delta State is pathetic as their ecology and natural water courses and occupations have been altered permanently by the oil companies in creating artificial canals to access oil wells, causing annual floods and the unnatural mixing of salt and fresh waters, in addition to the repeated oil pollution.

The people have suffered this great injustice over the years and all efforts to get the oil companies and the Federal Government to rise up to their responsibilities and address this mindless destruction of the environment have failed. It is for these reasons that we call on the Federal Government to suspend or cancel the current bid rounds for marginal fields until steps are taken to address the following issues:

1. Determine the ownership of the natural resources of the Niger Delta.
2. Remediation of the environment of oil bearing communities.
3. Compensation for damages already done to the people and communities.
4. Ensure Safety in oil exploitation activities and protection of oil bearing communities.

We hereby give notice that legal actions will commence against the Federal Government without further notifications if the current bid rounds for marginal fields is not suspended or canceled forthwith and the issues raised addressed.

We call on all men of goodwill and the international community to prevail on the Federal Government to address all issues raised herein before proceeding with any process of auctioning the resources of the Niger Delta. This injustice must stop!

Signed:

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