

C/o: Africa Network for Environment and
Economic Justice (ANEEJ)
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27th June 2023.

The Most Revd Justin Welby
Archbishop of Canterbury
Lambeth Palace
London SE1 7JU

Cc.

Alan Smith, First Church Estates Commissioner
The Rt Revd and Rt Hon the Lord Sentamu
Other church leaders active on climate change and divestment

Your Grace,

LETTER TO ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

Your September 2021 [joint statement](#) with Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch included the prophetic passage:

“We stand before a harsh justice: biodiversity loss, environmental degradation and climate change are the inevitable consequences of our actions, since we have greedily consumed more of the earth’s resources than the planet can endure. But we also face a profound injustice: the people bearing the most catastrophic consequences of these abuses are the poorest on the planet and have been the least responsible for causing them. We serve a God of justice, who delights in creation and creates every person in God’s image, but also hears the cry of people who are poor. Accordingly, there is an innate call within us to respond with anguish when we see such devastating injustice.”

As you prepare for next month’s General Synod, we urge you to consider the millions of people who live in the Niger Delta. Last year, these communities faced severe flooding resulting from climate change, heaping further misery on top of the decades of pollution, loss of livelihood and human rights abuses that they have suffered at the hands of Big Oil.

We warmly welcome the Church’s announcement that it will now divest from Shell and other oil companies because they are increasing oil and gas production at the expense of climate action. We commend the Church for standing on the side of the people by announcing its intention to disinvest from Shell plc and other oil and gas companies which are defying the Paris Agreement.

At the same time, we urge you to consider that the communities in the Niger Delta do not have the option of moving on from the oil companies and urge you to find ways to support them and their quest for justice. We believe that the Church has a responsibility to help make right the injustices suffered by communities during the time that it invested in oil companies operating in Nigeria. We also believe that companies and their investors, as well as governments, must contribute to paying for such “loss and damage”, in line with the agreement at the 2022 climate conference in Egypt.

The tens of millions of people living in the Niger Delta can expect far shorter lives than others in Nigeria - just 41 years on average. This is due to toxins in the air, water and soil that cause burns, lung problems and risk of cancer. These long-term problems are far from being resolved, as shown by [the Bayelsa State Oil and Environmental Commission](#), led by The Rt Revd Lord Sentamu, which reported last month.

This Commission found that clean-ups led by oil companies are often poorly executed and could further contaminate soil and groundwater. The Commission calculated that "the clean-up will cost US\$12 billion over 12 years" in Bayelsa - just one state in the Delta. There is no agreed cleanup figure for the whole of the Delta, but it will clearly be many times this US\$12 billion estimate. Shell is among the companies that are [trying to block](#) independent verification of cleanup so far.

Also last month, 30 Nigerian organisations came together in Abuja for the 2nd People’s AGM. They represented indigenous groups, women, youth and other constituencies and passed a series of [resolutions](#). These include a call for “an unbiased investigation into the remediation process in Ogoni land as well environmental and health audits of the entire Niger Delta and a total cleanup of the region”, and a “full scale livelihood restoration programme for the Ogoni people”. They also noted that the oil companies plan to shift production from onshore to offshore without addressing environmental damages.

Collectively, we called on the oil companies’ major investors to go to the Niger Delta for a fact-finding mission led by community-based organisations. Given the Church of England’s recent history of engaging Shell as an investor, and its very visible role as a moral force in the world, we hope and pray that the Church of England will be among the first to accept this invitation to the Niger Delta. And that it will then help bear witness to the world until these long-suffering communities have overcome the devastating injustices inflicted upon them.

Our Sincere Regards:



Rev. David Ugolor,
Executive Director,
Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice (ANEEJ)

1. Rev. Nnimmo Bassey, Executive Director, Health of Mother Earth Foundation
2. Bar. Chima Williams, Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth, Nigeria
3. Joel Bisina, Leadership Initiative for Transformation and Empowerment (*LITE-Africa*)
4. Bridget Emem, Kebetkache Women Development and Resource Centre
5. Edem Edem, Green Concern for Development (GREENCODE)
6. Umo Isua-Ikoh, Peace Point Development Foundation
7. Legborsi Saro Pyagbara, African Indigenous Foundation for Energy and Sustainable Development, AIFES

8. AkpoBari Celestine, Ogoni Solidarity Forum
9. Kentebe Ebieridor, Oil Watch International
10. Nelson Nnanna Nwafor, Foundation for Environmental Rights, Advocacy & Development (FENRAD) Nigeria
11. Amb. Clinton Ikechukwu Ezeigwe, Christian Fellowship and Care Foundation
12. Tijani Abdulkareem, Socio Economic Research and Development Centre (*SERDEC*)
13. Abiodun Oyeleye, New Initiative for Social Development (NISD)
14. Tijah Bolton Akpan, Policy Alert
15. Ken Henshow, We The People
16. Akinbode Oluwafemi, Corporate Accountability and Public Participation Africa
17. Mrs Nne Umoren, Women Initiative for Climate Change
18. Ms Idongesit Alexander, League of Queens International Empowerment
19. Mrs Nwindee Namon, Gbogbia Feefeelo of K-Dere
20. Mrs Regina Fabian Asanga, Rural Health and Women Development
21. Emeka Ogazi, Transparency and Economic Development Initiative (TEDI)
22. Dr. David Tola Winjobi, Civil Society Coalition on Sustainable Development.
23. Kola Giwa, Action for Community Participation
24. Jude Samuelson, Stakeholders Democracy Network
25. Emmanuel Kuza, Community Law Centre
26. Olusola Adeosun, Community Heritage Watch for Development initiatives
27. Eloho Ekoh New Apostolic Church Centre for Development
28. Israel Orekha, Connected Advocacy for Empowerment and Youth Development initiative
29. Inyingi Irimagha, Gender and Development Action, GADA
30. Bob MajiriOghene Etemiku, Civil Empowerment and Rule of Law Support Initiative, (CERLSI)
31. Keme Opia, Bayelsa NGOs fórum
32. Dr. Jude Obasanm, Josemaria Escriva Foundation
33. Chris Azor, International Peace and Civic Responsibility Centre (IPCRC)
34. Grace Ese Obakina, Caring Hearts Initiative For Advocacy Development and Empowerment (CHIADE)
35. Onose Martha, Community Empowerment and Development Initiative
36. Abiola Daisy Igaga, Take a Cue Development Initiative (TACDI)
37. Batholomeu Okoudo, Keep Hope Alive Community Development Initiative
38. Doris Ogbeifun, Society for Empowered Youth Development
39. Philip Slabor, Development Initiators
40. Emeka Ezeigwe, Global initiative for Citizens Advocacy and Representation (GICAR)
41. Barr. Agatha Erhabor, Women Youths and Children Advancement Program
42. Mrs Deborah Olaolu Salami, CAFSO-WRAG for Development
43. Perseverance Umukoro, Oghara Centre for Social Justice
44. Bachama Yusuf, Dandalin Matasa Initiative for Rapid Development
45. Mohammed Attah, NGO Network
46. Comrade Taiwo Otitolaye, Publish What You Pay, Nigeria
47. Rev. Fr. Benedict Onwugbenu, Justice Development and Peace Centre, Benin
48. Gbale Joseph, Niger Delta Youth Council
49. Sheriff Mulade, Center for Peace & Environmental Justice (CEPEJ)
50. Nowinta Igbotako, Niger Delta Alliance for Democracy
51. Monday Osasah, African Centre for Leadership, Strategy and Development
52. Dr. Bright Oniovokukor, Indomitable Youths Organization