

COMMUNIQUE

Issued at the End of the Two-Day Human Rights Workshop for Church Leaders and Partners from the Niger Delta

Introduction

The World Council of Churches (WCC) Africa Regional Programme Office, Abuja, in collaboration with the Africa Network for Environment and Economic Justice (ANEEJ), convened a two-day Human Rights Training Workshop for church leaders and partners from the Niger Delta. The workshop took place on the 1st and 2nd of April 2025 at the Chatkrum Hotel, Abuja, under the theme: **“Understanding the United Nations Human Rights System to Strengthen International Advocacy.”**

The workshop was facilitated by representatives from the WCC Geneva Office, alongside leaders from the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN), and civil society organizations (CSOs) from Ogoni and the broader Niger Delta region.

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Equip church leaders and partners from the Niger Delta, including Ogoniland, with foundational knowledge about the UN human rights system, including mechanisms for engagement and advocacy.
- Train participants on effective advocacy strategies, lobbying techniques, and safe data collection to amplify their voices at national and international levels.
- Deepen awareness of the human rights implications of environmental degradation in Ogoniland and the Niger Delta, particularly the rights to health, clean water, and a safe environment.
- Support participants in creating concrete action plans for post-workshop advocacy efforts aimed at achieving justice and environmental remediation.

Observations

Participants at the workshop made the following key observations:

1. There is growing concern over the renewed call for oil exploration in Ogoniland despite the lack of improvement in the living conditions of host communities and the incomplete implementation of the UNEP report recommendations.
2. Oil exploration has caused severe environmental degradation in the Niger Delta, leading to polluted water sources, destruction of livelihoods, and long-term ecological damage.
3. Institutions responsible for the clean-up of Ogoniland and the implementation of environmental management plans remain weak and ineffective.

4. International Oil Companies (IOCs) have failed to provide adequate compensation to communities affected by oil spills and gas flaring.
5. Women, children, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups disproportionately affected by oil exploration activities have been largely neglected in policy discussions and remediation efforts.
6. Existing environmental laws are not being enforced, as IOCs fail to comply with regulations, while regulatory agencies lack the necessary technical and financial resources to monitor and enforce compliance.

Resolutions/Recommendations:

In light of the above observations, participants resolved present the follows Recommendations:

1. Stakeholders in the Niger Delta:

- **Environmental Responsibility and Clean-up Efforts:** IOCs and multinational corporations should take full responsibility for pollution clean-up efforts in the Niger Delta and ensure long-term environmental sustainability.
- **Religious and Community Engagement in Environmental Advocacy:** Religious and traditional leaders should integrate environmental advocacy into their teachings and public discourse.
- **Inclusive Decision-Making:** The government must ensure inclusivity by actively involving youth, women, and other marginalized populations in policy discussions and decision-making processes.
- **Advocacy for Adequate Compensation:** Participants will engage government bodies, the legislature, and key stakeholders to ensure fair and adequate compensation for Ogoni people and other affected communities in the Niger Delta.
- **Access to Data and Human Rights Education:** There should be greater transparency in the availability of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) and EIA data. Additionally, human rights education should be expanded to include policymakers and decision-makers.
- **Sustainable Development and Climate Resilience:** A holistic approach, incorporating scientific, cultural, and religious perspectives, should be adopted to address environmental and developmental challenges, including climate change mitigation.
- **Public Awareness and Climate Action:** Awareness campaigns should be launched to promote environmental conservation initiatives such as tree planting, flood prevention, and biodiversity protection.

- **Right to Food Security and Support for Smallholder Farmers:** The government, IOCs, and stakeholders should support small-scale farmers through sustainable, climate-smart agricultural initiatives, leveraging faith-based organizations as implementation partners.
- **Land Ownership and Housing Rights:** Land ownership, inheritance, and housing rights should be upheld for both genders, with a review of cultural practices that hinder women's and vulnerable groups' rights to property ownership.

2. Federal Government of Nigeria:

- **Halt Oil Exploration in Ogoniland:** The Federal Government of Nigeria should suspend the planned resumption of oil exploration in Ogoniland until the UNEP report recommendations and existing environmental laws are fully implemented, with verifiable improvements in the living conditions of host communities.
- **Implementation of Human and Environmental Rights Policies:** Nigeria should fully implement national and international human and environmental rights conventions, including the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations, the UNEP Report, and the "Polluters Must Pay" principle.
- **Equitable Resource Distribution:** National resources, including solid minerals, should be distributed fairly to promote balanced development in line with the derivation principle.
- **Healthcare Infrastructure and Accessibility:** The government and private sector should collaborate to improve healthcare infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, by building and equipping hospitals and clinics and implementing affordable healthcare programs.
- **Corporate Responsibility in Oil Divestment:** Multinational oil companies divesting from the Niger Delta must take full responsibility for the clean-up and restoration of polluted environments before exiting operations.

3. International communities/ Organizations

- **Protection of Indigenous and Environmental Rights:** Increased advocacy is needed for the implementation of the UNEP Report, the Ogoni Bill of Rights, and the UN Declaration on the Rights of

Indigenous Peoples, with measures to protect environmental defenders from harassment and intimidation.

- **Anti-Bribery and Corporate Accountability:** The international community, including the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention, should prohibit multinational companies from bribing public officials to undermine environmental and human rights policies.

Based on the above resolution and recommendations, we hereby call on key actors, both within and outside the country, to take urgent and decisive action:

Call to Action:

World Council of Churches (WCC)

We urge Church Leaders at local, National, Regional and international levels to actively champion advocacy for human and environmental rights, particularly those affecting the Niger Delta.

Indigenous Community Leaders

We appeal to Niger Delta community leaders to manage available funds transparently, judiciously, and compassionately, ensuring sustainable development in the region.

Government

We call on all levels of government to collaborate with stakeholders in protecting human and environmental rights and promoting inclusive, sustainable development. The government must strengthen regulatory frameworks through adequate funding and the political will to enforce national and international laws. Additionally, we urge the federal government to implement the recommendations of the United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Nigeria in 2024 and from earlier reviews.

International Organizations

We urge the United Nations, African Union, ECOWAS, European Union, and other relevant international bodies to prioritize the Niger Delta's environmental, human rights, and developmental challenges, scaling up their intervention efforts in the region.

International and Indigenous Oil Companies (IOCs)

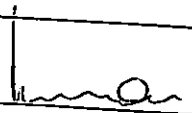

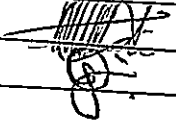
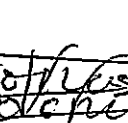
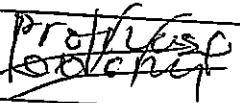
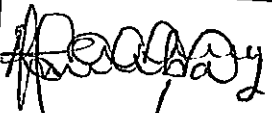
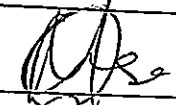

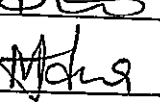
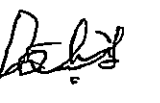
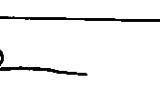

We call on oil and gas companies operating in the Niger Delta to adhere to global best practices by complying with existing laws such as the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), UNEP Report recommendations, International Environmental Regulations, and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Reports before divesting their investments.

Conclusion

Participants reaffirmed their commitment to continued advocacy for environmental justice, human rights, and sustainable development in the Niger Delta. They called on the government, civil society, religious institutions, and the international community to take decisive action in addressing these long-standing issues for the well-being of affected communities.

Issued this 2nd day of April 2025.

Signed by the following church leaders and civil society organizations:

S N	Names	Position/ Organization	Signature
1	Most Rev. Dr. Benebo Fubara-Fubara Manuel	Immediate Past President, CCN	
2	Rt. Rev. Dr. Evnas Onyemara	General Secretary, CCN	
3	Rev. Dr. Uzoaku J. Williams	Assistant General Secretary, CAN	
4	Rev. David Ugolor	Executive Director, ANEEJ	
5	Rt. Rev. Dr. Nnam Lebee H.	Chairman Ogoni Ministers Forum	
6	Pastor Anagbara Promise Ledornu	General Secretary, Ogoni Ministers Forum	
7	Evang. Inuba Bariture Awi	Coordinator of International/ Spokesperson, Ogoni Indigenous Ministers Forum (OIMF)	
8	Onose Martha	Community Empowerment and Development Initiative (CEDI)	
9	Nwauzor Tochukwu	New Apostolic Centre for Development (NCD)	
10	Dame Zinabari D. Sunday	Women Leader, OIMF	
11	Goodluck Macaulay	Coordinator, Niger Delta Youth Alliance (NYA)	
12	Audu Martins Asekhamhe	Coordinator, Joint National Association of Persons with Disability	
13	Inyingi Irimagha	Gender and Development Action (GADA)	