

ENDING THE SEASON OF HERDERS- FARMERS CONFLICTS

INDIGENOUS DAY OF THE OGONIS

The Eco~Instigator is a quarterly publication of Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) EDITORIAL TEAM

Nnimmo Bassey

George B.K. Awudi

Oluwafunmilayo Oyatogun

Zaid Shopeju

Cadmus Atake Enade

Daramfon Bassey

Joyce Ebebeniwe

Oduware Stephen

Mfoniso Antia

ADMINISTRATION

Dotun Davids Olatundun

Elvis Omorogbe

Omolola Abulatan

Layout

Babawale Obayanju (Owales)

Cover Design:

Arranged with elements from freepik.com

Circulation:

Shehu Akowe

Advisory Board:

The Advisory Board is composed of women and men who have distinguished themselves in the struggle for environmental justice and the rights of Mother Earth:

Chris Allan (USA) – Environmental health campaigner and philanthropy activist

Akinbode Oluwafemi (Nigeria) - Environmental justice campaigner

Siziwe Khanyile (South Africa) – Environmental justice campaigner

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Pablo Solon (Bolivia) – Climate justice campaigner, diplomat and movement builder

Liz Hosken (UK) – Mother Earth rights advocate Lim Li Ching (Malaysia) – Agro-ecologist and rights

Published by Health of Mother Earth Foundation

Top Floor 214, Uselu Lagos Road

PO Box 10577 Hghowo Benin City Nigeria

Tel: +2348173706095

www.homef.org

All mails, inquires and articles should be sent to editor@homef.org





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HOME RUN

Welcome to the first edition of our Eco-Instigator for 2018. The global environmental pollution is increasing and same heightened by the unholy wedlock between polluting industries and the supposed regulators. Activists from around the globe continue to work tirelessly for environmental and climate justice even as we prepare for a global "power shift" for climate action and activism.

In this edition, we bring you report from the UNFCCC COP23 which held in Bonn last November on the outcome of the Talanoa dialogue especially for the African stakeholders. We also serve you report from the maiden event of our FishNet Alliance in Lome, Togo.

More impacts of climate change are unfolding in Nigeria; black soot, the heat wave and the unpredictable seasons. The recent one is the clash between herders and farmers which is fast turning into unannounced war. Nomadic herders in search for forages for their herds graze in farm lands destroying farm produces.

This edition features lots of articles that will interest and spore us up to take positive actions to save mother earth. The GMO debate is still on as Nigerian Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA), the avowed GMO proponent recently exposed their chicaneries in a twitter chat on the safety and labeling of GMOs. We serve you screen shots from the conversation.

As usual, we bring you excellent poetry from renowned poets and we also update you with HOMEF's upcoming events. We shall be hosting our Fish Not Oil community dialogues latter in the year. As an organization rooted in knowledge generation and sharing, we shall be hosting a biosafety conference at Abuja in June to interrogate the dangers of GMOs and the issues surrounding biosafety. Our Rightlivelihood lecture shall be hosted at University of Port Harcourt from 3rd to 6th July, 2018.

Until victory! Nnimmo



o Nigerians know what the safety level of foods on their dining tables would be in 2018?

That is a trillion Naira question. The short answer is no. We give two quick reasons for this.

A reading of the body language of the permitting National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA) reveals that besides approving virtually every application that comes before it, the agency appears to be concerned with having those that had illegally imported those materials to simply formalise their stocks by registering with the agency.

Unfortunately, in 2018 when GM beans are unleashed on Nigerians, the roadside akara seller would not know that she is selling

akara made from genetically engineered beans.

The roasted corn seller would not know that what is being roasted is genetically modified corn imported or smuggled into the country. In sum, our major staple crops — maize, cassava, beans, rice and sorghum are at risk.

One of the cases with grave implications for biosafety administration in Nigeria is the one that hit headline news in October 2017 that unauthorized genetically modified maize worth about \$9.8 million had been impounded at Lagos sea ports.

Nigerians were elated by the vigilance of the regulatory agency and officers of the Nigerian Customs Service to intercept the illegal imports by WACOT Ltd – a firm that is best known for dealing in cotton and rice.

Another company implicated in the illegal importation of the GM maize is the Olam Group, a conglomerate that deals mostly in rice, including the widely sold Mama's Pride brand.

To underscore the seriousness of the biosafety infringement, the Director General of the National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA), stated at a press conference held in Abuja on September 13, 2017 that the Agency got notice of the importation through an intelligence report and had set in motion necessary machineries to track the importers and bring them to book.

According to the NBMA Act 2015, "Any person, institution or body who wishes to import, export, transit or otherwise carry out a contained field trial, multi-locational trial or commercial release of genetically modified organism shall apply to the Director General of the Agency not less than 270 days to the date of import, export, transit or the commencement of such activity".

(Our emphasis) An air of seriousness that our food systems could be protected was further raised when the Federal Executive Council was notified of the decision to repatriate the illegal genetically modified maize to Argentina, its country of origin and also when the National Assembly held a public hearing on the illegal importation. However, hopes that biosafety is important to the government may have been dashed because the noise over the impounding of the illegal GM Maize may have been nothing other than mere noise. Why do we say this? Barely a week after the NBMA announced that together with the Nigerian Customs Service they would ensure the repatriation of the illegal GM maize, the same NBMA issued a public advertisement announcing the application for importation of GM maize by WACOT Ltd.

The announcement stated: "In accordance with the National Biosafety Management Agency Act, 2015, requiring public display of any Biosafety application, for permit to intentionally release genetically modified organisms (GMOs), for comments from interested members of the public, the NBMA hereby announces a twenty- one (21) day display of an application dossier submitted by WACOT Ltd for the importation of genetically modified maize for feed processing. The display is with effect from November 22 to December 12, 2017 to enable the public to make input that would facilitate informed decision on the application."

Information from credible sources suggest that the application has since been approved by NBMA and the applicant may have received the green light to take delivery of the impounded illegal import and to further import genetically modified maize at will into Nigeria over the next three years. At the time of this writing, the permit is neither on the website of NBMA, nor on that of the United Nations Biosafety Clearing House. We need to know if the NBMA has permitted the release of the maize that the Federal Executive Council and Nigerians at large had been told were to be repatriated. We need to know if the application was made 270 days before the importation as required by law. If the maize has been repatriated, we need to know.

Some of us have on many occasions called for a radical review of the NBMA Act 2015. We have also made a clause-by-clause analysis of the Act and suggested needed changes. The composition of the NBMA Governing Board has inbuilt conflict of interest and the fact that members may not sit on issues where their interests are concerned is banal.

We also note that the National Biosafety Committee that determines which GM applications to approve is set up on an ad-hoc basis and at the whims of the director general of the NBMA without any higher authority providing oversight.

A situation where we cannot trust a board made up of representatives (not below the rank of directors) from the ministries of Environment, Agriculture, Science and Technology, Trade and Investment and Health to protect our biodiversity, environment and health is deeply worrisome.

Others on the board include representatives of the Nigerian Customs Service and the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC).





BY OGAGA IFOWODO

What are the things that grow here? Those that grow from stone, lacking life and root, flesh and water, things cut as caps for the baldness of stone.

What are the things that flourish here? Those that rise from dust, without teeth for the nourishment of sand, things frail and fallen that toss and fly with every wind.

And what are the harvests here?
Of corn crippled before teething
Of tubers poorer than the planted head
Of tomatoes rotted before ripening
Of sand and gravel, burnt bush and anthills.

What are the dwelling places? Houses bitter like a weeping face homes grievous like smoke-pipes walls held up by pillars of anguish, where lament makes bed and roof.

And how do children grow here?
Out of wombs whipped with want
and desire, they burst forth, to be
tough like street leather, sweet and hardy
like sugarcane, to learn love in safe time.

Here, we will walk the street where laughter is hidden in deep places and stores cannot shut their doors chock-full with hearts that bleed from gathered wounds and you will see, nothing can grow here—but agony.

Culled from Ifowodo 's poetry collection title Homeland and other Poems (1999)

ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND ACTIVISM

n the line of calls to service, the next greatest and fulfilling call after the call to serve the Omnipotent would be the call to serve mother earth, a call to render one's voice and ability in service to this part of the cosmos.

This call is in itself, an extension of the call to serve our Creator. It is in obedience to His commands that we can truly serve Him. He gave the first man an instruction for the part of the cosmos he occupied at the time "... to tend and keep it". That instruction being a pointer to the fact that God demands protection and accountability from us on the part of the earth we occupy.

We were created to take care of the earth while benefiting from her benevolence as a part of the cosmos and not to monopolize it as though it was meant ONLY for the benefiting of us (humans alone).

An environmental Activist (Pablo Solon) once wrote, we (human beings) are not "producers", "conquerors" or "transformers" of nature, but

"caretakers", "cultivators" and "mediators". I wouldn't agree any less with him. As humans, we are a part to the whole, not the whole and as such should let this reflect in our attitude towards our environment, knowing that there are others deserving of the benefit from the earth too.

No better way to put this than is in a lyrics from Abhay Kumar's earth song "United we stand, as flora and fauna; all for one, one for all, we are humans and the earth is our home...".

In his book titled Re-source Democracy, Nnimmo Bassey, wrote "Re-source Democracy requires that mankind serves as stewards over natural re-sources and not as predators", he further stated that "our rights do not supersede and must not subvert the rights of nature".

Oh how I pray that this consciousness would sink into every human living on earth.

So far, we have neglected our duties and have overused and abused our environment, a gift so divine and priceless, a gift that was meant for us to cherish, benefit from and pass down to the generations behind us. Oh how we have turned our cosmic blue pearl to a cosmic oasis. We have unduly exploited the natural resources, leaving our environment in a degenerated state. A state we would not be proud to hand over. In greed, some have, in the name of exploring fossils, stones, aluminum and other natural resources, polluted our environment and broken what was set as environmental laws with impunity.

As much as the exploration, manufacturing and production companies are to be blamed for the greater part, for their part in the pollution of our environment, it will be a grave error to just solely apportion blame to them without acknowledging the parts we play as individuals when we dispose of our wastes indiscriminately, when we burn our bushes, when we deforest, when we do not take care of our vehicles, leaving them to emit dangerous gases into the atmosphere, when we break environmental laws; and the part our government play

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governments have neglected and disappointed us, as none is ready to bring the offenders to book. Government regulatory agencies have left their duty as regulators, some for the love of money (in form of bribery and some in a way of owning the very companies exploiting and causing pollution) while others for fear, leaving us directly in the hands of the exploiters (companies).

In reality, our environment is meant to replenish itself if we indeed made use of its gifts sustainably. It's a sad reality that this cannot happen because of the alarming rate of exploitation and misuse. Notice, the choice of the word "we", meaning that we all have in one way or the other not taken responsibility in protecting or preserving our environment, from our actions and inactions, some of us as individuals have also unsustainably exploited the gifts of nature. We all share in this blame.

Our environment is in a devastating state right now but we can't just give up.





As much as we all had a part to play, one way or the other in pushing it to this heartwrenching state, we also have a part to play in restoring its glory.

It may take years to restore our environment (especially for those of us from the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria) but it is attainable, if we could but take it as a responsibility. We could start by changing our mindsets towards our environment, remembering that we are caretakers who will one day hand it over to others after us. We could take responsibility for that which we have done and find ways to remediate, knowing that our children and children's children will ask what we did to destroy their chances of having a feel of what we had.

If our Government, its regulatory Agencies and the production/manufacturing companies would not do the needful, it is left therefore to you and I to lend our voices together to demand that our environment, our dear earth be taken good care of.

If there is ever a good time to lend a voice as an environmental/Climate Activist; that time is now. Look around us people, look at what we have done to our environment and the devastating consequences we have received. Look at what we have turned our climate into, look at the sufferings and pains our actions and inactions towards the

environment have caused. Take stock of how many have lost their lives as a result of the changing climatic conditions, take a stock of how much in revenue people have lost in the past few years directly or indirectly as a result of this. Let this statistics be your motivation to rise up and lend your voice.

If there is ever a noble cause to fight for, if you have ever desired a noble cause to stand up for, this is one! You do not need to be a lawyer or an activist to fight for the restoration of our environment, all you need to be is a sincere and concerned heart, all you need to have is a voice and all you need to do is speak out. Let this be a reminder to the cause that we have been called to serve.

This is a call to sustainable thoughts and actions, a call to cautiousness and consciousness, a call to protect the earth. It is not just my call, it is not just a call for the environmental activists and practitioners or those tagged lovers/friends of the earth.

This is OUR call.

It is a clarion call for us all. Come on people, let's together rebuild and protect this earth, OUR EARTH, so we can be proud to hand it over to the next generation. Together, we can and we will #SaveOurEarth.



OP23 has come and gone. What has not changed is the fact that greenhouse gas emission is still going on at an alarming rate and the NDC's politicized.

This conference is a wakeup call for both the developing and developed countries to transparently develop the necessary framework and engage relevant stakeholders in pursuance of the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the Doha amendment by the respective member states.

This article is a peep behind the curtain of COP23 and some of the deliberations on the floor of the negotiation room. The author dissects it further and said that "the implementation of the Paris Agreement have many issues: adaptation and mitigation through the NDCs, loss and damage, adaptation fund, finance, transfer of technology, transparency, support and capacity building. Most of all these elements have been taken separately through a facilitative dialogue launched during COP 21 in Paris and pursued in Marrakech during COP 22, then in Bonn with the Fiji presidency, and the Talanoa Dialogue, a conversation between north and south representatives to achieve the long term pathway to 1.5°Celsius."

The Talanoa Dialogue

According to Frank Bainimarama, the Prime Minister of Fiji and president of COP 23 "We have been doing the job that we were given to do: advance the implementation guidelines of the Paris Agreement, and prepare for more ambitions actions for the Talanoa dialogue in 2018".

For the Prime Minister of Fiji, there has been a positive momentum in various areas in COP 23: the global community has embraced the Fiji concept of grand coalition for greater ambition linking national governments, states and cities, civil societies, the private sector and all women around the world. "We have launched a global partnership to provide millions of climate vulnerable people an affordable access to insurance", said the president of COP 23. For him, this year's COP has put people first. It has connected the people who are not experts on climate change to the UN Climate negotiations. According to him, putting people first showed to the world that these people are facing climate change in their daily lives.

What has been achieved?

In one of the meetings, the African negotiators left the negotiations room happy: according to Ambassador Nafo from Mali and head of the African group of negotiators, "We got it Adaptation Fund and Article 9.5". The decisions adopted in Bonn explained that there will be modalities for the accounting of financial resources provided and mobilized through

public intervention in accordance to the article 9 of the Paris Agreement. The Article 9.5 of the Paris Agreement has mentioned that the Developed country Parties shall biennially communicate indicative quantitative and qualitative information related to finance of both mitigation and adaptation.

Back and Forth

There was a night of Back and Forth by all the delegates on delegations which persisted for a long while and finally the Republic of Ecuador on behalf of the G77+ China group (134 countries) raised again concerns on the pre-2020 commitments to be honored by developed countries. The delegates left the New York Plenary (Name of the Plenary in Bonn) and again for clarification, the Democratic Republic of Congo on behalf the 52 countries of the Coalition of Rain Forest raised another concern.

"We lost a good opportunity to conclude a win for REDD+ and a win for Fiji Presidency, because the high level consultation did not start earlier", said Tosi Mpanu Mpanu, the head of the delegation of the Democratic Republic of Congo in the Congo Basin, the second largest tropical forest in the world after Amazonia. To him, forest sector cannot be ignored as it contributes to the reduction of Greenhouse Gas emissions.

He also expressed his disappointment on many issues, especially related to the effort of the Coalition for Rain Alliance Forest group to mitigate and integrate the nonstate actors and raised concerns on the difficulties related to procedures during the two weeks negotiations.

The Coalition for Rain Alliance Forest also reaffirmed its support to the statement on the pre-2020 commitment of the G77 and China.

This has also been emphasized by the African group of Negotiators. "On pre-2020, the African Group is disappointed that there seems to be little appetite to accelerate pre-2020 action, as exemplified by the fact the Doha Amendment has not yet come into force and means of implementation to developing countries is declining", explained the Ambassador Nafo.

Finally, after all the delegates from AOSIS, Australia, European Union, LDCs, and, Iran, Mexico, Peru, and the civil societies gave their closing remarks, the COP presidency affirmed that this UN Climate Change Conference was a success. But For the Civil society outside the plenary, there is an imbalance between the requirements asked to the developing countries and what the developed countries, especially what the European Union, are doing to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions. The European Union hasn't yet ratified the Doha Amendment, albeit, the prime minister of Fiji gave positive feedbacks.

Perspective

"We all leave Bonn with some notable achievements; our ocean pathway, the historical agreement on agriculture, and action plan on gender, the decisions that benefit local communities and indigenous population, we have also secured more funding for climate adaptation, and I am pleased to know that we are taking the important next step to ensure that the adaptation fund shall serve the Paris Agreement", indicated Mr. Bainimarama.

Another issue discussed and resolved was Loss and damage. "A program of 5 years has been established, with a one year forum, a dialogue with experts on finance and support and a working group will be established on the issue of migration", said Ambassador Nafo.

However, to the African negotiators, the question of the 100 billion US dollars per year by 2020 for the Nationally Determined Contributions for developing countries is far from reach, even though it was raised during a dialogue on the role of climate finance during COP23 and should be discussed deeply in 2018. "It (the 100 billion USD per year by 2020) will remain a pipe dream", said a negotiator from Africa who prefers anonymity.



anuary 4th has been adopted by the indigenous people of Ogoni land to annually commemorate their freedom and liberty won in 1993. The spirit of solidarity was reignited when the MOSOP president, Legborsi Saro Pyagbara took the podium to reiterate commitment to the struggles of the fallen heroes of Ogoniland.

He recounted how the struggles for a just environment started in Ogoni land; in his words he said "my fellow Ogoni people, twenty-eight years ago, we launched a titanic struggle to liberate our people and twenty-five years ago, we gathered here, on this very ground, to begin the walk from our Egypt of repression to our Canaan of emancipation and to set the agenda for a peaceful, just and inclusive Ogoni society".



When the United Nations General Assembly in resolution 45/164 of 18 December, 1990 proclaimed 1993 as the International Year of the world's Indigenous peoples, little did they know that they were responding to the yearnings of a far flung indigenous minority people located thousands of kilometers away from the hallowed halls of the United Nations in New York where the United Nations General Assembly(UNGA) took place and was setting the stage for the eventual take off of the journey of the liberation of the Ogoni people.

It was indeed within the context of that proclamation that the Ogoni struggle drew inspiration and renewed dedication to our quest for inclusiveness, self-determination, justice, freedom and peace as our forbearers gathered to launch Ogoni's celebration of the International Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples on January 4th, 1993, one of the very first Indigenous nations to do so at the time. On January 4th, our unique identity was established. A new

Ogoni was born. Each time we meet on 4th January in this gathering, we bear witness to the enduring strength and resilience of our people.

My brothers and sisters, in this period, the Ogoni Bill of Rights, the cornerstone of Ogoni Biblicism, with its enduring ideals and principles erected on the twin pillars of truth and non-violence had been our binding thread.

DIALOGUE ON THE OGONI QUESTION

Pyagbara expressed disappointments in the federal government of Nigeria and also listed out their demands as a people. Pyagbara raised a somewhat rhetorical question for his people, "where is the Ogoni-people in the Nigeria project?"

He lamented that "the government of Nigeria had failed to dialogue with the Ogoni people on the issues raised in the Ogoni Bill of Rights". We call on the government of Nigeria to seize the opportunity of this famed clean-up process to open a renewed dialogue on the Ogoni question with the intent to addressing the key issues raised in the Ogoni Bill of Rights.

- We are seeking:
- Local autonomy for the Ogoni people within a federal Nigeria
- A new economic structure that ensures the use of a fair proportion of Ogoni economic resources for Ogoni development
- Proper Environmental Management of Ogoni Natural Resources

ENVIRONMENTAL TERRORISM, OGONILAND RESTORATION AND UNEPREPORT

We would recall that in my 2014 Ogoni Day Speech, I stressed that our ancestors taught us that water is life; they taught us that our forests with its collection of trees are the cathedrals of life; they taught us that we and our animals have a psychic relationship that we are caught up with in the same web of life. They taught us that the assault on our environment is an assault on our lives. The situation where millions of plant and animal

lives continue to fall to the toxicity of oil pollution is environmental terrorism in which no blood is spilled, no bones are broken yet all one sees around is dead.

It is in this light that we appreciate the efforts of the President Muhammadu Buhari led administration to address the environmental nightmare in Ogoni land.

However, the efforts are indeed too slow and is becoming too late to come if there is no urgent deliberateness to guarantee that critical steps are taken to ensure that the HYPREP delivers on its core mandate to remediate the polluted Ogoni environment and restore livelihoods.

Whilst appreciating the Hydrocarbon Pollution and Remediation Project (HYPREP) for the Ogoni Medical Outreach Programme which took place in the last week of December 2017 and saw to the offering of free medical services to over two thousand physically challenged Ogoni people, we want to see a clear and focused intervention programme in the area of the emergency measures which will see the take-off of the water intervention project, provide livelihood support training for women and carry out the health impact assessment in the first quarter of the year. This will be the fifth year we are calling for the speedy implementation of so-called emergency measures where their absence is leading to needless deaths and health crises.

The construction of the Integrated Contaminated Soil and Water Management Centre must advance significantly within this first quarter if there is to be any significant cleanup within the lifetime of this administration. It is wrong for government to say that the cleanup in Ogoni is progressing adequately when these things are yet to start.

Additionally, we would like the government to commence the process of the declaration of the Ogoni wetlands as a Ramsaar Site. Globally wetlands are being appreciated as crucial environments for fending off climate change — both in reducing CO2 and in protecting our land from inevitable sea level rises. We also call on government to commence the process of converting the proposed Centre for Environmental Excellence to a full- fledged University of Environmental Science.

Any further delay on the part of the government in the restorations of our land will be seen as an act of genocide being committed against the Ogoni people.

On our part, we assure that the Ogoni community is ready to give all the necessary support for the implementation of the report so long as the walls around the current delay are brought down.

POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT AND JUSTICE

In 2015, we raised certain issues in our campaigns that bothered on political justice. On our part, our struggle for political representation is not over. In fact, that struggle is still alive and is on. It is on this note that I am reiterating our call on Ogoni sons and daughters who have not done the voter registration to do so now and get their PVCs. It is our power, it is our future!

According to the revered Greek Philosopher, Plato, "One of the penalties for refusing to

participate in politics is that you end up being governed by your inferiors". Come the next election period, it will be time to use our votes to rewrite our history and our story.

I am charging all of us including our politicians and political activists that the time for preparation is now. We particularly call on our people to reject the violence that has been repeatedly visited on our kingdoms in recent elections. It is our right to be able to protect our youths and families from assault and coercion and we should be able to peacefully make our choices. We must all come together and begin to set the agenda for political justice.

YOUTHS, CRIMINALITY AND COMMUNAL CONFLICTS

On occasions like this, we also want to express our appreciation to some of our youth for heeding to our calls to end the cycles of communal violence and deaths in our communities due to conflict, criminality and cultism.

However, I want to emphasize that the increasing involvement of Ogoni youths in criminal activities such as robbery, kidnapping and cult violence in our communities is on the upward swing and must be confronted by us all.

While I regret the state of unemployment in the country, I hasten to add that this cannot be a reason why any nubile young Ogoni son or daughter will turn our communities into conflict zones and engage in armed robbery, kidnapping and cultism. Our forebears who launched us on this struggle and laid down their lives for our dignity did not envisage that our young men and women will turn themselves into criminals. I am pleading with every Ogoni youth who believes in the struggle to desist from these activities. Engaging in these acts means the death of Ken Saro-Wiwa and other martyrs for the second time.







Our message today to every Ogoni youth here is that you must make a new vow to stand with us as we fight against criminality and conflicts in our communities. MOSOP is ready to engage with all the youths to ensure that we have a crime free Ogoni and I am inviting all Ogoni Youths to join us in this campaign.

HEALTH CRISIS IN OGONILAND

The UNEP report had raised serious health concerns in relation to the health implications of the pollution footprints in the area and called amongst others the emplacement of a health registry and impact assessment. Two reports released recently had raised the frightening dimension of the health crisis in Ogoni land. The first is the report from Amnesty International that raises concerns about the link between infant mortality in the Niger Delta particularly Ogoni and oil pollution in the region.

The second is the report I received from the field by the Ogoni Medical Doctors Forum who were engaged in the recent HYPREP Medical Outreach Programme. The Forum had informed us about the high incidence of surgical cases amongst Ogoni patients some of which had lasted for almost a decade because of no funds with the patient to pay for such surgical operations to be carried out.

This reinforces our call on the Federal government to establish a specialist medical facility in Ogoni land. The current situation where there is no specialist facility to address health matters in Ogoni land is unacceptable.

RESUMPTION OF OIL PRODUCTION IN OGONILAND

To mitigate poverty, unemployment and conflict in Ogoni land, MOSOP hereby reechoes its support for economic investments in Ogoni land. In this regard, MOSOP will help foster the enabling environment that will make such investment to be human rights friendly and also thrive. Ogoni is blessed with abundant human and natural resources that need to be harnessed for the benefit of the people and investors. Consequently we warmly welcome genuine investors who will add value to the lives of the people while making honest profit on their investment.

However, regarding the resumption of oil production specifically, MOSOP reiterates its position that following the central role of oil in the Ogoni crisis, all outstanding legacy issues must be addressed and the consent of the people obtained before this can take place.

It would be recalled that apart from the issue of environmental devastation that attended Shell's operations in Ogoni land, the Ogoni people raised serious concerns about the total lack of participation of the people in the entire value chain of the oil industry, including employment; and the absence of a clear and focused Community Benefit Sharing Agreements (CBAs) and sustainable development process that recognize the rights of the people to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) in accordance with global best practice.

MOSOP wants to state unequivocally that the Ogoni issue involved three main parties namely, the Federal Government of Nigeria, the oil industry led by Shell, and the Ogoni people. Any attempt to deal with any aspect of the issue must necessarily involve the three principal actors as stakeholders in a joint project of finding a lasting solution to the Ogoni crisis. In this regard, therefore, MOSOP will resist the present attempt by the Federal Government and Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria to arbitrarily award the Ogoni fields in Oil Mining Lease (OML) 11 without consultation with the Ogoni community. It is on this note that MOSOP wants to state unambiguously that it has not certified any oil company to take over oil operations in Ogoni land as this is a process that requires the necessary consultation with all stakeholders in Ogoni.

Resumption of oil production must follow the doctrine of free, prior and informed consent through good faith consultation with the people. It has to be an open and transparent process that will allow a level playing field for any company that is interested in Ogoni oil. In this regard, the Ogoni people at the behest of MOSOP has set up a strategic committee representing the various interests in Ogoni and headed by Professor Ben Naanen, a notable

economic historian and resource governance expert, to develop a template that will harmonize existing positions and guide the Ogoni people in any engagement with the Federal Government and the oil industry regarding oil production in Ogoni land. Once the template is adopted by the Ogoni people very soon, Ogoni land will be ready for engagement and consultation on this matter.

It is also in regard to industry best practice that MOSOP condemns the current ongoing laying of pipeline by Shell. Whether it is a pipeline replacement or a new pipeline, the conduct of an Environmental, Social and Human Rights Impact Assessment is absolutely necessary. Beyond that, the UNEP report had clearly stated that for any future discussion about resuming oil production in Ogoni land, there would be need for the conduct of an Environmental Impact Assessment which must include socio-economic and health considerations. This has not been done.

RENEWABLEENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

In order to promote alternative sustainable energy sources and as a key climate change response solutions, MOSOP is partnering with some investors to bring in a-10mw solar powered energy to the city of Bori. Renewable energy is one of the most effective tools we have in the fight against climate change and the move from fossil fuel dependence.

In Nigeria, renewable energy offers us an alternative to decades of unstable power supply and an end to reliance on gas and oil. Emphasis has been placed on northern Nigeria for solar power but it is such a rich resource in our region that it is viable in all parts of the country

Besides issue of job creation, the renewable energy sector has been found to have positive impact on health.

My dear brothers and sisters, as it has indeed pleased God to enable us enter 2018, I would stress that we cannot build better communities with peaceful, just and inclusiveness if we are not working together. No single Ogoni person can turn around our destiny. We must do things together, now, more than ever before, because we are one nation of one people with one common destiny. We must therefore reconcile with ourselves and forgive one another where wrong has been made. According to Rev. Martin Luther King Jnr, the Black American Civil Rights hero, he who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. I seize this opportunity to appeal to all of us once again to forgive ourselves and move forward in the spirit of reconciliation to save our nationality.

My fellow compatriots, we have gotten thus far in this struggle because of the enormous support that we have garnered both locally and internationally from conscientious neighbours, friends and sympathisers. To all of them, we owe a debt of gratitude for the support and assure that MOSOP on behalf of the Ogoni people will continue to reach out and build strong alliances with them. This is necessary to enable us take our crusade for justice to every corner of the world, to every valley of oppression and to every prison of hopelessness.

In conclusion, co-pilgrims in the Ogoni struggle, as a people, we have been tested by several trials that steeled our resolve and proved our resilience. In the days ahead, let us continue to exhibit that resilience for which we are well known. Let us therefore holdfast to that message of hope and renew our commitment to the cause of justice and human dignity committed to our hands by our forebears when they marched on January 4th 1993. It is only in doing so, that we can join hands to sing, this is our moment of justice, this is our moment of honor!

I wish you a happy Ogoni Day 2018 Long live Ogoni People, Long live Ogoni Nation.

Legborsi Saro Pyagbara is the third president of Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) he joined the Ogoni struggle as far back as 1990 to launch the Ogoni Bill of Rights.

STOP ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

BY NJOUSI ABANG

If I were you,
I will stop for once and ponder:
Where am I? Where am I going?
What am I taking away?
What am I bequeathing to posterity?
Is your legacy a pit of fire?
Is your legacy a scorched earth?
Is your legacy an inhospitable globe?
Is your legacy a barren planet?
Is your legacy a great Bang?

Then let it be known that
People and nations come and
go
But nature and God live
forever.
The will of God reigns
supreme:
'Neither will I ever destroy the
world
With brimstone nor with flood
waters'

If you do what God disallows,
You will have yourself to
blame.
You may get temporary
satisfaction
But after you, a thousand
years
Will be a short period for God
To regenerate the earth with
all its splendour
God's will shall be done
according to His Word



Genetic Engineering Dream or Nightmare? Dr. Mac-Wan Ho

BOOK REVIEW

ae-Wan Ho was a well-known and respected British scientist, Reader in Biology at the Open University, UK and a Fellow of the US National Genetic Foundation. Until her demise in 2016, she was scientific adviser to the Third World Network and other public interest organizations on genetic engineering biotechnology and biosafety.

Genetic Engineering: Dream or Nightmare, the three hundred and seventeen (317) pages book published by the Third World Network in 1998, shares insights into the dangers of deploying the technology in Agriculture.

The author started by describing Genetic Engineering Biotechnology as bad science working together with big business for quick profit, against the public good, will and aspirations, against the moral values of the society and world community. She went further to explain how scientific world-view takes hold of people's unconsciousness, making them act unthinkingly to shape the world to the detriment of human beings and also of how that dominant world-view

by: Stephen Oduware

generates a selective blindness in scientists themselves, making them ignore scientific evidence or fail to interpret them correctly. She described this world-view as "reductionist, manipulative and exploitative world-view".

She went further to describe the combination of Genetic Engineering and big business as an unprecedented and unholy alliance which is inherently hazardous. She posited that various "consensus conferences" and 'public consultations' were carried out at the time only to quell the anxieties of the anti-GMO individuals who at the time warned of unexpected effects on agriculture and biodiversity, of dangers of genetic pollution that cannot be reversed, they condemned the immorality of the 'patents' of life and so on, but the public were benumbed into false sense of security, making them belief that the scientists and 'bioethicists' were considering the risks in the technology and ethical issues raised.

In a bid to garner support, the GMO proponents always argue that since the dawn of civilization, biotechnology has been practiced- from bread to wine making to selective breeding, adding that genetic modification is much more precise as genes can be individually isolated and transferred as desired thus creating limitless benefits for humankind.

These GMO proponents seem to have a list of well-garnished defense for this tainted substance. Therefore, "for those morally concerned about inequality and human suffering, it promises to feed the hungry of the world by genetically modifying crops to resist pests and diseases and to increase yield. For those who are in despair of the present global environmental deterioration, it promises to modify strains of bacteria and higher plants that can degrade toxic waste or mop-up heavy metals to clean-up the environment. For those hankering after sustainable agriculture, it promises to develop greener, more environmentally friendly transgenic crops that will reduce the use of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers". They deliberately obfuscate the public with the trick that GMOs are equivalent to the crops that were bred using conventional breeding methods.

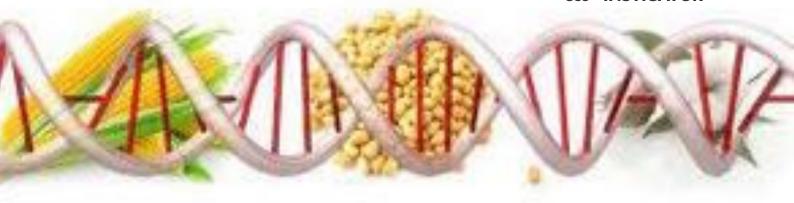
She emphasized that science itself is not bad but that there can be bad science that ill serves humanity and that science can often be wrong. Conversely, she explained that science is supposed to be nothing more and nothing less than a system of concepts for understanding nature and for obtaining reliable knowledge that enable us to live sustainably with nature. It is through our proper knowledge and understanding of nature that we can live a satisfying life.

Genetic Engineering Biotechnology is an unprecedented alliance between two great powers that can make or break the world: Science and Commerce. Most established

geneticists have direct or indirect links with industries; this sets limits on what scientists can and will research on, this makes it possible for them to compromise their integrity as independent scientists. Another factor that makes the alliance dangerous is that it is between the most reductionist science and multinational monopolistic industries whose drives are both aggressive and exploitative. According to the author, "Genetic Engineering Biotechnology is really bad science working hand in gloves with big business for quick profit, aided and abetted by our government".

She also gave accounts of how the inequality between the Global North and South are being further widened using the tool of "global economy". How the Organization of Economic Corporation and Development (OECD) member countries worked on Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) which was written by and for corporations to prohibit any government from establishing performance and accountability standards for foreign investors.

Other negotiations went underway at the World Trade Organization level to ensure that no barrier of any kind should remain in the South to dampen exploitation by the North and at the same time, to protect the deeply unethical 'Patent of Life' through Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) agreements. Hence in addition to gaining complete control of the food supply of the South through exclusive rights to genetically engineered seeds, the big food giants of the North can asset-strip the South's genetic and intellectual resources with impunity, up to and including genes and cell-lines of the indigenous people.



In the book, genetic engineering was described as a set of techniques for isolating, modifying, multiplying and recombining genes from different and unrelated organisms, she explained further that it enable geneticists to transfer genes between species belonging to different kingdoms that have no probability to interbreed in nature.

The discovery of genetic engineering biotechnology in the 1970s came as result of the discovery of several key techniques in molecular genetics- the molecular geneticists who discovered the technique or were in forefront of developing and using genetic engineering, soon after became aware of the dangers of opening a Pandora's box. One of the dangers they saw was the distinct possibility of inadvertently or intentionally creating pathogenic strains of viruses or bacteria by recombining genes in the laboratory. These issues led to the Asilomar Declaration, which at the time called for a moratorium on genetic engineering until appropriate guidelines were put in place. The scientists at the time were responsible people, they recognized the dangers so they brought the matter to public attention and at the same time imposed a moratorium on their own research. From the 1990s the risks from genetic manipulation has become far greater, and the question is where the voice of the scientists is now?

Science is now being commercialized, research funding are intentionally and

drastically cut to make scientists dance to the tunes of the pay masters. Even the 1993 science white paper "stressed on the need to concentrate on research that would help the economy" and genetic engineering biotechnology is seen to be one of the prime candidates.

The commercialization of genetic engineering and the patenting of life grew in the 1970s with the first corporation, Genentech. A milestone was reached in the industry in 1980 when the US Supreme Court ruled that genetic engineered microorganisms can be patented. This ruling gave birth to an avalanche of patents especially with the \$3bn US-funded human genome initiative, which open the floodgate to 'patents on life'. This bad science has failed basic safety and risk assessment questions and has reduced life to a tradable commodity, also destroying biodiversity and small scale farmers' livelihood. It is an unfair and unsustainable projection that will allow the Global Northern companies to take genetic resources freely from the South as 'common heritage' which are then returned to them as priced commodities.

The failure of the reductionist science to the reality test was also well explained. The list includes: The Green Revolution, Eugenics and Nuclear Energy. She added that the reductionist science failed to recognize links between mad cow disease and the human neuropathy, CJD; between severe

pesticide-poisoning and organophosphate; between chlorofluorocarbons and the loss of the ozone layer. She also cited the horror of thalidomide, which rushed into market and was used as a sedative for pregnant women without adequate tests and eventually withdrawn in 1961 after about 8,000 babies were born with severely truncated limbs. She further explained that there is a mismatch between mindset and reality by the proponent geneticists, this she demonstrated she stated as follows:

- 1. Converse to the GE mindset that gene determines characters in linear causal chain; one gene gives one function. In reality scientific findings have it that gene functions in a complex network; causation is multidimensional, nonlinear and circular.
- 2. Contrary to the mindset that genes and genomes are not subject to environmental influence. The reality of scientific finding is that genes and genomes are subject to feedback regulation.
- 3. The GE mindset is that genes and genomes are steady and unchanging. But in reality, genes and genomes are dynamic and fluid, can change directly in response to the environment and give adaptive mutations to orders.
- 4. Against the GE mindset that genes stay where they are put. In actual sense, scientific findings have it that genes can jump horizontally between unrelated species and recombine.

There has always been government involvement both nationally and internationally in advancing some technologies that redirect how people live without public participation in the usefulness and need for such technologies. Sometimes they make people believe that such acts are altruistic.

The idea of relying on the scientific outcomes of corporate scientists can be likened to a case of making someone a judge over one's own case. My recommendations are:

- · In Nigeria, there should be an independent public enquiry set up to look at all the associated risks and hazards of GMOs. This should be done by independent scientists and relevant civil society organizations.
- Conduct a nationwide market survey to check the extent of proliferation of GMOs and other related products.
- All field trials should be suspended until the proper risk assessment and in-situ scientific results are well analyzed and a proper clearance given.
- There should be a huge penalty enshrined into the NBMA Acts; such that any form of genetic pollution, illness and/or abnormalities as a result of these transgenic crops will lead to imprisonment and closure of such establishment.



ell-meaning CSOs and individual stakeholders have continued to express their concerns about the proposed cattle colonies – stating that it is not the solution to the perennial herdsmen/farmer clashes across the country.

There has been mixed reactions as the minister of Agriculture, Audu Ogbeh claims that the idea of cattle colonies was meant to put an end to the incessant herdsmen/farmer clashes across the country.

It is really worrisome and disheartening the spate of conflicts between herders and farmers and how it has degenerated into full-fledged silent war. This has led to killings and destruction of properties with the incubation of reprisal attacks anytime. If not checked properly, the consequences are grave and could only best be imagined.

Perturbed by the unmanaged conflicts between herders and farmers in several states, some of the stakeholders believe that the issue has political undertone, while they ask the government to show more commitment, secure the lives of people and take necessary unbiased steps to quell the clashes while all perpetrators are brought to book.

Furthermore, they argued that rearing cattle like other livestock is a private business, so the owners of the businesses should be able to create an enabling environment for their business to thrive subject to the local regulations governing the area, saying that such meddling and unwarranted intervention by the government is needless.

The Director of Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF), Mr. Nnimmo Bassey in his blog (Earthly Tales) post said that "the idea of creating grazing or cattle colonies across the nation as announced by the Minister of Agriculture sounds rather bizarre and raises a number of concerns. Top on the list of concerns is the undertone of the word colony.

For most Nigerians, the idea of a colony would be one defined as a country or area under full or partial political control of another, often distant country. Could it be that the minister was using the term in the sense sometimes used to describe animals of the same breed staying together in a closed structure? Whatever the case, the imagery requires further interrogation".

He further explained that the distrust in the polity could heighten the wrong signals associated with the perceived meaning; in his words he stated that "Keeping in mind that colonialism was entrenched by the power of the barrel of the gun, could anyone believe that it is at a period of heated conflict and distrust that colonizing any territory, for any purpose, can be the way to resolve the conflicts?"

According to him, "The way to go in rebuilding the environment, fighting desertification, improving on the fertility of the soils thus stimulating higher farm yields; increasing agricultural extension services and creating linkages to market"

Part of the solutions he suggested is that the 'Great Green Wall Programme aimed at combating desertification amplified by climate change through improved use of land and water resources should incorporate pastoralists in their fodder production scheme for sustainable development. Noting that the fact that southern Niger Republic is greener than parts of northern Nigeria should suggest to us that our approach to environmental management is defective.

Bassey, who is an environmentalist, said restoring the environment is a practical measure to restore and build peace, saying that this should be the direction of government and indeed the political agenda of any people-oriented party or

government.

In a publication by Independent Newspaper, Adeola Elliott who is the immediate past chairman of Agric and Agro-Allied Group of Lagos Chambers of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), emphasized that cattle rearing is an agricultural business and that he is wondering the interest of the government in the matter.

He went further to say that the herdsmen should not have problems negotiating land usage with the landowners if they are true sheep or cow herders or breeders.

According to him "Cattle-rearing is an agricultural business. I still don't understand why the government is meddling in this matter. Ordinarily, the herdsmen shouldn't have problems negotiating land usage with the landowners if they are true sheep or cow herders. Again, they will not carry weapons like guns. It is obvious, there is a hidden agenda".

Analyzing the issues of cattle colony, Dr. Jide Johnson criticized the use of the word colony, saying that it sends wrong impression and/or sounds like a warning. This could mean colonization of other people's territory by herdsmen. He expressed his dismay why the Federal Government cannot propose a colony for mass education and housing, saying that the proposed colony for cattle is absurd.

"Why can't the government create an educational colony, housing colony too, I don't know the value of an average Nigerian life, so colony for cattle is absurd and it is pathetic that cattle is valued above human life," he added.

He advised the government to borrow a leaf from the Botswana experience and the Ghana

experience, stressing that if colonies are created for the herdsmen government must also do same for fishermen in Nigeria on the international waters and other farmers across the country

Johnson further stated that there are laws that govern businesses and government should not be directly involved in the matter.

"I am not against government providing subvention or facilities for different categories of people, but the government should not be directly involved in the matter," he added. Proffering solution to the issue, Johnson said the solution to the problem is simple, saying that the herders should rear their cattle in open lands and not encroach on other people's land.

"When you graze your cattle on other peoples' farmland it will create a problem and I think one of the solutions people have suggested is that it is unhealthy for cattle to travel long distance.

"That is where the colony comes in so that they are limited to a particular place, let each farmer take responsibility for his cattle, approach the indigene, buy your land and then rear your cattle within the perimeter of the land.

He added: "We should not allow cattle to be roaming on the street, when the people that are meant to do their jobs are doing it, we won't have this issue, the farmers and the herders have been living in harmony, it has some measure of political interference and I have said this severally that Nigerians love one another. The solution is for us to see ourselves as brothers".

He tasked the various security agencies to do their job to ensure that people do not have business with firearms, and should be denied access to it.

The President, Federated FADAMA Community Association, Oyelekan Muftau, said Nigeria should have outlived cattle roaming and take lessons from other countries.

According to him: "If you want to raise an animal you have to be ready to raise the animal, it is not about being nomadic, what about if all poultry farmers and livestock farmers want their livestock to be roaming the street to eat; what do you think will happen". Furthermore, he noted rightly that as other livestock farmers are taking care of their livestock the herdsmen too should find means to feed their cattle and stop moving them around.

Following that was the admonition, Joseph Ojeyemi, General Secretary Federated FADAMA Community Association, posited that stakeholders should work together to find lasting solution to the current challenge and said "it would not be out of place for the country to take lessons from other countries and replicate same for peace and growth".

He emphasized that there can be a symbiotic relationship between farmers and herders while citing the examples of Kenya, he said "their cattle do not graze around", noting that farmers that plant maize and guinea corn also sell their produce to the cattle keepers and make money in return.

This is an issue that requires urgent attention and should be devoid of ethnic, political or religious undertone in addressing the issues. The root cause should be isolated and treated without bias- cattle colonies not the solution because it is like robbing Peter to pay Paul.













n the Norwegian crisis phone number system, calling #112 connects the person directly to the police operational center. Children and newly arrived refugees learn this number at the elementary educational stage. Article 112 in the Norwegian Constitution concerns an obligation for the state and a human right for "everyone". But can Article 112 prevent the drilling of oil in Barents Sea (South and East) and what is the implications for the climate?

For the first time in Norwegian history, the state by the government's oil and energy department is sued by the environmental movement NGOs, Greenpeace, Nature and Youth and The Grandparent's Action, and testified in court.

The lawsuits regards the government's administrative decision to grant 10 licenses to search for oil in the delicate Barents sea to 13 oil companies... The localization for this search is in the southern and eastern part of the Barents Sea. Some of the 40 newly

opened blocks are located close to the Russian boundary, and the northern blocks overlaps with the ice edge zone as defined by the Polar institute and Polar front. The grounds for the lawsuit are the consequences of the public administration decision, namely the irreversible damages on the climate and environment for our age and the next generations.

What does article 112 really say?

The constitutional environment article states that "Every person has the right to an environment that is conducive to health and to a natural environment whose productivity and diversity are maintained. Natural resources shall be managed on the basis of comprehensive long-term considerations which will safeguard this right for future generations as well. In order to safeguard their right in accordance with the foregoing paragraph, citizens are entitled to

information on the state of the natural environment and on the effects of any encroachment on nature that is planned or carried out. The authorities of the state shall take measures for the implementation of these principles."

The provision is a continuation of the former article 110B, which was enacted during the Gro Harlem Brundtland government. Prime Minister <u>Brundtland urged the nations in the UN report "Our common future" in 1987 to oblige themselves not only politically but also legally to the principle of sustainable development, which was the ground for the Brundtland commission.</u>

An important principle for the legal state is the court's jurisdiction of the public administrative acts, which included the procedural, personal and material content. However, the court cannot control the legal administrative margin of appreciation. This practice goes way back and was in 2014 enacted in the Constitution article 89.

The climate lawsuit challenges the separation of powers principle by requesting the court to review whether the government's oil extract permissions are contrary to article 112.

The plaintiff claimed that the lawsuit is a proof for the importance of having the right to climate and environment constitutionally legalized, and that article 112 must be interpreted as a limitation for the state's margin of appreciation concerning environmental intervention, due to the licenses facilitating for further irreversible and unacceptable climate effect, primarily through global warming. Subsidiary the plaintiff claimed that the government decision was not in accordance with the requirement of the Administration Act concerning the administrative procedural requirements,

that is, clarification and assessment of the consequences, founded on correct fact and the grounds for the decision.

The plaintiff stated that "No economy in the world can justify this measure, nor should the licenses have been granted, because it is already clear and undisputable that the worlds' fossils and resources exceeds what can be released to the atmosphere, the plaintiff claimed."

The purpose of the decision is economical gains, which is the typical consideration weighed against the consideration of climate and environment. The plaintiff claimed that there is no doubt that the government will gain economical advantage, because the petroleum industry is generally economically beneficial. Further, the plaintiff stated that it is hard to accept that we might not earn the same economical gain in this specific case. We must break this presumption because the petroleum industry will always be advantageous, while the environment will be damaged. It is a central point that we now face a change of paradigm. The change of paradigm regards the amount of fossil energy exceeding what the climate and environment can handle.

UN's climate panel acknowledge that we must leave a lot of the fossil resources. This affects the opinion of the importance of petroleum in the future. There will be a competition to sell, not to buy oil, which will increase the price of oil negatively. If the administrative decision does not lead to a valuable gain, it would imply that the damages on the environment which the licenses will cause cannot be accepted.

The plaintiff claimed that the government have based economical gain on the oil company's economical assessment, instead of the economical calculation laid

down in the assessment of the decision's consequences, which shows that the costs

of the oil company are not in accordance with the state's calculations. Thereafter the plaintiff asked the court rhetorically whether the state could take such a bet on the climate goals. "This part will claim that it cannot be done. A general and complete assessment is not made. The government assessment is based on specific fields and its conclusion is that e n o r m o u s

environmental damages are at risk without certain economical numbers"

Finally, the plaintiff stated "Lastly, no body shall tell me that the government would continue with its current decision to grant these licenses if they knew that this will lead to loss of millions for the state."

The governmental defendant replied to the economic argument by saying that the Finance Department would make sure to stop the activity if the economic gain is negative.

The Attorney General of Norway acknowledged that the lawsuit is unique, in the sense that article 112 is directly brought up for the first time since it was enacted. Beside the Alta case, neither the present nor the former article 110B has been claimed by the environment movement. Nevertheless, the lawsuit is not unique, the defendant claimed. There is a global environmental activism, which uses legal tools to legalize and prevent environmental intervention.

The attorney general claimed that if the 29 climate lawsuit, which he called

constitutional activism before the Norwegian court, is taken seriously, it will

> not only prevent the governmental decision, but all or most of the oil extraction licenses granted in the North Sea.

Further, the attorney general claimed that the government perceives the climate lawsuit as a question of the principle of separation of power, democracy and the interpretation of article 112.

Separation of power

To form the climate case as a lawsuit brought before the court, was claimed to be an attempt to move the brick between the governmental powers. The environment movement was accused of attempting to override the legislative and executive powers, who have decided the course of Norwegian climate and petroleum politic, by bringing the administrative and politically backed decision before the court. To require judicial control on a political and democratic decision was claimed as an attempt to Americanize the Norwegian legal tradition.

The fact that the civil societies by the environment movement traditionally have used political tools, but now choose to change strategy through legalization, by bringing the case before the court, use of media focus and establishing massive campaign, was complemented as great and legitimate. But there was something spooky about connecting the case to the court and at the same time exercise campaigns to affect people's understanding of the lawsuit.



The attorney general states that Their wish to use the court to make an environmental political performance in order to affect the climate and environment battle [...] is to use the court as a political arena [...] this is a performance the state won't participate in, not on this arena nor in the court.

Democracy

Further, the attorney general claimed that if the parliament members in 1992, which was the time when oil was Norway's most important industry, had dreamed that article 110B would be applied to prevent granting oil extract licenses, they would never have enacted the provision, far less with 2/3 majority for the constitutional proposition, as required cf. article 121. The attorney general stretched the argument further and claimed that the same applies for the parliament members of 2014.He ended his speech with this "Article 112 is

attempted applied beyond the boundaries the legislative powers obviously have meant".

The attorney general did not deny that the environmental question is very real and is being discussed and debated in all arenas, including the private/public sectors, the parliament and in the last political campaign by several parties.

As the leader of The Grandparents action, Ketil Lund stated: We have grown up in a Norway characterized by rebuilding with a relative even and prudent growth of wealth, until the entrance of the old age, and thereafter an adventurous increasing wealth at the expense of livelihoods and diversity.

The attorney general complimented the climate as a sign of a democratic and engaged arena, but it did not belong to the legalization arena, nor in an attempted Americanized debate.

The leader of The Grandparent's Action commented in his testimony, the attorney general's claim regarding Americanization of Norwegian court, by stating that through his 12 years' experience as lawyer, 7 years as defendant for the government and 12 years as judge, including serving as judge for the supreme court, couldn't remember anyone attempting to ridicule the counterpart as the attorney general did. I was quite upset by that [the statement of Americanization].

So far, 850 permits have been granted, distributed on 2400 blocks. In the Barents Sea alone 400 blocks are granted for oil and gas extraction. The attorney general reminded the court not to take the counterparts general and wide claims into account, except what is specifically relevant to the current case.

In short, the defendant stated that the state considered the decision of granting oil extract licenses as ordinary, beside the fact that the localization is more toward north than ever before.

The law

The enforced decision has been considered three times by the government and gained 2/3 majority approval by the parliament, and is therefore deeply anchored in a wide majority chosen by the people, who follow the parliament's petroleum policy.

The decision was claimed to be in accordance with the law on all level, both in accordance with constitutional and formal law cf. Constitution art. 112 cf. Petroleum activity act art. 3-1 cf. art. 3-3.

According to the attorney general, the assessment basis for article 112 is understood as a question of whether article 112 requires more from the government than the Act pertaining petroleum activities. The defendant argued that article 112 is not a human right which any one can plead, but an obligation for the state to assess whether

measures should be taken when deciding upon cases affecting the environment. As examples of measures the governments have taken, the attorney general mentioned Norway's contribution to climate negotiations, use of the quota system, agreeing to and complying with the Kyoto-, Doha- and Paris agreement, rain forest venture, and climate cooperation with China.

The grounds for the interpretation of article 112 was based on the last paragraph, which directed to the state's responsibility to implement the principles of environment, health, diversity, sustainability and long term decisions for the future generation, based on the preparatory works where it is stated that the third paragraph is meant to strengthen the government's obligation to meet the above mentioned principles by taking necessary and adequate measures.

The attorney general argued that art.112 differs from the other human rights in the Constitution which holds the state responsible to ensure the citizens their human rights. Further, the attorney general claimed that environment and climate is not an international human right. As support for this claim the attorney general referred to the few decisions brought before the human right court in Strasbourg, where environment considerations have won on the grounds of intervention in the right to privacy and family life, and not on ground of a right to climate and environment.

On this background the decision to grant oil extract licenses was claimed as clear and indisputably valid.

The interpretation of art.112 is very interesting. Article 112 has not earlier been subjected to direct assessment. Therefore, the court's interpretation will serve as guidelines for future court decisions and subject of further consideration from the two higher levels of courts in Norway.

Does the state, as the attorney general claimed, oblige itself through art. 112 and not to the citizens, or is the correct understanding that art. 112 was deliberately placed in the chapter of human right to legalize any one's right to a sustainable developed livelihood, which according to the Precautionary principle requires general and total assessment of the resource use. And if any doubt occurs, the decision should fall in favor of the environment.

Courts conclusion

The court judged in favor of the government, in accordance with the will of the parliament's majority and the attorney general's interpretation of article 112. The court considered emissions that occurred in Norway as relevant for the case, and not the international emission Norway contributes to. The court stated that the government has implemented sufficient compensative climate measures.

Natural science

The opening of Barents Sea south east for petroleum industry is the first new opening in 20 years. Further, the blocks differ by lacking infrastructure for search, extract and potential transportation of oil. Some of

the blocks in south east of Barents Sea is located close to the boundary to Russia, and the blocks to the north overlaps the iceedge zone as defined by Polar institute and Polar front. The ice-edge zone is the most vulnerable ice-edge zone. This vulnerability is also the reason for the Environment directorate's discouraging 20 of the 40 blocks.

Why is the ice-edge vulnerable?

The last 10 years have shown a whole other situation compared to the average temperature compared to the last 100 years. The earth is exposed to considerable heating, particularly across land and arctic. The globe is 1 degree warmer and this leads to the melting of ice and snow, which in turn makes the sunshine reach and heat the sea. 1 degree is no joke. In his testimony, Professor Eystein Jansen, leader of Bjerknescentre for climate research in Bergen, and director of the last two report by the UN Climate Panel, presented the current climate situation and its development. The climate varies with the activity of the solar energy and its absorption, which can be hindered by volcanic eruption, leading to a cooling effect of the temperature.



What is left is the human contribution to the climate change through the emission of sulfur, which has a cooling effect. Primarily, heating is due to emission of climate gases absorbing radiation. Without the climate gases the radiation would be released out to the universe. The effect of these gases is approximately as having a blanket over your head, it will get warmer.

Through this and other work, it is concluded indisputably that most of the heating the last years are created by humans.

Climate situation in Norway

The Norwegian Prime minister mentioned the increase of slopes and flood, and that energy from renewable resources are necessary for a sustainable future and growth.

Norway produces 2 % of the world's oil and gas. There are few countries in the middle – east that are close to the position Norway holds. Oil extraction loops in technological products, infrastructure and transportation construction and their provision involve many countries and could also lead to the expansion of their own oil and gas industries. This is not the direction Prime Minister Erna Solberg expressed in her New Year speech; she stated that we must prepare for a new future where growth must come from green and climate friendly business.

The Norwegian climate service center publishes reports about the expected climate change in Norway. The center has published reports regarding climate, weather temperature, rainfall, flood and rise of sea level.

Temperature Rise

The rainfall has increased considerably throughout the country the last 100 years. We have mainly had years of rainfall congestion. The rainfall congestion has affected west coast and most of north Norway, especially in fall and winter season, and in the summer season east Norway is exposed to thunder and flood.

Extreme rainfall has increased and will continue to increase. In 2013 and 2014 the frequency of floods increased in the west coast city of Odda and Voss. Slopes were accompanied by floods taking several houses, documented by the amount of registered report. This is the typical consequence of increased frequency and strength of extreme rainfall events in Norway. The danger of flood increases in the whole country, especially south, west and north will witness flood, rainfall flood and several low pressures.

According to UN's climate panel report great amounts of rainfall in northern part of the globe can be connected to human affected actions, based on the methods we must detect that follows from nature and what is a consequence of climate gas emission.

In his research, Professor Jansen stated that 30 % of the world's population are exposed to potential dangerous heat waves. If the emissions increase, 74 % of the world's population will be exposed to this kind of heat waves, especially the tropical areas. South-East Asia and northern Australia will be most exposed.

With regards to extreme wind, it is consensus among the climate researchers that hurricanes in the tropical area will not increase in amount. The most dangerous hurricanes will probably increase. The explanation lies in the hurricanes depending on energy from the ocean, which will lead the hurricanes to category 5 and not 1 or 2, the normal hurricanes.

Specific measures made with satellite images dating back to 1850 till our time, shows that the ocean rise have increased to 20 cm globally in the last 100 years. The ocean rise applies particularly to countries where the land is not rising due to the ice age anymore, such as in Bergen, the capital of west coast. The sea level has accelerated twice the amount compared to the beginning of the 20th century. This is due to warmer oceans which expand and take more space. The greatest effect arrives from melting ice on land, especially Antarctica due to the surrounding ocean being warmer, and Greenland which has lost double of its ice mass compared to Antarctica. This has also led to reduction of the ice rinks (the width of the ice) in the world. We can only imagine how many billion ton of ice changes per year, due to its impact on the sea level. The total loss of the ice mass makes up half of the observed sea level rise, which in turn slowly but surely will affect the sea level.

Therefore, most of the researchers believe that the domestic ice in Greenland have reached a turning point were the melting will continue in a long term. It is impossible to say how much the decrease will be, but it depends on the emission. Professor Jansen stated that he was pretty sure that what we see now, is the beginning of something that will last hundreds of years before the ice has found its equilibrium with the temperature around it, if the temperature stabilizes. His consideration is that the heating we have

started will continue and future generations will have to deal with including by damage reparation and by moving away from the seas, changing infrastructure and so on.

There is an interesting work that shows the long-term consequences of sea level rise on the area of land. If the climate gas emission is not controlled, great land areas will be affected by the sea level rise. Big cities such as Saigon, Shanghai, Singapore, Bombay and Buenos Aires are some of the areas. And when we first turn on the heat, is it difficult to turn it off, because we don't know a proper way to turn it off, not technologically, neither ecologically nor economically.

Professor Jansen concluded by stating that a temperature rise to 2 degrees, which is the limit set by the international society, is significant for climate change and strong global heating. Failure to implementing zero emission measures during the next ten years, both local and global, will have great consequences, especially flood, slopes, heat waves, lack of food due to lack of food production and sea level rise.

Further, he informed that we most likely are in a turning point with regards to the ice cover in Antarctica and Greenland, and the sea level rise we have started is most likely irreversible and will continue. But the power and the amount will depend on the cut of emission measures. It is certain that we are already inflicting future generation considerable damages and costs.

Professor and climate researcher at the University of Bergen, Helge Drange, refers to the Central Agency of Statistics which shows that Norway have increased carbon dioxide emission with 24 % since 1990 and that the statistic does not show decrease the last ten years. On the other hand, Denmark has decreased its emission with 45 % and Sweden with 37 %.

Bano Abdulraham is studying law at University of Bergen, Norway and is a volunteer at the Rafto Foundation.



ishNet Alliance in Lome, Togo was launched on Thursday, March 1, 2018. It was made possible by the local fishers and with the facilitation of Association Jeune Chretien en Action pour le Developpement (JCAD). The epochal event took place at Centre d'Education Spirituelle pour l'Apostolat des Laics (CESAL).

Ahianyo Kokou Guy, the chairman of the Board of JCAD welcomed all and stated that the gathering was called to mobilize fishers who have been impacted by oil exploration/extraction as well as from impacts of climate change. It was also to develop resilience strategies to climate change to help protect their livelihoods. He was optimistic that the sharing of oil impact experiences from Ghana and Nigeria would set the stage for the inauguration of the

FishNet Alliance in Togo.

Steady Growth of the Fishing Sector in Togo

First presentation was on Fisheries and the Impacts of Climate Change by the leader of the fishers group, Mr Dermane Adam. He stated that fishing in Togo is mostly artisanal and that there are a total of 22,000 fishers - 12,000 of which are women while 10,000 are men. Their current fishing harbour at Ablogame, Lome, is giving way to an expanding container port while a new one is being constructed by the government with support from the Japanese government.

The sector was mostly dominated by fishermen and women from Ghana and other countries until the 1980s when then president Eyadema decided to promote the sector in order to have more Togolese in the trade.

Fishers in Togo became better organised from the 1990s, this made the government pay more attention to the sector.

"I come from Northern Ghana, and many wonder how I became a fisherman here. I became a professional fisherman in the 1980s when then president showed interest in developing the sector and getting more Togolese involved," said Adam.

Today they have fishing schools and the sector is gradually getting more mechanised with the introduction of newer fishing techniques.

Challenges

Fishers have to go further offshore to increase the chance of making a good catch. This would require the acquisition of bigger boats which are purchased in Ghana at the cost of \$1400 each.

"After buying the boat you have to buy the outboard engines imported from Japan and sometimes from China. One engine costs over \$4000", Adam added. "Besides the purchase of the boat and an engine, one still need to buy the nets at about same price as the engine. It is an expensive business and the possibility of getting financial support from the banks is very slim", he said.

Adam is worried that petroleum exploration and extraction activities in Togolese waters will harm the marine ecosystems and compound the challenges facing the fishers. He noted that fish are migrating away from noisy coastlines and from pollution from oil spills and waste oils.

Adam was hopeful that with the formation of the FishNet Alliance, the fishers would have information about activities in other countries and also have a wider space for sharing experiences.

Oil and Gas eroding the identity of the Fisheries Sector

Noble Wadzah of Oilwatch Ghana spoke on the subject 'The Fisheries Sector: A Lost identity in the Scheme of Oil and Gas'. His presentation covered the key features of Revenue Management Act of Ghana, highlighting the big failures and gaps in its formulation and with regards to the fisheries sector. He also focused on how fisheries sector is perceived in official circles in Ghana.

Oil business picked up with the discovery of the resource in Ghana in 2008. Politicians and bureaucrats were very happy. The citizens got drawn into the euphoria - all believing that a lot of funds would come into the system and citizens would enter an era of prosperity.

Ghana started with thinking about how to manage oil revenue before thinking of any Oil and Gas Policy and then harmonizing the Exploration and Production Law.

Wadzah saw this as a fatal flaw in the approach to the oil and gas business. He then detailed the tripod on which the Act stands as follows:

- 1. Support national budget
- 2. Assign funds for future generations
- 3. Stabilize economy when there are shocks

His brisk presentation went on to list the following:

- 10% (2.5 million) of the Ghanaian population engage in fisheries. Double that number for others that depend on those directly involved in fishing.
- Oil contributes 1.2 Million USD annually to the Ghanaian economy.

- Interestingly, it is the same amount that fisheries brought to the economy that was the expected revenue to be brought in by oil at that time.
- Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) prepared by oil companies claimed that fisheries would not be impacted by oil activities.
- In order to fast track oil exploitation, government ignored the requirements in existing laws that required fisheries impact assessment before any extractive activities are permitted in the seas.
- A commission to manage the oil did not include any representatives from the fisheries sector.
- Fishers are now resisting oil activities in their waters due to unmet expectations and these have led to conflicts and arrests of some locals.
- Government is now beginning to think about how to build harmony between oil exploitation and fisheries through a Sea Safe Framework.

Wadzah rounded up his presentation by highlighting that 10 years of oil extraction, no benefits have trickled down to the local fishers and it has become clear that rather than expecting gains they are in for more loses.He recommended that as a way forward, oil and gas business must not dominate or destroy fisheries business. He noted that fisheries are renewable whereas oil is not and that whereas fisheries support citizen's economy, oil does not. He also stated that the FishNet Alliance demands that investments must shift away fossil energy and into renewables. The Alliance also believes that fisheries holds the key to economic progress and nutrition for Africa.

Fish Not Oil

Nnimmo Bassey brought a report from Nigeria and this elicited interest from participants who wanted to know what the clean-up situation was in the Niger Delta at after six decades of oil and gas extraction.

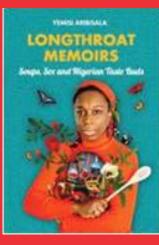
What is the fate of the 6.5 million fishers in Nigeria? Participants learned that the clean-up process of the Niger Delta is commencing with Ogoni territory and that according to a report prepared by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), it would take a generation (30 years) to complete the clean-up and restoration of that environment. The general situation of oil and gas exploration in inland water bodies as well as along the entire continental coastline was examined with the potential for political conflicts between nations - due to the resources being found along national boundaries- as well as the impending oil spills and other polluting activities. Pollution of ground water was highlighted as problematic in South Sudan and Nigeria.

The damage to fisheries was emphasized and the fact that fishers have already started campaigns against extractive activities in Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon and South Africa was underscored. Of interest was the fact that some countries have already legislated against extraction of petroleum resources in their waters. Examples were given of Costa Rica and Belize. It also mentioned that El Salvador has banned mining in order to protect nature's gifts in that nation.

FishNet Alliance expands

At the end of deliberations, the FishNet Alliance Togo was formally inaugurated by Nnimmo Bassey. He stressed that the Alliance was a platform for solidarity, connecting of struggles and support for livelihoods.

Mr Adam declared that "united we are strong". He also added that the Alliance will embolden the fishers in Togo to take strong positions, make strong demands for the protection of marine ecosystems. He added, "we are ready to share information and to participate in activities of the network".



Longthroat Memoirs by Yemisi Aribisala

Longthroat Memoirs presents a sumptuous menu of essays about Nigerian cuisine, lovingly presented by the nation's top epicurean writer. As well as a mouth-watering appraisal of the cultural politics and erotics of Nigerian food, it is also a series of love letters to the Nigerian palate. From the cultural history of soup, fish as aphrodisiac and the sensual allure of snails, Longthroat Memoirs explores the complexities, the meticulousness, and the tactile joy of African gastronomy.

Nigeria has a powerful culture of oral storytelling, of myth creation and the imaginative traversing of worlds. Longthroat Memoirs gather some of these tales and creates an irresistible stew, guaranteed to amuse the inquisitive mouth and nourish the curious stomach.

Longthroat Memoirs introduces Nigerian cuisine to the international dining table of ideas, introducing its textures and tastes to a global audience.

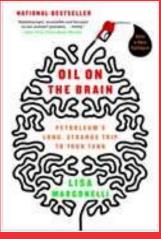
SUCCESS IN A WORLD WITHOUT GROWTH LORENZO FIORAMONTI

Wellbeing Economy by Lorenzo Fioramonti

Economic growth is a constant mantra of politicians, economist and the media. Few understand what it is, but they love and follow it blindly. The reality is that since the global financial crisis, growth has varnished in the more industrialised economies and in the so-called developing countries. Politicians may be panicking, but is this really a bad thing?

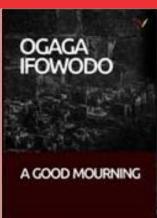
Using real-life examples and innovative research, acclaimed political economist Lorenzo Fioramonti lay bare society's perverse obsession with economic growth by showing its many flaws, paradoxes and inconsistencies. He argues that the pursuit of growth often results in more losses than gains and in damage, inequalities and conflicts.

By breaking free from the growth mantra, we can build a better society based on a wellbeing economy, which would have a positive impact on everything we do. Wellbeing Economy is a manifesto for radical change in South Africa and beyond.



Oil on the Brain by Lisa Margonelli

Oil on the Brain is a smart, surprisingly funny account of the oil industry—the people, economies, and pipelines that bring us petroleum, brilliantly illuminating a world we encounter every day. Americans buy ten thousand gallons of gasoline a second, without giving it much of a thought. Where does all this gas come from? Lisa Margonelli's desire to learn took her on a one-hundred thousand mile journey from her local gas station to oil fields half a world away. In search of the truth behind the myths, she wriggled her way into some of the most off-limits places on earth: the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, the New York Mercantile Exchange's crude oil market, oil fields from Venezuela, to Texas, to Chad, and even an Iranian oil platform where the United States fought a forgotten one-day battle. In a story by turns surreal and alarming, Margonelli meets lonely workers on a Texas drilling rig, an oil analyst who almost gave birth on the NYMEX trading floor, Chadian villagers who are said to wander the oil fields in the guise of lions, a Nigerian warlord who changed the world price of oil with a single cell phone call, and Shanghai bureaucrats who dream of creating a new Detroit. Deftly piecing together the mammoth economy of oil, Margonelli finds a series of stark warning signs for American drivers.



A Good Mourning by Ogaga Ifowodo

A Good Mourning is an impressive book that is marked by competence, style, grace, and a distinct authentic voice. It is that competence that I intend to dwell on a bit more because some of the snide remarks about the shortlist had focused on what they regarded as substandard work on the shortlist. Thankfully none had mentioned Ogaga's name in the diatribes. He is a competent voice whose work leaves no one in doubt of his facility with words, dexterity with decades of African and modern poetic traditions, and sincerity in the pursuit of his numerous truths and points of view. 38



Biosafety Laws and Standards

- The African Union Model law on biosafety adopted by the African Union in 2003 was meant to guide drafting of domestic biosafety frameworks and legislation at country level in order to robustly regulate genetically modified organisms (GMOs).
- But there is great disparity between the high biosafety standards set by the Model Law and the legislation passed at the domestic levels.
- Corporate interests are driving our food systems.
- Nigeria's Break-Neck Dive into GMOs on a defective structure
- The National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA) has continuously shown that it cannot regulate the country's biosafety as it welcomes and approves any application sent to them without due consideration of the impact of proposed activities or of the concerns raised by the

public.

 The composition of the governing board of NBMA is defective as it includes promoters of GMOs. The National Biotechnology Development Agency (NABDA), for example, sits on that board.

Despite all safety concerns

- On Sunday 1st May 2016 NBMA issued permits to Monsanto Agriculture Nigeria Ltd for the commercial release and placement in the market of genetically modified cotton (MON 15985) and to jointly to Monsanto and NABMA for field trials of GM maize (NK603 and MON89034X NK 603).
- In September, 2017, the agency granted permits to Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and ETH laboratory in Zurich for field trials of novel GM cassava (AMY3 RNAi Transgenic lines) which has not been tested anywhere else in the world.

- There are plans to commercialise the GM cowpea (beans) in this year 2018.
 Other GM crops in the pipeline include sorghum and rice.
- The case of the illegally imported GM maize of October 2017 further dashes any hope of a safe biosafety regime.
 NBMA issued a public advertisement announcing the application for importation of GM maize by WACOT LTD-the same company which tried to sneak in the GM products barely a week after it said the illegal goods will be repatriated.
- In December 2017 NBMA issued a permit for the said company to import GM maize into Nigeria for a period of 3 years. This approval may be construed to also permit the release of the seized illegal imports that were to be repatriated. If this is so, the action will fly patently in the face of the law that require 270 days notice before imports.

Blind plunge to failure

- Burkina Faso had a disastrous experience with genetically modified cotton (Known as Bt cotton) because it gave very poor yields and farmers faced huge losses. This same cotton which was abandoned in Burkina Faso in 2016 was the same one NBMA approved for commercial release that same year.
- GMOs are accompanied by a cocktail of chemicals. These chemicals which are produced by same GM seed companies are highly toxic and linked to serious health defects.
- Weeds and pests are fast becoming resistant to the chemicals thus increasing the need for even more toxic and harmful concentrations of those chemicals to control them. Additionally, non-target organisms get destroyed in the process.

Intergenerational Responsibilities

 The impacts of GMOs on our health, environment and economy go beyond

- this present generation.
- GMOs once released cannot be recalled and we lack capacity to manage the impacts.
- It's not just about now, it's about tomorrow. It's not just about Nigeria but it's about Africa.

What Museveni Saw: Lessons from Uganda

- The Ugandan President, Yoweri Museveni recently declined to sign a Biosafety Bill passed by the Ugandan parliament. It is instructive to note that the same president who was loud in demanding that Parliament passed the Bill, had to decline in signing of the bill. What did Museveni see that made him to apply precaution?
- The use of the GMO crops will contaminate the indigenous ones which Ugandan farmers have developed over several years.
- The law would give monopoly of patent rights to corporations and ignore the communities that developed and maintained the original materials or seeds.
- The use of poisons and dangerous bacteria as inputs in genetic engineering must never be allowed.
- GMO seeds should never be randomly mixed with indigenous seeds just in case they turn out to have a problem.
- Labeling of GMOs should be clear and failure on this should attract severe punishments

A call for President Muhammadu Buhari

President Museveni's caution should not be sidestepped by Nigeria and other African nations.

- As a country, we need to take a stand on the technology and that stand must be taken fast.
- It is time for President Buhari to take a look at the National Biosafety Management Act and the biosafety management architecture in our country before it is too late.
- Several loopholes that allow the influx of GMOs need to be blocked and the lives and livelihoods of our people preserved.
- Nigeria cannot afford to have a Regulatory agency that has reduced its tasks to GM application approvals and GMO promotion. The process by which NBMA has been issuing approval for GMO applications need to be critically examined.
- NABDA was set for the critical scientific tasks of development of genetic engineering. Sadly, they have become merely an organ for promotion of GMOs as well as a mere mouthpiece for OFAB an industry-inspired entity that is neither an NGO nor government parastatal.
- While government should invest in research on the viability, safety and sustainability of GM products in Nigeria, the important need to pay attention to agroecological food production and support for small-scale farmers should be intensified.

* + M

GMO

UNRELATED GENE

abelling is mandated by the Cartagena Protocol on biosafety as it relates to Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs).

This should help people to make informed choices but it doesn't erase the concerns about the safety of GMOs neither does it avert the risks to the environment. In a country like Nigeria, labelling is not feasible.

During a tweet chat with the director of the Nigerian Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA) on the 7th of February 2018, the issue of labelling was raised.

A question was asked about how food stuffs e.g. Akara/Moi-Moi (made from beans) or corn sold by the roadside or in local markets in cups and measures will be labelled.

The response of the Nigerian Biosafety Management agency awed everyone: "The seller can put a signboard stating that she is selling GM akara"

CROP







Anyone who understands Nigeria's sociocultural context will know that this doesn't make sense. There is no way the woman/man who is out there to make sales would indicate that he/she is selling GM foods knowing that the safety of such is questionable.

Even if every sales person is enlightened enough to read labels (which is absolutely impossible) and/or buy from a source where they can tell if products are genetically modified or not, who will ensure that there is a sign post at every spot where fried yam, akara or corn is sold by the road side in villages and cities?

This response by the Agency further exposes the laxity with which the issue of biosafety is handled. The agency is promoting this technology based on imported ideas. If any assessments were done at all, they would know that labelling will not work with our structure.

Empty goalpost

In another tweet, the agency admitted that



GM foods were already in our markets meaning that people are already consuming these products even when their safety is not



certain.

It is a wonder what the NBMA is about. The crops that they claim to be ensuring their safety are already in the markets before their safety is certified. When asked how these crops will be regulated for safety, the response was that: "the NBMA enforcement team is currently surveying the markets, acquiring samples and testing them in our GMO detection and analysis laboratory." What happens when/if they confirm that majority of the products in our shelves are genetically modified? How will they be cleaned out? If the agency was focused on ensuring that strict measures are enforced to checkmate entrance of GMOs into the country there will be no question of whether GMOs are sitting in our market shelves. They prefer to promote the same technology which they were made to regulate by saying that GMOs are safe. It is

also a wonder that there are no NBMA officials at any of the Nigerian borders. This was admitted by the NBMA director in an interview with NTA on the 20th of February. To have an effective surveillance on what kind of products come in there is need for the NBMA to monitor the borders closely.

Whose job is it to stop GMOs?

The agency continues to say that their job is not to stop GMOs but to make sure they are safe. Then who will prevent the entry of GMOs in Nigeria? Worldwide, nations are taking precaution against GMOs. Recently, China traders cancelled U.S. corn cargoes on strict GMO control. There must be a prevention and adequate testing before the doors are open to genetically modified products. The agency has not presented any independent tests done to confirm that the crops would not have adverse effect on human health in the long term.

Helio Cadmus, NBMA was not established to stop the entry of GMOs in to Nigeria but to ensure they are safe for Nigerians and the Nigerian environment. Safety assessments are carried out before any permit is granted or rejected. NBMA gives you a choice on the consumption of GMOS

Calmis Asia (1907)

Middle (1907)

True patriotism

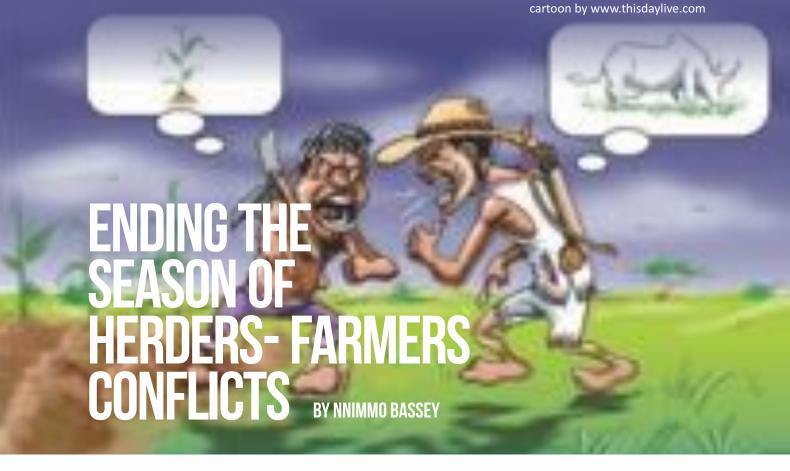
The biosafety agency has tagged civil society organisations which are speaking about applying caution with GMOs as unpatriotic. GMOs are regulated because their safety is in doubt. Why the NBMA grants permits without due consideration to Nigerians, our environment and health is something our

government need to look at critically. To be patriotic is to look out for the interests of the nation and not for personal financial gains. In October 2017, WACOT Nig. Ltd. tried to smuggle into the country genetically modified maize worth about \$9.8 million. The goods were impounded and the NBMA announced that they will be repatriated but barely a week after that announcement, the agency publicised the application for the



said company to import the same maize and approval was quickly granted. This doesn't paint the picture of patriotism. Granting approval to an offending company instead of sanctions only weakens the stakes for efficient regulation of GMOs in the country.

Health of Mother Earth Foundation has called on the Nigerian government to look critically into the issue of GMOs/Biosafety in the country; to take a stand on whether or not they should be allowed. The call is also for the government to consider the biosafety management architecture and the manner in which the NBMA grants permits for importation of GMOs.



he gruesome murder of our brothers, sisters and children in Benue State by herdsmen has taken the level of insecurity in Nigeria to near heights. While some of us were quick to avoid the devastating photos of the carnage as posted in social media, photos of rows of caskets in which the victims were buried etched indelible prints on our souls as a people. The uniformity of the caskets says to us: this could be you.

As each victim was lowered into the grave, their departure marked a strong rebuke to a system that allows these atrocities to be perpetuated. How low can we sink as a people? The need to urgently check the spread of this terror cannot be overemphasized. Hopefully the entry of the military to combat the menace signals the seriousness with which the matter is being considered.

The failure of the system to protect citizens

has been on a downward spiral and continues to be worrisome as responses raise spectres of further insecurity. In recent times, we have had huge debates about the need or otherwise of certain security outfits like the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). To some of us, even without being harassed by SARS, just seeing their officers dressed in casual attires and wielding automatic rifles on the streets raises fears of insecurity rather than assurances of protection.

No matter how one looks at it, appearance of gun toting security officers in casual wears cannot promote security. Anyone could do same. We simply cannot know who is pulling us over when they operate the way they do.

We hope that the mass burial in Benue State serves as a wakeup call for the Federal Government and its security agencies. And we do hope that mass burials do not turn into regular or repeated events, as happened in the case of previously inconceivable suicide bombings.

Responses to the abominable killings in Benue have been both forthright and contentious. Consider, for instance, efforts at informing us that this was not as horrendous as what may have happened in the past simply increase the pains rather than raise any sense of hope that things could change for the better. Such numbers do nothing to calm nerves when it is recalled that 2,500 citizens were said to have been killed by herders in Plateau, Nasarawa, Kaduna and Benue States in just 2016 alone.

Moreover, the notion that migration is due to a population explosion in Nigeria is debatable. The lack of credible population figures and reliance on projections based on dubious figures are grossly unrealistic and cannot be trusted and continue to inflict avoidable harm on our planning efforts. Our larger than life population figure gives us ready excuse for not taking right decisions.

With regard to action responses to violent herdsmen, let's consider one of the proposed actions that would be taken as a long-term solution to the conflict — the idea of creating grazing or cattle colonies across the nation as announced by the Minister of Agriculture. It sounds rather bizarre and raises a number of concerns. Top on the list of concerns is the undertone of the word colony. For most Nigerians, the idea of a colony would be one defined as "a country or area under full or partial political controls of another, often distant country". It may be that the minister was rather using the term in the sense sometimes used to describe animals of the same breed staying together in a closed structure. Whatever the case, the imagery requires further interrogation.

Keeping in mind that colonialism was entrenched by the power of the barrel of the gun, could anyone believe that it is at a period of heated conflict and distrust that colonizing any territory for any purpose be the way to resolve the conflicts?

Unfortunately, the persistent conflicts between pastoralists and farmers are often reduced to incidents induced by struggle for religion or ethnic frictions. While there may be basis for reaching such conclusions, it is clear that pursuing those lines would not lead to a resolution of the crisis. Pastoralist is not a preserve of particular ethnic nationalities or religion.

We can indeed develop pastoral activities across the nation with the mind-set that the business is not patented to only one ethnic nationality. With this understanding, a dedicated grazing area in a particular state would not translate to the ceding of such territories to be colonized by anyone. It should also be clear that grazing isn't restricted to those breeding and rearing cattle. Goats, sheep and other livestock can equally benefit from such developments.

It was from the understanding that the conflicts can best be resolved by tackling the root instigators of the crises, that Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) and the Confederation of Traditional Herder Organizations in Africa (CORET) began a series of engagements with pastoralists and farmers starting from Abuja in September and October 2017. In those engagements, we examined the confluence between pastoralists, farmers, land use, conflicts and climate change. These were considered also from a gender perspective to provide a rounded understanding of the dynamics that throw up different kinds of conflicts in our society.

One of the conclusions from the engagements was that farmers and pastoralists can operate in a mutually beneficial manner.

If the right physical environment is guaranteed, the culture of nomadic herders trekking over huge distances could be moderated in a manner that the movements could be strategic and not necessarily translate to herders trekking all over the nation.

Nigeria needs multiyear environmental management plans with clear targets and strategic action paths.

The fact that southern Niger Republic is greener than parts of northern Nigeria should suggest to us that our approach to environmental management is defective. Here we refer specifically to our management of our vegetative cover and water resources. We tend to see our environment as capable of rapid selfregeneration irrespective of how rabid our rate of consumption of Nature's gifts to us. The result is the reality of desertification in northern Nigeria that we characterize as the downward march or spread of the Sahara Desert. Permit us to pose a simplistic question: if the desert was marching down so mercilessly, how come Niger Republic has not gone completely under the sand?

While the security agents fish out and bring the perpetrators of the Benue massacre to book, it would be useful for the Minister of Agriculture, other relevant ministries, as well as security agencies, to consider some of the resolutions that came out of the October 2017 Sustainability Academy:

- 1. There should be greater engagement of agricultural extension workers by all levels of governments to effectively engage in communicating climate change to farmers and pastoralists.
- 2. Pastoralists and farmers have lived in harmony in Nigeria and can do so now.

The ongoing conflicts are needless and distort development efforts.

- 3. There should be re-orientation for pastoralists and farmers for harmonious co-existence as both are interdependent and their actions can be mutually beneficial.
- 4. The fact that climate change impacts differently on different gender and social groups should be considered in preparing climate action plans.
- 5. The <u>Great Green Wall Programme</u> aimed at combating desertification amplified by climate change through improved use of land and water resources should incorporate pastoralists in their fodder production scheme for sustainable development.
- 6. Government should implement a livestock development policy that aligns with regional and international practices.
- 7. The Federal Government should initiate actions to produce a detailed land use and environmental plan for the country.
- 8. There is need for public-private partnership and scientific re-orientation for the development of pastoralism in Nigeria.
- 9. Herders should adopt the practice of managed intensive systematic rotational grazing as well as ranching.
- 10. Fully integrate gender justice in the brokering of peace and the implementation of all forms of conflict management initiatives
- 11. The Federal Government should create a Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries as is obtained in several other African countries like Ethiopia, Kenya, Cote D'Ivoire, Senegal, Mali, Niger and Tanzania
- 12. Climate change dose not respect geopolitical boundaries and should be tackled with this understanding.
- 13. Take inventory of the all existing grazing reserves, traditional grazing areas, transhumance corridors, major stock routes, review and take appropriate development actions.



DO NOT PLAY POLITICS WITH MY FOOD

