

ISSUE #26 - DECEMBER 2019

# eco ~ INSTIGATOR

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF HEALTH OF MOTHER EARTH FOUNDATION



## THE COMING GREEN COLONIALISM

**THE KIDS KNOW**  
ANOTHER WORLD  
IS POSSIBLE

**WANT REAL CLIMATE AMBITION?**  
KEEP POLLUTING INDUSTRIES  
OUT AND MAKE THEM PAY

**EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES**  
AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS  
FOR AFRICA

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# Home Run



## NNIMMO BASSEY

Director, Health of Mother  
Foundation

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*2019 was a year in which we got really inspired by youths in their push for innovative climate solutions. We were also inspired by fishers who stood firm in their struggles for the protection of marine ecosystems.*

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Weather events in 2019 confirmed that climate change is here with us, no matter how deep into the sands anyone may wish to bury their head. It has been a year when millions around the world stood together to demand climate actions.

The storms came closer home, staring with cyclone Idai that hit Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi.

The year sadly ended in a whimper at COP25 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. With nations dithering and seeking ways to avoid action and responsibility one would wonder whether policy makers see climate change as another arena for speculators, as a carbon stock exchange.

As usual, we bring you reports of our activities and of happenings in the environmental/climate justice space from around the world. Also, in this edition are articles that challenge us all to decolonize our minds as we grapple with the existential problems of climate change, food sovereignty and emerging genetic and climate technologies.

We also bring you a poem by Tekletsadik Belachew and books we believe you should read.

We must continually challenge oppressive narratives, fight coloniality and push ourselves to take liberating positions in the fight to forge the future that we want.

2019 was a year in which we got really inspired by youths in their

push for innovative climate solutions. We were also inspired by fishers who stood firm in their struggles for the protection of marine ecosystems. We thank our regular contributors for their continued support.

We remain grateful to donors who have made it possible for your favourite magazine to reach you every quarter without fail. We request that you send us stories, poems and point us to books that should be announced on our pages.

We also look forward to reading your reactions.

From all of us at HOMEF: have a liberating New Year!

Until Victory!

**Nnimmo Bassey**



# The Kids Know Another World Is Possible



Babawale Obayanju for TellThatStory

**M**ADRID—This year's United Nations climate summit, dubbed "COP25" for the 25th annual "conference of the parties" to the climate negotiations, heated up on Wednesday 11 December as grassroots activists, youth and indigenous leaders protested en masse outside the main plenary hall. As the "Democracy Now!" news hour broadcast live from the convention center, different chants rang out: "Shame! Shame!" and "The people, united, will never be defeated;" in Spanish and English,

and "What do we want? Climate justice! When do we want it? Now!"

The protest was one of many in Madrid, challenging the lack of progress in finalizing rules for the implementation of the 2015 Paris Agreement, the global treaty that is the last, best hope to forestall catastrophic, irreversible climate catastrophe.

"The COP has been moving in a dangerously bad direction," Nnimmo Bassey, the director of Health of Mother Earth Foundation based in Nigeria, told "Democracy

Now!" from the plenary hall protest.

"The protesters here are saying that the trajectory on which the COP negotiation is moving, towards market mechanisms rather than real climate action, is wrong.

The protesters are saying: 'Look, you have to respect indigenous territories. You have to respect the rights of people from less polluting nations, and what we need now is real climate action and not just another talk show.'

The protest was scheduled to directly challenge just such a "talk show" on the summit's main stage, where one of the featured speakers was Ana Botin, executive chairperson of the Santander Group, the 16th-largest bank in the world. Forbes Magazine calls Botin the ninth most powerful woman in the world.

According to Rainforest Action Network's 2019 "Banking on Climate Change" report card, Santander holds tens of billions of dollars in fossil fuel investments, from deep-sea oil extraction to Arctic oil exploration,



OLIVIER DOULIERY/AFP via Getty Images

from fracking to ventures in LNG (liquefied natural gas). Critics have long argued that corporations have polluted the UN's climate negotiations and protests here in Madrid over the past two weeks have hammered that point home.

COP25 was abruptly moved from Santiago, Chile, to Madrid, as nationwide protests against inequality and austerity in Chile prompted right-wing President Sebastian Pinera to cancel the UN climate summit there. Chile retained the mostly ceremonial presidency of COP25. The COP's logo is a stylized clock with the linear outline of Chile forming one of the clock hands.

The accompanying slogan, “#TimeForAction,” is plastered all over the sprawling conference complex and on government buildings around Madrid. But inside COP25, diplomatic decorum and an entrenched bureaucracy cast a pall over the proceedings, masking the urgency of the crisis.

On the front lines of the worsening climate disaster, there is a scant space for polite dialogue. Extreme weather events, made more severe and more frequent by human-induced global warming, are killing thousands, from hurricanes and typhoons to wildfires and droughts. Much of Australia's east coast is consumed by wildfires caused by the global heating. Smoke from the fires has blanketed Sydney, causing smoke alarms to go off nonstop in the city. In Brazil, President Jair Bolsonaro has encouraged burning of the Amazon rainforest, considered the “lungs of the planet” for the irreplaceable, complex ecological systems that it supports.

“We have been attacked in our democracy,” indigenous activist Daiara Tukano from the Brazilian Amazon told “Democracy Now!” from the protest outside the COP25 plenary hall. “We have been attacked in our forest. And we, as indigenous people from the forest, are trying to defend what is left of nature. Indigenous territories defend more than 80% of biodiversity in this world.

Biodiversity is connected to cultural diversity. It is in our knowledge, in our way of life.”

While Forbes may rank the wealthy, Time magazine named Greta Thunberg as its 2019 “Person of the Year” on Wednesday 11 December, just as the protest at COP25 was at its height.

The 16-year-old Swedish climate activist began “school striking” just over a year and a half ago, skipping school on Fridays to stand in front of the Swedish Parliament, demanding urgent action to combat climate change. Her solitary protest inspired millions around the world to take action, building on an already vibrant youth climate movement with dedicated leadership among indigenous youth and other youth of color worldwide.

Greta spoke at COP25's “High Level Event on Climate Emergency” in the morning of Wednesday 11 December. Afterward, scores of youth activists rushed the stage as security tried to escort them off.

They stood, immovable, fists raised in the air. “You can't drink oil! Keep it in the soil!” they chanted.

Their final chant as they walked off the stage: **“We are unstoppable! Another world is possible!”**

*Culled from:*

<https://www.truthdig.com/articles/the-kids-know-another-world-is-possible/>

# The Coming Green Colonialism



We have entered the era of Nature-based colonialism. Call it the Green Colonialism.

By Nnimmo Bassey

**T**he gloves are coming off. The climate crisis in the world is being approached as a mere unfolding change, as business opportunities and not as an emergency that requires drastic actions.

Nations are comfortable to spend decades on talks and pretend they have ample time to procrastinate or deflect actions. However, this is not a time for propping up fictional ideas and carbon mathematics as though the cycles of Mother Earth are ordered according to some calculus or algorithms.

The climate COP25 held in Madrid is drawing to a close as this is being

penned. Not much progress has happened at the negotiations. Indeed, the technocrats who are saddled with actually negotiating the various clauses of the Paris Agreement's rulebook could not conclude work on a number of articles and pushed them over to be handled by the ministers who arrived in the second week. Considering that the ministers are basically politicians, their inputs tended to be weighted heavily on political considerations.

Beginning from the evening of 10 December, a pattern of selective consultations ensued with ministers and not with heads of delegations or negotiators.

Considering that Article 6 of the Paris Agreement remains the thorny matter at this COP, observers feared that some of the ministers will be unfamiliar with the details and may indeed be unable to adequately negotiate it due to its complex and technical nature.

**“**  
*It is clearly not a time for propping up fictional ideas and carbon mathematics as though the cycles of Mother Earth are ordered according to some calculus or algorithms.*  
**”**



Issues expected to be handled by the ministers include adaptation financing in the context of the cooperation under Article 6 and the use of the approaches for other international mitigation purposes; delivering on the overall mitigation in global emissions; and the governance of the framework for non-market approaches.

There is a general tendency for nations to strenuously work towards avoiding responsibility. The current government of the USA shows clearly that nations can simply walk away from the multilateral space and allow the world take care of its problems.

The only snag in this way of thinking is that unlike the nuclear deterrent scenario where nations hoped to beat others by arming themselves and projecting possibilities of utter destruction, the impending climate catastrophe does not offer the

possibility of any nation emerging as the winner or even as a survivor. It is doubtful that anyone can survive extreme temperature increases, neither can anyone hope to survive for long under flood waters.

You would think that this sobering reality would force politicians to have a rethink concerning their posturing at the climate negotiations.

Climate politicians are churning out new seductive words to obscure intentions and to market ideas that would help them avoid both action and responsibility. The narrative merchants bring up concepts such as nature-based solutions (NBS) which, on face value, is hard to fault. How can you reject any action that is based on nature, that respects nature and that works with and not against nature?

The catch is that NBS does not mean any of that. At the COP, there were side events that showcased how to include nature in Nationally Determined Contributions. Another one listed Shell, Chevron and BP as founding members for “Natural Climate Solutions.”

The so-called nature-based solutions include carbon offsetting mechanisms that allow polluters to carry on polluting while claiming that their pollution or emissions are offset by mitigating activities such as tree

planting or corraling off of forests as carbon sinks. Indeed, the NBS can be understood as the wheels of carbon stock exchanges.

When nations speak of carbon neutrality, they are basically speaking of solving the climate crisis through mathematics and not through any real climate action. It does not suggest changes in modes of production and consumption. The same can be said of having Net Zero carbon emissions.

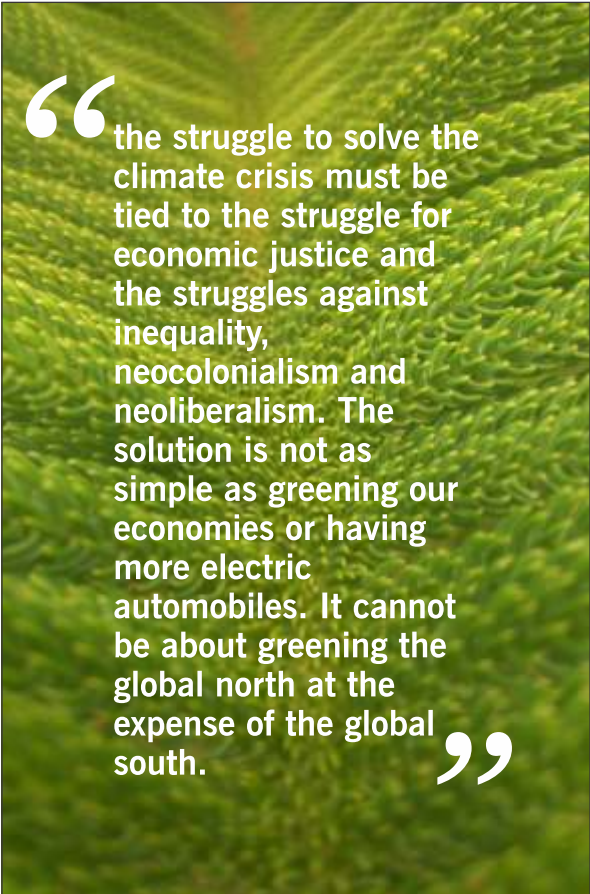
As the climate negotiation drags on, we must remind ourselves that it is essential for us to understand what we are fighting for before we can forge the real solution. The acceptance of carbon offsetting and similar notions as epitomes of carbon colonialism give reasons for worry.

The burden of climate action is being forced on the victims without any regard for historical responsibilities, without regard for justice. This posture rides on the same track as slavery, colonialism, neocolonialism and their cousin, neoliberalism.

Climate activists made a loud noise outside the plenary hall on Wednesday 11 December voicing the critical need for rich, polluting nations to remove their heads from the sands and take real climate actions.

They were urged to quit their push for carbon markets and tricks to aid double counting when it comes to climate finance.

They were reminded that there is a climate debt that has neither been acknowledged nor paid for.



**“the struggle to solve the climate crisis must be tied to the struggle for economic justice and the struggles against inequality, neocolonialism and neoliberalism. The solution is not as simple as greening our economies or having more electric automobiles. It cannot be about greening the global north at the expense of the global south.”**



The investment of \$1.9 trillion in fossil fuel projects and the expenditure of close to \$2 trillion in warfare annually were held up as obscene reminders that contributing a mere \$100 billion for climate finance ought not to give the world sleepless nights if there is any seriousness to use the hours spent at the COP to tackle the root causes of global warming, cut emissions at source, help build resilience and pull the vulnerable from their miseries.

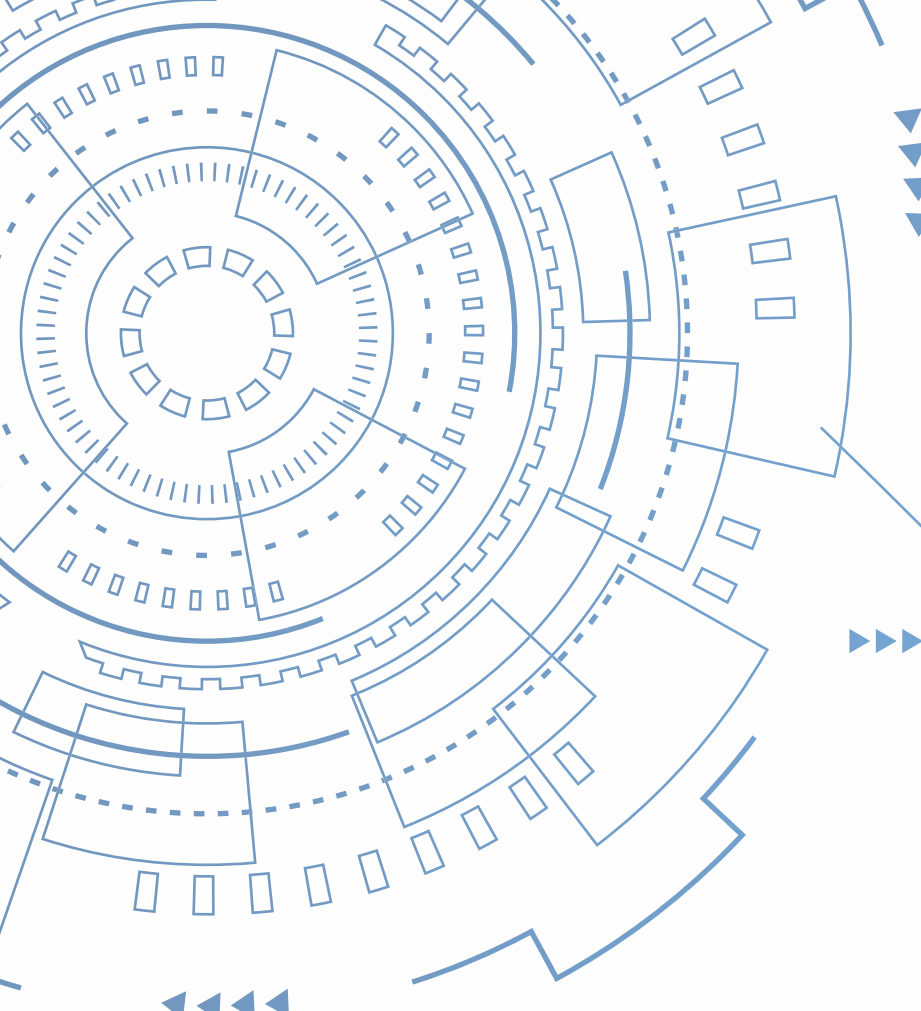
As **Asad Rehman** of War on Want said at the Social Space during the COP, “the struggle to solve the climate crisis must be tied to the struggle for economic justice and the struggles against inequality, neocolonialism and neoliberalism. The solution is not as simple as greening our economies or having more electric automobiles. It cannot be about greening the global north at the expense of the global south.” He warned that anything short of the needed system change is nothing but a precursor of a new wave of green colonialism.

# EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES and their Implications for Africa

By: Joyce Ebebeinwe

**H**ealth of Mother Earth Foundation and ETC Group organized a School of Ecology (SoE) and a continent-wide conference on new and emerging technologies and their implications for Africa. As usual, the twenty participants for the SoE were carefully selected after a review of the several applications received for the session which provided a space to interrogate the emerging technologies and their implications for Africa as well as other socio-economic and development concepts/innovations.

During the SoE session, diverse civil society actors in Africa held a meeting which built on previous twelve months of research on how to create a “technology assessment platform,” relevant to African development needs and aspirations. Participants included members of civil society organisations, scientists, legal practitioners, and faith-based organizations. The African countries represented included Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Togo, South Africa, Eswatini, Cote d'Ivoire, Uganda and Cameroon.



There were seasoned presentations and discussions on a wide range of topics related to emerging technologies. The presentations were preceded by welcome remarks by Nnimmo Bassey, the director of HOMEF, Neth Dano, a policy and development researcher and board member of ETC Group and Peter Tarfa, Director, Department of Climate Change, Federal Ministry of Environment.

The speakers during the 2-day session were Jim Thomas, an active campaigner on technology and co-founder of the 'New Luddites' in the UK and of GEN (UK's network of groups against genetically engineered crops); Zahra Moloo, an investigative journalist, documentary filmmaker and researcher; Nnimmo Bassey, an environmental activist and Director, Health of Mother Earth Foundation, Mariann Bassey-Orovwuje, a lawyer and an environmental, human and food rights activist; Gopal Dayeni, a

social, economic, environmental and racial justice campaigner and trainer; Tom Wakeford, a biologist, action researcher and participatory worker; Ali Tapsoba, an activist and head of the organisation called Terre à Vie in Burkina Faso and Neth Dano.

#### **The presentations covered:**

- .Understanding technologies: traditional, modern, post-modern.
- .Introduction to the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR)
- .How the 4IR affects conservation and biodiversity.
- .The implications of emerging technologies on agriculture and food, including extreme biotechnology and precision agriculture.
- .The implications of emerging technologies on the environment and climate: geo-engineering and extractive technologies.

.Gene drives, an extreme biotechnology targeted at Africa, with Burkina Faso as the entry point and the ongoing sky grabs.

.Biosafety and Bioterrorism

.Biosafety policy and legislative frameworks on the continent, especially with reference to Nigeria.

.The importance and functions of technology assessment platforms, with examples from Asia and Latin America.

The session had focus group discussions that mapped out major global challenges, examined the pitfalls and opportunities in regulation of the emerging technologies and identified sustain-able solutions as alternatives.

#### **The participants noted that:**

.contrary to claims by industry players and their government supporters, technology is not neutral, but rather political and sometimes with conceited objectives.

.Africa has become a dumping ground for new technologies without prior assessments being conducted by governments and civil society groups, and local communities.

.Technologies, such as GMOs, synthetic biology, and geo-engineering, have cultural, sanitary, environmental, economic and social impacts in Africa. They can bring about the disruption of livelihoods on a massive scale.

.Africa is rich in endogenous technologies that can be harnessed to address its socio-economic and ecological challenges. We must not succumb to the warped colonial narrative which insists that Africa is lagging behind the rest of the world in terms of development.

.While mitigation and adaptation are important, what is most relevant is to address the root causes of climate change such as extractivism and over-consumption imposed by neoliberal capitalism and profiteering. Technologies like gene drives and geoengineering technologies are false solutions to complex problems and merely technofixes.

.Agroecology is a viable alternative to agricultural biotechnology/industrial agriculture and works with rather than against nature, ensures high quality and quantity of food production while contributing significantly to the reduction of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

**At the end of the 2-day impactful and interactive session, participants declared:**

a) An urgent need for the establishment of an African Technology Assessment Platform (AfriTAP) which brings together civil society groups working together to track, understand and assess the implications of emerging technologies.

b) That African governments must urgently diversify national economies away from dependence on fossil fuels and transit to renewable energy for all, owned and controlled by the people

c) That seeking public free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of indigenous people and local communities must be a precondition for the introduction of any new technologies in their territories. These communities must also retain their right to say NO.

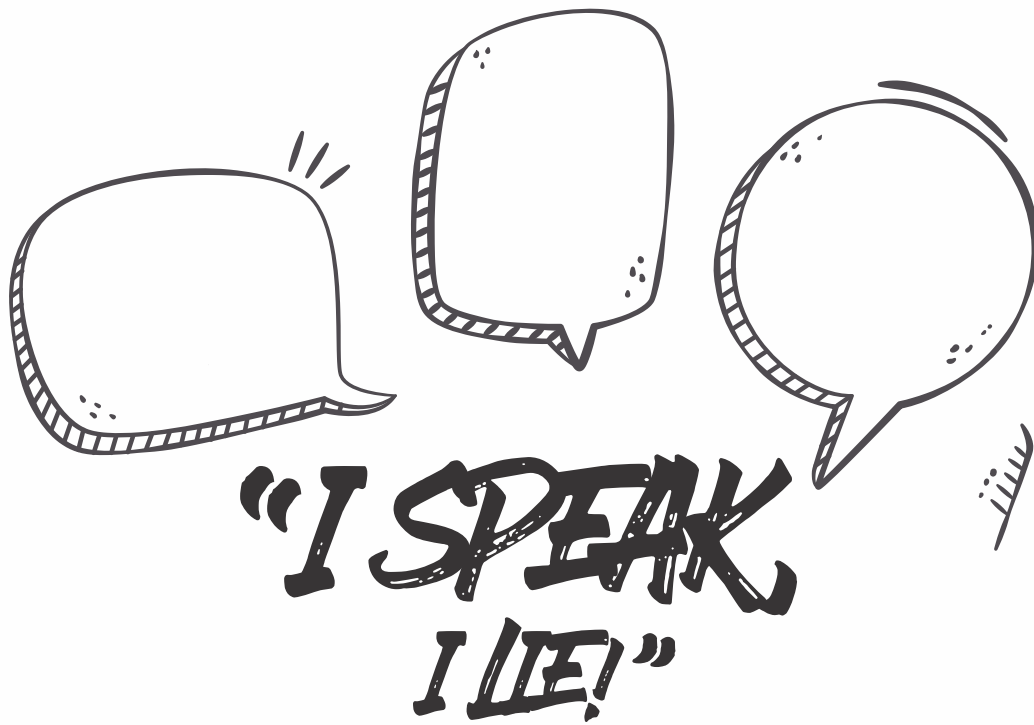
d) A moratorium on the approval

or deployment of any variant of genetically modified organism and urgent continent-wide consultations on these and other emerging technologies.

e) That governments should shift their focus from industrial agriculture as a solution to the world food and climate crisis to agroecology, invest in research on agroecology and support small-scale farmers with the provision of extension services along with infrastructural resources.







By Tekletsadik Belachew

"I speak, I lie!"  
 whenever he speaks, he also lies  
 erasing memory, discarding the past trashing the  
 ancient, constructing brand new lies

"100 years is enough!" prior to Min-yilik, Ethiopia  
 was not!  
 [fast forward ...]

here I am! the sender and the sent – the apostolate!  
 anointer, anointed, anointment  
 I AM ...the electing (voter),  
 I AM the elected (self)!  
 I AM the gazing other (the observer)

"no end for my rule" no boundary of time for your  
 sake, they shoulder me "patience!"

before I, 'Ethiopia proper' never exist! i I am the  
 maker, the marker, the inventor.

my weapon is terror, my weapon is media my  
 weapon is the constitution, the justice court and the  
 par-lama

my weapon is the LAW i write, i interpret, i judge  
 mimicking a colonial narration? "a continent  
 without history and civilization..." prior to the advent

of explorers and 'discoverers', we were not!

then, in the name of civilizing mission, now, in the  
 name of developing a nation.

they (the colonizers & the  
 dictators) made roads for this, we are obliged to  
 offer homages

but we knew in our hearts, it is for more  
 exploitations

tormenting us by fear, ruling us by terror teary of no  
 tear gas but sniper

under the façade of the colonizer emerges, the new  
 nation-state's order the balager is the resident-alien,  
 the stranger once his umbilical cord buried and

connects him with the land

as a signifier of life

now alienated – cut off from "mother-earth", utterly  
 disconnected

let alone feeding family from the fruit of his tilling  
 the soil

no chance to rest his body for the final Sabbath  
 double displacement – both in life and death

'the wretched of the earth'

the peasant, (85 %),

no heroic father, no ancient history or no  
motherland has he  
we are state-orphans  
seeking for adoptions.  
yay, it is 'free-market'  
yet, the “native” is utterly estranged the elite and  
the ex-pat with the dollar are the 'balager'  
the owner, the land grabber – the monger.

resources belong to the rich “bourgeois”  
with the aid of invest-exploiters with the loaners of  
the worldly bankers: World Bank, IMF  
for the sake of the “West”

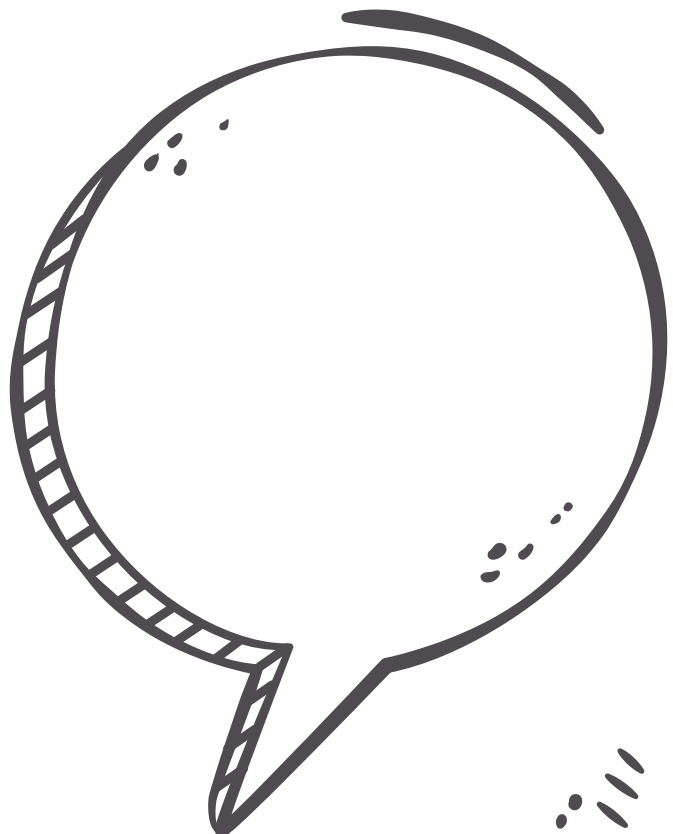
the loaners and donors ... the rest is a “waste” too  
generous in giving out lands and its fruits in  
slathering lives for senseless wars  
uprooting what is indigenous:  
the seed, the plant, the forest, the farmer, the crypt,  
the monasteries, the professor  
spirit of the living and the dead, tormented,  
tortured, mutilated  
he lynched us publicly with insulting tongues we  
are fond of gazing at our artificial images  
via the deformed mirror  
and listening to the power of falsity always  
monotonic and violent  
millions don't count  
we are just percent numbers, nameless, colourless,  
faceless, voiceless, stateless, rootless

i lament not because we are landlocked but  
mentally-shackled,  
not because we are geographically dispersed, exiled  
but culturally displaced, historically uprooted.  
he is our name, our face, our voice our  
representation and our representative as if we are  
like him or he is just like us  
he (single-handedly) colonized us  
as if there were no empires and kingdoms he  
divided us into “tribes”  
in the name of ethnic-federalism/s we happily  
perform our “tribal” dances in ecstasy, our body  
spins  
for the 'unknown' spirits  
they are awaiting for blood, not satisfied with ashes  
sucked by the empire of the vampire donating our  
money-blood  
for the sake of his belly  
he makes us a-hungry  
(angry, hungry and pacify us from both)  
he spoke those “wicked” words of “democracy,”

“development” and “renaissanceeeeeee”  
we echo and re-echo “renaissanceeeeeee”,  
“renaissanceeeeeee”

again we are just numbers singing, 'a resounding  
gong or clanging cymbals'  
behold: the demi-god! re-activating the ... emperor-  
cult once more, listen to the lie  
to the one who acts as if he is Omni ... again, listen  
to his speech-acts;  
“i am immortal!”

***Tekletsadik Belachew is of Concordia Seminary,  
Addis Ababa. This poem was first published in  
CODESRIA Bulletin, Nos 1&2, 2017***



# Activists File Appeal Opposing Exploratory Oil & Gas Drilling off KwaZulu-Nata Coast

Environmental activists have formally appealed against the Department of Mineral Resources' (DMR) decision to grant environmental authorisation for exploratory oil and gas drilling along the KwaZulu-Natal coast.

**A**nouncing their intention to appeal in terms of the public participation process at Durban's beachfront on Monday, a coalition representing 16 environmental groups stretching from northern KwaZulu-Natal to the province's south coast regions outlined their reasons for the challenge. These included concerns such as the risk of a "catastrophic oil spill" to a failure to adequately assess the socio-economic impacts of the drilling as well as inadequate public participation.

The Department's granting of environmental authorisation will allow Italian gas and oil multinational Eni to conduct exploratory drilling in an area of more than 300 km of coastline between Port Shepstone and the industrial city of Richards Bay in the north of the province.

Sasol was originally granted exploration rights by the Petroleum Agency of South Africa (PASA) for what is known as Block ER236 in 2013, and then brought in Eni as a partner.

However, the environmental authorisation had been subject to various delays due to public pressure, including a moratorium by the government to not

award any new licences. Minerals minister Gwede Mantashe lifted the ban in 2018 on the grounds that it would boost investment.

The DMR's award will allow Eni to drill, at its closest point, 62 km from the shoreline and at depths of about four kilometres.

## **Six wells have been approved for drilling**

"For the Department of Minerals to proceed with this application, while understanding the science of global warming, is reckless and ill conceived," said Desmond D'Sa of the South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA), which is leading the environmental coalition.

D'Sa said that the decision to approve the drilling was "premature".

The appeal by the environmentalists would be based on procedural fairness, he said, as all decisions taken to date had been influenced by Mantashe's "swift pursuit of oil and gas development", utilising the Mineral and Petroleum Resources Development Act (MPRDA).





Photo by Riddhiman Bhowmik on Unsplash

KwaZulu-Natal has over 12 000 fishers who depend on the ocean for a livelihood and a tourism and recreational industry whose source of income depends on the ocean, said D'Sa.

The evaluations and recommendations for the authorisation came from the Petroleum Agency SA, whose mandate was to promote, regulate and facilitate the exploration of oil and gas, he said.

"These decisions therefore lose sight of the devastating effect on the environment of oil and gas exploration, and they lose sight of the principle relating to the right to a healthy environment, which is enshrined in the constitution."

D'Sa said that fossil fuel investments of this nature should not be considered in light of the "climate crisis" affecting the globe.

"It is submitted that decisions which continue to perpetuate reliance on oil and gas are irrational and unreasonable. Secondly, the impacts of climate change increase the threat of oil and gas combustion risks and likelihood of impacts from exploration and production activities."

The appeal was submitted to the Department of Environmental Affairs, DMR, PASA and Eni. The deadline for submission was 30 September 2019 but an extension was granted until Monday at 4.30 pm. A final decision is expected within 60 days.

Culled from:

<https://www.all4women.co.za/1870195/news/south-african-news/watch-activists-file-appeal-opposing-exploratory-oil-gas-drilling-off-kzn-coast>

# SENEGAL OFFICIALLY CANCELS ITS CONTROVERSIAL BARGNY COAL PLANT

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**D**AKAR, Senegal, 10th December 2019 – The President of Senegal Macky Sall announced the cancellation of the Bargny coal-fired plant in line with the country's commitments under the Paris Agreement. This announcement has been welcomed by the local communities and activists in Senegal who, for over five years, have strongly opposed and actively campaigned against this coal power plant while pushing the government to invest in renewable energy.

In response to the announcement, Landry Ninteretse, Regional Team Leader at 350Africa.org, said, “In the last three years, 350.org along with local and regional partners have been raising the alarm, exposing the catastrophic human and ecological impacts facing the Bargny, Sendou and Rufisque communities if the project went ahead. We denounced the role of banks such as the African Development Bank, the Compagnie Bancaire de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (CBAO) and the Netherlands Development Bank (FMO), who had financed the project. This decision confirms that the voices of concerned communities and the science calling for a halt to fossil fuels need to be heard by governments.

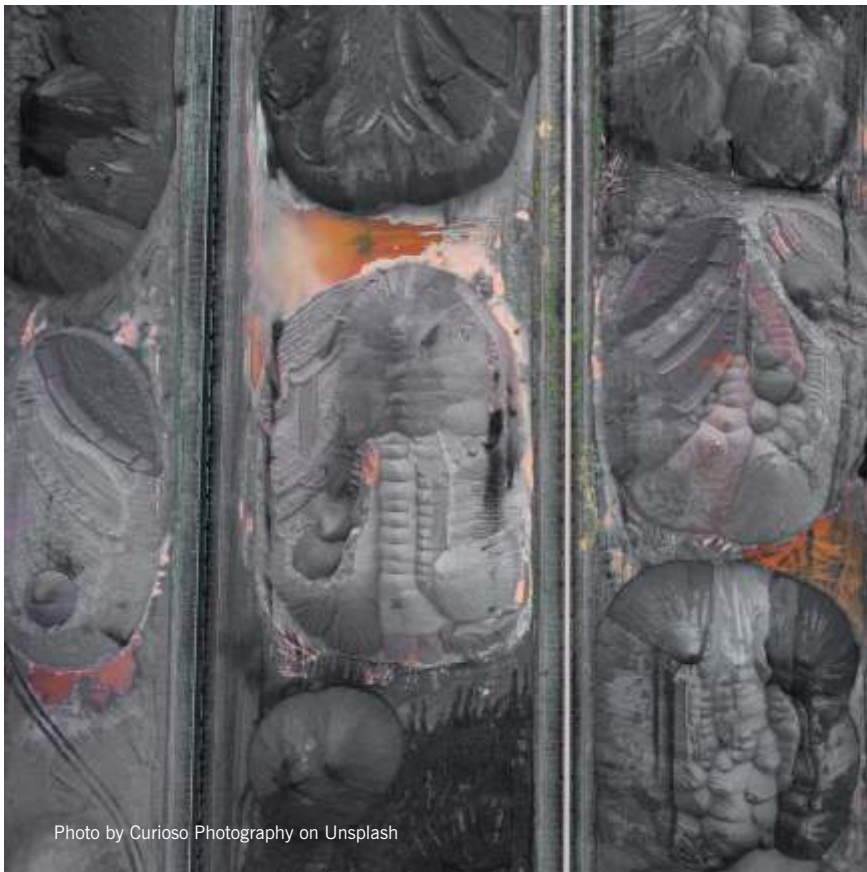


Photo by Curioso Photography on Unsplash

Lamu Coal Plant. Proof that people power is truly unstoppable and that resistance to fossil fuels is rising.

Similarly, the announcement by the African Development Bank in September that it won't fund any coal projects in Africa shows the growing concern and lack of support for fossil fuel projects across the continent and more importantly the fact that the voices of the people demanding greater climate action are now being heard in top-level decision-making organs across the continent.

### **More about the Bargny Coal Project**

Bargny is located on the Atlantic coast, just 15km from Dakar, the Senegalese capital. Bargny is a city that's vulnerable to climate change and massive coastal erosion.

Senegal now has a chance to get on a different, clean path to development that centers on sustainability and justice.”

The cancellation of the coal project comes after a series of technical failures, financial difficulties and conflicts between shareholders, a series of factors which had paralysed the project in the last four months, halting the importation of coal and causing the dismissal of project workers. Also, recently the Tidiane General caliph added his voice as a well-respected religious leader in the country to those of the communities and activists who have been mobilizing against the controversial coal project.

Mamadou Barry, the Executive Director of Action Solidaire International, said, “While we as campaigners in Senegal welcome the presidential decision, we are wary of the 'transition plan' suggested by the Senegalese President that is considering turning the coal plant into a gas facility. We shall also resist this gas facility as it is likely to have similar harmful impacts on the wellbeing of the people of Bargny, Sendou and Rufisque.”

The cancellation of this Bargny Project is the second major coal project to be cancelled on the continent this year, after the National Environment Tribunal (NET) of Kenya cancelled the licence previously granted to Amu Power for the construction of the

With the inhabitants of Bargny being predominantly fisherfolk, it was always worrying that the site of the coal plant lies a few hundred meters from a fish-processing site that employs 1,000 women from the village, a daycare, a health center, and a primary school. It is half a kilometer away from the houses recently rebuilt after the latest storm surge. Having been exposed to the pollution already provoked by the Sococim cement plant which is 1.5 km away, the community members have been, since 2014, organizing and mobilizing in Bargny and surrounding villages to oppose the construction of the coal plant.

They have been organizing demonstrations, marches and awareness-raising events in the last few years, calling on President Macky Sall to take a stand against Bargny coal power plant and to invest instead in renewable energy.

*Culled from: <https://350africa.org/press-release/senegal-officially-cancels-its-controversial-bargny-coal-plant/>*



# Farmers in Southeastern Nigeria Reject GMOs and Call for Protection of Indigenous Foods



By Joyce Ebebeinwe

On Wednesday 20 November 2019, Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) in collaboration with the Network of Women and Youths in Agriculture organised a dialogue with farmers on the food and farming system in Nigeria with a focus on GMOs and their implication on health, the environment and the economy. The dialogue which was held at the cooperative college in Enugu, Enugu State, highlighted agroecology as a viable alternative for agriculture productivity and climate resilience.

In attendance were over 60 farmers (mostly

women) from across 5 states in the Southeast of Nigeria who specialise in farming of various types including crop farming, fish and poultry farming.

Also present in the meeting were government officials including the Enugu State Commissioner for Agriculture, some directors and other officers from the Ministry of Agriculture and officials of the Agricultural Development Programme (ADP).

The Commissioner for Agriculture, Dr Matthew Idu, in his opening remarks stated that the State is committed to improving the agricultural sector, especially in the area of rice and cassava production. He also said that organic agriculture is to be taken very seriously. HOMEF admonished that in the interventions of the State, attention should be paid to the Precautionary Principle of Biosafety which insists that caution should be taken wherever there are doubts regarding the safety of any interventions in the environment because of possible implications for human health. It was also pointed out that the smallholder farmers and their level of knowledge and awareness of newer techniques should be carefully considered in the interventions.

The Programme Manager of ADP, Dr Mathias Onu, buttressed the need to work with farmers, especially to ensure a preservation of our indigenous foods and biodiversity. He added that more needs to be done to sensitize the people on the implications of GMOs, stressing that our researchers should engage with the issues of GMOs and properly inform the people and the government in decision making.

HOMEF's programme officers, Joyce Ebebeinwe and Cadmus Atake-Enade, gave presentations on GMOs and their implications on human and animal health, the environment and on the economy. Highlights from their presentations included that GMOs are not needed in Nigeria as there are more sustainable ways of tackling challenges facing agricultural production today instead of giving the country's food system over to corporate control. Implications examined included the degradation of the soils and the environment which is occasioned by the excessive use of chemicals that accompany several GM crops; the loss of right of farmers to save, share or reuse seeds; the loss of biodiversity caused by monocropping and the potentially dangerous chemicals used on the farms.

Mention was made of the link between the consumption of GM foods and immune disorders, birth defects and cancers especially those resulting from the use of glyphosate-based herbicides.

Also highlighted was the report of the survey conducted by HOMEF which reveals the presence of several foods produced with genetically modified organisms consumed on a daily basis.

The presentations were followed with extensive discussions—one issue that was stressed was how farmers and the public can differentiate between GMOs and non-GMOs. This was identified as a major problem. It was made obvious that while it is important to label genetically modified foods so farmers and consumers can make informed choices, labelling does not address the implications on the economy or the environment, neither will it be effective as food products are mostly sold in cups and measures and in processed forms where sellers will not be able to indicate that their products are made from GM foods.

Lovelyn Ejim, a farmer and the CEO of the Network of Women and Youths in Agriculture in Nigeria, stated that GMOs are no good for farmers. She highlighted examples of the failure of these crops in Burkina Faso, South Africa and India. She stressed that researchers in Nigeria should work with farmers and also ensure that results of such research are shared with the farmers and not hoarded as is mostly the case.

Oluwatoyin Okanlawon, a researcher at the



University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria, spoke on organic agriculture and the opportunities for securing farmers' income and feeding the world. She explained several natural measures used in the control of pests and diseases including the use of neem plants, stating that pesticides are a major hazard to farmers and farm workers particularly in developing nations.

According to Mrs Okanlawon, "In addition to increased resistance to pests and diseases, organic agriculture supports and





enhances ecologically sound systems of food production, increases and stabilizes yields, particularly in marginal lands and combats desertification by decreasing erosion and improving water uptake and retention.”

The meeting highlighted the importance of agroecological farming system in preserving ecosystems and promoting healthy and nutritious foods through the enhancement of soil health. Agroecology (which includes organic agricultural practices) also preserves and promotes farmers' rights to seeds, land and water and is knowledge-intensive, combining farmer knowledge with scientific innovations in response to agricultural challenges.

The major resolutions from the dialogue were that:

- . GMOs are a failure and should be banned by the government.

- . Indigenous varieties should be protected, and farmers should be provided with credit schemes, infrastructural facilities, better access to land and extension services in order to maximize production and increase food availability

- . The government should examine carefully the seeds which are given to farmers, beyond closing of the borders.

- . There should be further sensitisations on the issues of GMOs

- . Food is key to healthy living and hence health workers, researchers and the government should work closely with agriculturists to ensure that food is produced in ways that do not compound health problems.

- . Markets for organic products should be encouraged.

# FishNet Dialogue in Senegal

by Stephen Oduware



**F**ishing plays a pivotal socio-economic role in Senegal. It is the leading sector of the national economy as the main provider of foreign exchange with about CFAF 200 billion in revenues generated per year. The sector represents 30% of total export and employment revenues with about 600,000 people amounting to 15% of the total active population.

Artisanal fisheries account for about 80% of total landings, 60% of supplies to export factories, and about 90% of national fish consumption. Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) in partnership

with the Centre de Recherche sur Droits Economiques Sociaux et Culturels (CRADESC) and the Comité Local de Pêche Artisanale (CLPA) organized a community dialogue in the town of Kayar on November 30, 2019 to interrogate the Senegalese government's decision to embark on an offshore oil and gas exploitation from the year 2020, and to share the Nigerian experience of the impact of oil and gas operations since 1958. This meeting was attended by fishers, the media and CSOs.



Nnimmo Bassey, Director of HOMEF, in his welcome words applauded the fishers in the country for their consistent and excellent organisation as fishers, and for their enormous contributions to the Senegalese economy.

He however stated that what they enjoy from fishing at the moment may soon become a thing of the past when the proposed exploitation starts—saying that the environmental degradation, socio-cultural manipulations, loss of biodiversity and livelihoods experienced in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria will sooner or later be experienced in Senegal if they allow the planned offshore operation to go ahead.

Fatima Diallo, Executive Director, CRADESC, remarked that since the discovery in 2015 and the decision to exploit the gas fields of Saint-Louis and Kayar (both included in the Grand-Tortue complex, which are two main fishing ports), traditional fishermen and other women organizations have been concerned about the production of fishery products and the safeguarding of their jobs.

The meeting was an opportunity for knowledge exchange regarding the impact of oil and gas exploration and exploitation, using the impact experiences from the Niger Delta of Nigeria as a case study. The fishers were taken through aspects of the lifecycle of oil and gas reserve, outlining the impacts of every stage of the cycle on health, biodiversity, environment, livelihoods and wellbeing.

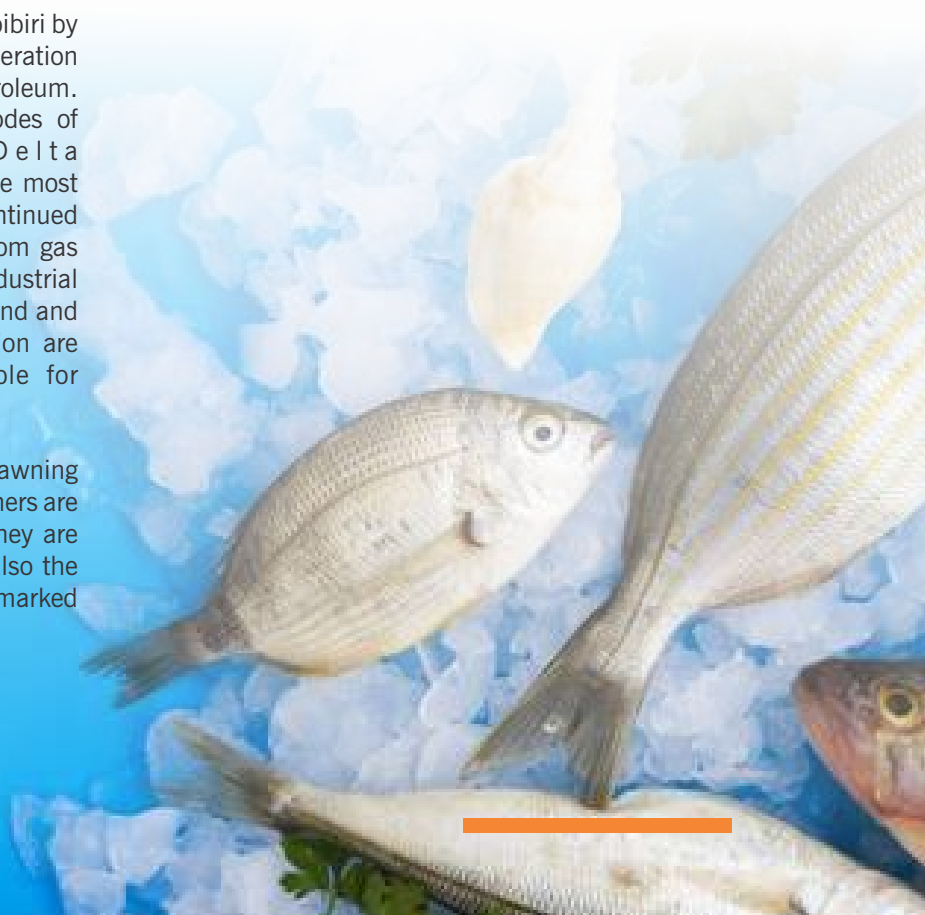
Oil was first found in Nigeria in 1956 in Oloibiri by the then a British protectorate, by a joint operation between Royal Dutch Shell and British Petroleum. This marked the beginning of the episodes of degradation of the Niger Delta environment—famous for being one of the most polluted places on earth. The region has continued to witness varying degrees of pollution from gas flaring, oil spills, and the discharge of industrial effluent into rivers. The impact is on air, land and water! The rivers and creeks in the region are becoming acidic, making it inhabitable for humans and other aquatic beings.

The mangroves that serve a perfect spawning ground for fish have been destroyed and fishers are forced to travel into deep waters where they are often attacked by sea pirates. There are also the issues of restricted fishing around areas marked for offshore activities.

The fishers expressed concerns about the proposed offshore project, probable issues like the loss of economic activities and the future of the actors (fishermen and women) like the almadies of Pirre, reduction in fish production and the increasing illegal immigration of young people, the health effect if the proposed project fails, the level of awareness about the project and the level of preparedness for the new trade to come.

At the end of the dialogue, the fishers resolved that community people's involvement in decision-making moments is sacrosanct. Hence the following resolutions were made:

1. There is need for the creation of a prospective platform that informs and educates the local population about the proposed project and how it will affect the people and the environment
2. Relevant CSOs and CBOs should organize sensitization sessions to inform and warn people about gas exploitation drawing lessons from the meeting
3. There should be more knowledge/experience exchange between fishers in Cayar and fishers in other countries (such as Nigeria) faced with similar challenges of oil pollution.





# PROMOTING BIOSAFETY IN NIGERIA: MEDIA TRAINING AND LAWYERS' ROUNDTABLE

By Joyce Ebebeinwe

On the 26th of November 2019, Health of Mother Earth Foundation organized a training for journalists in Lagos on issues of biosafety, bordering on GMOs, other emerging technologies and their implications for Nigeria. The meeting which had about 20 journalists in attendance charted the way forward for the promotion of biosafety with a focus on the role of the media.

In his opening presentation titled Do We Need GMOs?, Nnimmo Bassey, the Director of HOMEF, condemned the myth that small-scale farmers cannot feed the world, stating that while small-scale farmers provide about 80 percent of the foods consumed globally using a mere 25 percent of the resources in the food production sector, industrial agriculture accounts for less than 20 percent although it takes up about 75 percent of cultivated land.

It was noted that a handful of corporations have cornered the seeds and agricultural inputs market and so concentrated power in their control such that governments, multilateral and research institutions find it difficult to stand up to them.

Also pointed out was that although the producers and promoters of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) push to sell their artificial crops and animals through political pressure and blackmail, illegal introduction and through basket-case biosafety regulatory systems, GMOs are not necessary, especially in Nigeria. They have been shown by scientific studies to not yield higher than natural crops and instead of reducing the use of chemicals as promised, they lead to an increased use as weeds have overtime developed resistance to the chemicals which they are made (by the same seed companies) to withstand.

In his words, “our small-scale farmers require support, including through extension services, rural infrastructure, storage facilities and access to markets. Nigeria should focus on subsidizing agriculture beyond the wasteful and harmful fertilizer distributions that are actually sabotaging our food system.”

There was a call for vigilance on the emerging new variants of GMOs such as synthetic biology, gene drives etc. It was noted that whereas some GMOs are engineered to reduce the need to weed frequently or to kill off pests, the new variants, among other things, are essentially extinction GMOs. They try to upturn nature, are prone to being weaponized, and introduce traits with unpredictable and dire consequences for the future.

Speaking on Biosafety in Nigeria: The Act, the Regulation and the Challenges, Ifeanyi Nwankwere, a human rights advocate and legal practitioner, highlighted the importance of the Precautionary Principle on Biosafety which advocates caution where there are threats of irreversible damage to human or environmental health as a result of an innovation. This session considered the National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA) Act and the regulation of GMOs in Nigeria. It concluded that there needs to be an urgent review of the Act to close gaps such as the conflict of interest seen in the boards of the regulatory agencies such as the National Biotechnology Development Agency (NABDA) and other promoters of GMOs but excludes smallholder farmers. Other areas of the Act that need amendments include public participation and access to information, mandatory provisions on strict liability and redress, and risk assessments.

It was noted that while it is important to label food products of genetically modified organisms, the action will not be effective in protecting the rights of consumers due to the manner in which food is produced, sold and consumed in Nigeria. Agroecology was presented as a viable solution to the challenges of pests and diseases, food availability and climate change. According to the presentation by Joyce Ebebeinwe, HOMEf's Project Officer on Hunger Politics, agroecology is an applied science which uses ecological concepts and principles for the design and management of sustainable agroecosystems where external chemical inputs are replaced by natural processes such as natural soil fertility and biological

control.

It was said to be highly knowledge intensive (based on scientific as well as traditional and farmer knowledge) and uses a set of practices and modes of production that enable abundant and quality production while preserving the soil for future generations. A major principle of agroecology is biodiversity, and this is key in its ability to ensure resilience to climate change impacts. It was also shown that agroecology helps to trap carbon in the soil, thereby reducing the concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere.

#### **Some of the reactions from the participants:**

*“When we eat the Bt Cowpea (genetically modified with a gene from the bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* to act as pesticide), we are actually consuming pesticides. The issue of GMOs is very pertinent, and our government must take it seriously” ~Michael Simire (EnviroNews Nigeria)*

*“This training has opened our eyes to some of the inherent issues with our food” -- Ganiyu Obaro (New Telegraph)*

Participants agreed on the need for sustained awareness creation on the subject. During a group session, participants practically demonstrated their role as media practitioners by identifying a story idea on the subject, drafting a pitch, making a list of people to be interviewed, listing locations to be visited and suggesting headlines.

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In a similar vein, HOMEF organised a roundtable with legal practitioners in Abuja on 27th November 2019 with a focus on the legal issues around GMOs and the emerging extreme variants. This meeting concluded with each participant making an informed commitment to the promotion of biosafety and the protection of the rights of the people to safe food and environment.

Jackie Iketuonye, a botanist and Country Representative, Bio-integrity and Natural Food Awareness Initiative, speaking on GMOs: The Case of Cowpea/Maize and the Mounting Threats on our Food System and

Biosafety, stressed that Nigeria has the capacity to feed itself and address whatever challenges there are in agriculture without giving in to the colonization and corporate control of our food system.

Mariann Bassey-Orovwuje, a lawyer and an environmental, human and food rights activist, spoke extensively on synthetic biology and gene drives and their implications for Nigeria.

Some of the issues with synthetic biology were explained to include the far-reaching impacts on agricultural economies, especially for producers without information or resources to respond to sudden shifts in natural resource supply chains, substitution of natural commodities and products, destabilization of natural product markets, disruption of trade, and displacement of jobs and livelihoods. Gene drives were explained to be products of a technology that spreads irreversible genetic modification across whole population of species.

Reference was made to the case in Burkina Faso where a thousand genetically engineered mosquitos have been released in a village called Bana.

Gene drives present a unique challenge for risk assessment as potential impacts on ecosystems and human health cannot be fully assessed without deploying it. Other concerns include its impact on biodiversity and the possibility of being weaponised. Other presenters at the roundtable were Ifeanyi Nwankwere and Joyce Ebebeinwe, who spoke on the Act/Regulation of Biosafety in Nigeria, and Agroecology respectively.

It was resolved at the end of the meeting that the NBMA Act be reviewed such that it can adequately protect the rights and interests of the people. Also it was resolved that there should be a stricter surveillance of our borders to check the illegal importation of food products of GMOs and more efforts should be made to educate consumers on their implications.

The meeting concluded with the setting up of a legal taskforce for the promotion of biosafety in Nigeria





# POLICY NOTE ON GMOS IN NIGERIA (Part 2)

By Daramfon Bassey and Yeside Dipo-Salami

This policy note has been broken down into two parts. Part 1 was featured in the last edition of eco-Instigator; so go read it

The publication dealt extensively with issues bordering on international and regional assessment on GMO use, GMO use in Nigeria, and the dangers associated with GMO crops. Here is the concluding part of the policy note..

## Background

The World Bank projects that food demand will rise by at least 20 percent globally over the next 15 years, most especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and East Asia. A number of means have been advocated by scientists, corporations and donor agencies to ensure food security globally, one of the most prominent recommendations being the need for increased and widespread cultivation and production of genetically modified organisms (GMO) crops.

A Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) is an organism that has had its deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) altered or modified in some way through genetic engineering. In the first-generation genetic engineering, scientists remove one or more genes from the DNA of an organism, such as bacterium, virus, animal or plant and “recombine” them into the DNA of another organism.

For instance, genetic scientists have transferred genes from a bacterium known as *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) into the DNA of crops. The Bt genes express a protein that kills insects. Transferring the genes allows the corn to produce its own pesticide.

Genetically modified foods have been on the United States (US) market since the 1990s, with the introduction of the failed “Flavr Savr” tomato species that was engineered to ripen more slowly.

This technology has been met with a great deal of controversy.

Most European countries such as Northern Ireland, Switzerland, Bulgaria, France, Germany etc. have stringent laws that regulate the importation and development of GMO crops. As at 2015, over 30 countries globally had banned genetically modified (GM) crop cultivation. Presently, Canada, Spain, Portugal, Brazil, and the United States of America are among the countries with lax GMO rules and have big markets for the production and supply of GM crops. Countries such as Switzerland, Germany, France and Italy specifically banned the cultivation of GM crops but have no restrictions on importation.

## GMO Mitigation: Socio-Economic Risk Analysis

Though GM champions sell the promise of GM crops as the second green revolution and the silver bullet that will solve hunger on the continent, analysis of the implications of the cultivation of GM crops in Africa makes it clear that the growing of GMO crops is not the solution to food challenges in Africa. Farmers on the continent already have effective approaches to seeds and other agricultural

practices, which are far more environmentally and farmer friendly than GM.

Traditional African farming systems have developed an incredible diversity of seed varieties. So by pushing for the adoption of GM seeds that need fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides, agribusinesses are eroding Africa's crop diversity. Additionally, about 80% of small-scale African farmers have for decades saved their seeds for the next season largely to save cost and because of the value of their seeds. Also seed sharing amongst neighbours, relatives and friends is a cultural norm in many African communities. Most biotechnology companies prohibit farmers from saving their on-farm produced seeds for the next season and from sharing them via elaborate contracts, agreements and conditions imposed by these multinational companies, thereby jeopardizing these cultural and important practices.

According to a study, crops fare much better in an environment where soil and water are conserved in composted land than on land that has been pumped full of fertilizer and GM seeds. African countries have the potential to feed hundreds of families using their own indigenous seeds and techniques—and this model has proven to be more efficient and productive than GMO cultivation.

Instead of adopting this unproven technology, African countries should enhance investments in agricultural research that focuses on the specific and indigenous issues that affect farming communities by providing fair trade and improved food processing and marketing systems, improving rural infrastructure, providing farmer-friendly credit schemes, providing low cost irrigation systems and rural training to sharpen the skills of local farmers in food production and processing.

## Agroecology

A viable alternative that has been advocated for by scientists, grassroots organizations, civil society organizations is the adoption of agroecology. Agroecology is a type of agriculture that focuses on producing long-term crops and livestock that make the best use of nature's goods and services while having minimal effects on the environment.

This practice thrives when it works with local ecosystems, for instance, the improvement of soil and plant quality via available biomass and biodiversity. Agroecological farmers seek to improve food yields for balanced nutrition, strengthen fair markets for their produce, enhance healthy ecosystems, and build on indigenous knowledge and customs.

In addition to food production, this agricultural practice is also concerned with water conservation, reducing the use of fertilizers and pesticides, promoting biodiversity, improving economic stability of farms and the improvement of farmers' techniques and quality of life.

Some of the common techniques include the cultivation of crops that create their own nutrients to reduce the use of fertilizers, crop rotation, crop mixing, and drip irrigation etc. Some of the benefits of agroecology include contribution to environmental conservation, public health safety, prevention of pollution, promotion of biodiversity, economic benefits to farmers and benefits to the environment.

### **GMO-Free Nigeria Alliance**

The GMO-Free Nigeria Alliance, a network of organisations and individuals who share a common concern about the threats of GMO products to the country's food and agricultural systems, has been very vocal in advocating against the production and distribution of GMO food products in Nigeria.

The objectives of the Alliance include taking concerted actions towards the ban of GMO products in Nigeria, Facilitating information exchange on the threats of GMOs, promoting agroecology and food sovereignty has superior alternative, enhancing the capacity of small-scale farmers, producers, fisherfolks and consumers against the use of GMOs, and interrogating, contesting and rejecting policies, laws and actions that endanger human and animal health, the environment and biodiversity.

In 2018, The Alliance in partnership with Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF), and the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) organized a rally that had over 35 civil coalitions in Abuja in participation. The rally was to draw attention to the unbridled permitting of GMOs by NBMA and to draw attention to the illegality of importing or producing or marketing GMO products in the country without the approval of the regulatory agency.

### **Case Study of GMO contamination:**

The StarLink case illustrates the danger of GMO contamination. StarLink is a variety of GM maize authorized in the United States only for animal feed purposes. In 2002, however, Friends of the Earth campaigners discovered StarLink in "Taco Bell" taco shells, a maize derived food product. This led to over 300 Corn products being recalled

across the United States despite StarLink being only planted on 0.4 percent of total US corn acres. This contamination was also detected in food shipments to Japan and South Korea in 2000 and 2001 as well as food aid to Bolivia in 2002.

Another case that highlights the danger GMO use is the Liberty Link Rice contamination crisis of 2006. Liberty Link rice was a GMO rice variety developed by Bayer CropScience. The rice was designed to be tolerant to Liberty, the brand name of Bayer's glufosinate-ammonium herbicide, and was not intended for commercialization. However, in 2006, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced that the GM rice had contaminated commercial rice seeds. In another case, the local chapters of Friends of the Earth Africa between 2006 and 2007 conducted an independent monitoring and testing in Nigeria, Cameroon, Ghana and Sierra Leone in partnership with an independent laboratory in the United States. The tests confirmed the presence of Liberty Link Rice 601 in Ghana, Sierra Leone and Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

The importance of food security cannot be over emphasized, but the negative outlook surrounding genetically modified crops outweigh any positive ones. For the short term it may seem like the issue of food insecurity in Africa can be quickly tackled with the use of GM technologies, but with recorded factors such as no yield advantage, contamination, increased use of pesticides, extreme cost as well as the various health risks associated with GM crops, it will be in the best interest of African countries, most especially Nigeria, to learn from other countries that have banned the cultivation and importation of GM crops. It is clear, with the number of countries that have refused to use this technology in its food production, that the cultivation of genetically modified crops is not sustainable for our environment, and that practices such as agroecology including the cultivation of crops that create their own nutrients to reduce the use of fertilizers, crop rotation, crop mixing, and drip irrigation are the way to go to promote biodiversity and tackle food insecurity on the continent.

*\*Daramfon Bassey – Leads the Civil Society and Sustainability portfolio at Clean Technology Hub*

*\*Yeside Dipo-Salami – Leads Stakeholder Engagement and Business Development at Clean Technology Hub*



Photo by Paddy O Sullivan on Unsplash

# A FOREST IN THE CITY

## How Climate-Conscious are You?

Ako Amadi

**I**n both scientific discourse and in conventional media communication, we are often frustrated by the interchanging usage of the closely related terms, 'global warming' and 'climate change.' The processes are complicated, but it suffices to state that global warming causes climate change. It is indeed a science to simplify science. The former results from excessive accumulation of greenhouse gases, chiefly carbon dioxide in the atmosphere; the latter is responsible for progressive environmental disasters that endanger life, property, and livelihoods.

Thanks to the digital revolution, it has become easy via the ubiquitous smart phone to google up technical jargon and popular slogans anywhere and make sense of their intricate linkages. Additionally, it is important that readers look up 'ecological

footprint' and 'carbon footprint,' which actually reflect the state and modulation potential of national, group and individual contributions to global warming.

In recent months, there have been massive climate protests and rallies in country capitals. Because Nigerians are not interested in such things, we wonder what the fuss is all about.

In reality, climate change has become the greatest problem in the civilization of the 21st century. If the 16-year-old Swedish girl, Greta Thunberg, has enough grasp of climate change science, so can all of us. All nations on the planet are impacted by global warming and all countries and cultures must play a role in the mitigation of global warming and adaptation to climate change.



While industrialized countries should largely take greater blame for causing global warming, what should worry us more is the fact that the poorer nations will be disproportionately endangered by climate change.

Global warming is the resulting distillate from a centrifuge of economic growth and reckless environmental degradation. There are apocalyptic indices, no doubt, but in truth it is a matter of life and death which we cannot leave to governments. Evidence is incontrovertible, and there is hardly an issue over which experts are more in agreement than climate change. Climate change doubters have now shrunk to an infinitesimal minority.

Today, climatological changes in one portion of the planet are likely to cause havoc in a distant geographic environment. A change of currents in the South Pacific could remotely trigger off temperature anomalies in West Africa that can result in heavy rainfall and floods in Nigeria. It is for this reason that the fight against global warming has progressed in joint international operations.

We all have a stake in combating climate change. The attack strategy is basically two-pronged: mitigation of global warming through alternative, energy-efficient, and less polluting industrialization by the rich nations targeted at reducing emissions of carbon dioxide; and adaptation by all countries to the impacts of climate change.

Because plants absorb carbon

dioxide in the chemistry of photosynthesis, every tree you plant or cut down has an impact on the budget of carbon dioxide in the global atmosphere.

Planting more than 500 billion trees globally could remove 25 percent of existing carbon from the atmosphere, a recent study has found.

Nigerian cities must be filled with vegetation that will absorb carbon dioxide, check floods and soak up excessive rainfall and flash floods, but also provide breeding habitats for birds and pollinating bees, beetles, and butterflies. We have no choice but to create urban forests for our own safety. And it will cost next to nothing.

Are you interested in ecological footprint in terms of the number of hours you use the air conditioner, the quantity of fuel consumed by the jeep and generating set?

Are you worried about how many single-use plastic bags you take home from the supermarket?

Do you talk to your children about climate change? Have you thought of replacing your well-manicured lawns with a vegetable garden?

Are there trees and shrubs in

your compound?

Have you practiced separating domestic waste – empty bottles, plastics and paper from biologically-degradable kitchen waste to enable composting with the latter?

Have you thought of reducing the amount of meat you consume, based on the fact that compared with a 100g portion of vegetables, a 50g chunk of red meat is associated with at least 20 times as much greenhouse-gas emitted and 100 times as much land use?

Are you considering installing solar panels on your roof top?

Any reader unable to answer 50 percent of these questions in the affirmative constitutes a climate change liability, and not the solution to the problem.

**Ako Amadi** studied marine science, international development and nonprofit management at Kiel and Kassel universities in Germany, and at Harvard. He was Head of Marine Biology at the Nigerian Institute for Oceanography, Director of Nigerian Conservation Foundation, and Technical Advisor/Analyst with the Canadian International Development Agency, Abuja





# BEQUEATHING A HOT INHERITANCE

By Nnimmo Bassey

**T**he arrival of the Paris Agreement in 2015 as the outcome of the Conference of Parties (COP15) was received as a major milestone in efforts to tackle global warming. As has been the case with the implementation of policy and multilateral agreements of this sort, deadlines were set for certain steps to be taken.

Recall that the MDGs included goals of halving extreme poverty, halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing free universal primary education by the year 2015. The year 2000 was also taken as a watershed for many issues to be resolved. Indeed that year became rather mythical.

For the Paris Agreement, the years 2020 and 2025 have taken on heightened significance. The same can be said about the year 2050 and the turn of the century at 2100. The thing is that these milestones come to pass rather quickly, sometimes much faster than we would prefer. Parties to the Paris Agreement gave themselves the target of reviewing their commitment to reduce emissions after five or ten years. Their commitments are captured in what is termed Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). The import of that agreement is that by 2020 or 2025 nations have to review and upscale their NDCs.

To ensure that no nation gets caught napping on the commitments, the United Nations Secretary General convened the Special Climate Summit in September 2019. That summit was aimed at getting nations to give an indication of their seriousness in taking climate actions. Indeed, to help governments see where they stand in the build-up to the review of their commitments by 2020, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) issued an important assessment in a report appropriately titled *The Heat is On*. That report while sounding optimistic revealed alarming shortfalls in the manner in which nations are taking the looming climate catastrophe.

In an opinion article titled *Nigeria Must Lead on Climate Change* published in *Daily Trust* on 30 September 2019, Mohamed Yahya, the UNDP Resident Representative in Nigeria, took a broad look at the implications of climate change for Nigeria and examined where Nigeria stands with regard to increasing ambition through the NDCs and highlighted ways by which the nation can show climate leadership. His article saw the seven pillars for climate action enunciated by President Buhari during the United Nations General Assembly as realistic and as offering the country the opportunity to take up a leadership role in climate action. He rightly noted that for this to happen, action must match the declaration. We note that although the President outlined his points under seven sections, there are multiple action areas embedded in those points and with the pledge of continued support from agencies such as the UNDP, it will be a missed opportunity if

the ideas are left hanging without being implemented.

We should note also that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issued another special report in September 2019 focusing on the impact of climate change on oceans and the marine ecosystems and dependent economies. In 2018 the IPCC had issued a report showing the huge difference that will exist between a 1.5 degrees Celsius temperature rise above pre-industrial levels and a well below 2.0 degrees temperature rise. Indeed, the alarming conclusion of that report was that the world has a mere twelve years to take serious actions if climate chaos is to be avoided.

The report, *The Heat is On*, shows that there is a still a huge gap between intention and actual actions in the climate change arena. It shows that the most ambitious and forthcoming nations are the most vulnerable ones who at the same time are the least culpable in the league of nations responsible for stoking the atmosphere with greenhouse gases. This is a very significant finding that confirms that climate burden is being borne by poor nations both in terms of impacts and necessary actions.

According to the UNDP report, “of the 112 nations revising their climate plans, 75 are leading by example. Almost all of them are developing nations.” Some of these nations are proposing to increase their ambition in terms of transitioning from polluting energy sources as well as embarking on adaptation actions for national preservation.

For Nigeria and many other vulnerable nations, climate action is largely predicated on the availability of finance. The promise to provide \$100 billion per year from 2020 as climate finance is not anywhere close to being realizable as rich nations are dodgy over the matter. In fact, it is estimated that the 1.5 degrees pathway requires an investment in the energy sector to the tune of \$2.4 trillion between 2016 and 2035. If losses due to climate events are added to that we can see that there is no ambition with regard to climate finance.

The industrialized nations who are largely responsible for the crisis are hardly showing short-term actions, an indication that they may be seeing the problem as somewhat distant.





Charlotte Sullivan, for UNEP

An additional reason for worry is that these nations are mostly planning to be “carbon neutral” by the year 2050. Carbon neutrality or “net zero” carbon are terms that should raise alarm signals because they indicate a determination to continue with business as usual or to continue with polluting activities while finding ways to offset the pollution.

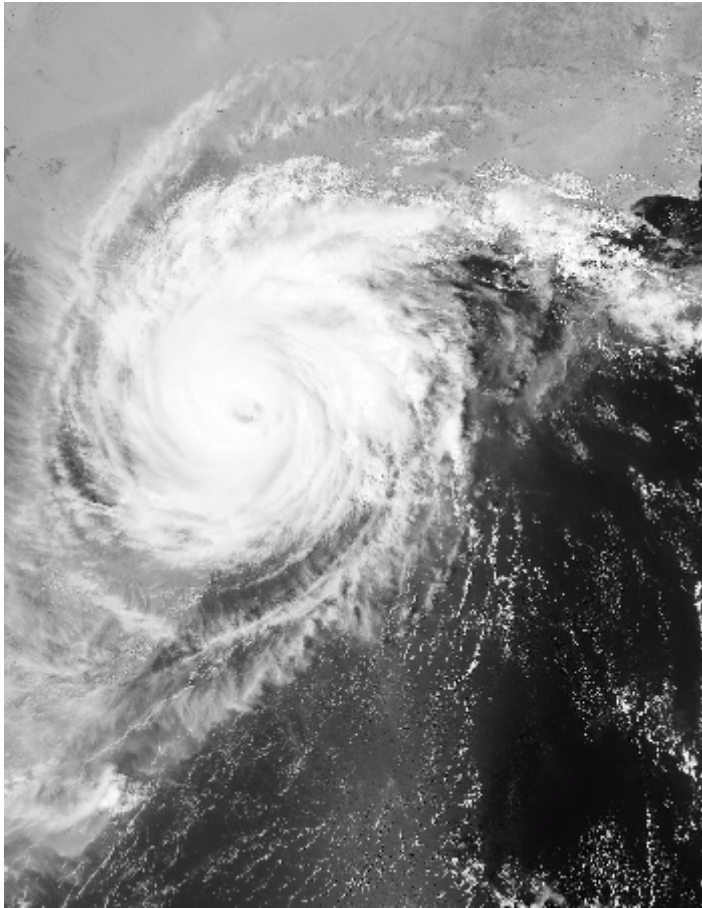
A nation can achieve “net zero” carbon emission without taking any action beyond, for example, laying claim to ownership of carbon stock in trees in forests with the stand that the carbon in the trees are equal to the carbon they pollute through dirty activities. That makes them carbon neutral or positions them as net-zero carbon economies. Unfortunately, nature does not work on the basis of mere carbon arithmetic. And, unfortunately, the entire concept is largely speculative and is not fool proof. If a country had calculated its carbon neutrality based on the carbon in trees in the portions of the Amazon that got razed, what would be the validity of their claim? There are yet others that bank on technofixes to achieve the so-called net zero status.

The concept of common but differentiated responsibilities and different capacities should be put into practice. The industrialised nations definitely have to do more to reduce emissions than the less industrialised ones whose activities

have contributed less to the carbon emissions. Nations should not only be required to indicate what they wish to contribute in terms of emissions reduction, rather the Paris Agreement should be amended to require nations to make mandatory emissions cuts based on science and not have them indicate mere intentions to act.

The demands of young people for real climate actions can no longer be ignored. Recent youth climate hubs held across Nigeria showed that our youths are enthusiastic about taking climate actions, are loaded with ideas and merely need enabling platforms to unleash their innovative ideas and energies. Without a mandatory shift from fossil fuels and without taking necessary actions, the older generation are set to bequeath a fiery inheritance to the children. And the children are right to insist that that is not reasonable.





# INDIAN OCEAN CYCLONES HIT INDIA AND COUNTRIES IN AFRICA

Sonali Narang

**H**urricanes, cyclones and typhoons are all types of tropical storms. Well, they are all basically the same thing, but are given different names depending on where they appear. Hurricanes are tropical storms that form over the North Atlantic Ocean and Northeast Pacific.

Cyclones are formed over the South Pacific and Indian Oceans. Typhoons are formed over the Northwest Pacific Ocean. Several factors are necessary to the forming of cyclones: strong and homogeneous winds in altitude up to 15km, high humidity and sea surface temperature higher than 26°C in the 60 metres upper layer.

This temperature heats the air and provokes great water evaporation from the Ocean to the atmosphere. Scientists remain prudent regarding the link between these hurricanes and climate change.

It seems that warmer sea surface temperatures tend to generate longer and more intense cyclones. However, this causal link can be established based on a high number of cyclones: on average, these extreme disasters might be more frequent and intense as planetary temperature increases

Extreme weather events are a regular occurrence in the Southern Africa and Indian Ocean region. They are becoming more frequent and intense as a result of climate change. The Indian Ocean cyclones, which killed over a million people and affected livelihoods and coastal resources in 14 Asian and African countries, highlighted the need for coastal protection against cyclones and other hazards, including storm surges.

A number of countries have called for the restoration of coastal forests to improve protection of coastal areas. However, it is difficult to provide specific parameters for coastal forests (i.e. width, density and biological characteristics) for effective dissipation of the energy of storm waves and cyclone-force winds because the potential for damage depends on many variables such as the location and the nature of each cyclone incident.

The 2019 Indian Northern Ocean cyclone season is an ongoing event in the annual cycle of tropical cyclone formation. The North Indian Ocean cyclone season has no official timeline; however, cyclones tend to form between April and December, with two peaks in activity in May and November of each year. An increased frequency of high intensity storms in the Indian Ocean should raise alarm bells because most countries in Africa and a country like India are not well prepared to handle the consequences.

The season's first named storm, Pabuk, entered the basin on January 4, becoming the earliest-forming cyclonic storm of the North Indian Ocean on record, tying with that of the 2014 season. Pabuk entered the basin from the Gulf of Thailand as a cyclonic storm. Its name was assigned by the Japan Meteorological Agency. Pabuk affected Thailand, Myanmar and the Andaman Islands.

In March, tropical cyclone Idai made headlines as one of the most severe storms to have made landfall in Mozambique and impacted Zimbabwe and Malawi. In Zimbabwe, the floods exacerbated an already existing food

security crisis and a volatile economic situation, affecting almost 3 million people. Estimates suggest that more than 1,000 people died from cyclone Idai and another three million in need of humanitarian assistance.

This makes it the deadliest tropical cyclone ever to have made landfall on the southern African subcontinent. After Idai, Eline was the strongest—though not the deadliest—cyclone to have hit the southern east African coast. Cyclone Idai was followed six weeks later by tropical cyclone Kenneth, which impacted Comoros, Mozambique and Tanzania. Kenneth, in many regards, took the region by surprise. The storm was the northernmost tropical cyclone to make landfall on Mozambique, and the first to make landfall on Tanzania.

It occurred very late in the season. Most cyclones in the region occur from January to March. It was also unusual for the Mozambique Channel to experience two severe tropical cyclones that made landfall within one season.

Fani became an extremely severe cyclonic storm on April 30, killing 89 people between Odisha and Bangladesh; Fani caused \$1.812 billion in damage. The cyclone affected Sumatra, Nicobar Islands, Sri Lanka, East India, Bangladesh, Bhutan. In early June, a strong pulse of the Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO) led to the development of another cyclonic storm, Vayu, which formed on June 10 in the Arabian Sea near the Maldives. Vayu affected Northern Maldives, India, Southern Pakistan, and Eastern Oman.

The Deep Depression BOB 03 affected East India and Bangladesh. It was formed on August 7, 2019(?) before the strike between East India and Bangladesh and it has made landfall along the north Odisha-West Bengal coastline. According to Odisha Sun Times Bureau (2019), flooding across the state affected about 130,000 people, 2,081 homes, and 14,332 people who required evacuation.

### **Hurricanes in a warming world**

The areas of South Asia are the low-lying coastal regions around the Bay of Bengal, mostly vulnerable to hurricanes. Hurricanes' high wind speeds, intense rainfalls and storm surges (unusually high sea levels) destroy lives and property and can leave areas devastated.



Winds, often travelling at more than 117 kilometres per hour, remove or seriously damage makeshift houses. High intensity rainfall over a relatively short period (up to and above 50 centimetres over three to seven days) can cause serious flooding and major crop loss. It could also lead to loss of lives and property if it causes reservoir collapses and landslides.

But the most destructive part of a cyclone is the storm surge at the front of the storm which pushes up to high levels as it moves inland. At the head of the Bay of Bengal, where the coastline becomes restricted, storm surges can reach a staggering 12 or 13 meters and kill many people.

### **Vulnerable populations**

The people most vulnerable to hurricanes around the world include those with limited economic resources, low levels of technology, poor information and skills, minimal infrastructure and unstable or weak political institutions. Such groups are not fully able to prepare for, or protect themselves from, hurricanes, nor are they able to respond and cope with their effects.

These people are low-cost communities, ethnic minorities, women, children, disabled, low-income people, people in debt and people isolated from transport, communication and health services infrastructure. When a category four

hurricane hit the Godavari delta region of eastern India in November 1986, various marginalized groups responded differently to the hurricane's impact. For example, poor female agricultural labourers working in flood-damaged rice fields had to sell their few possessions and become maids in nearby villages, while some had to migrate to other paddy regions in order to survive.

Tens of thousands were displaced from their homes. In Mozambique during cyclone Idai, thousands of infrastructures were badly damaged or destroyed, including at least 57 critical health facilities, roads, bridges and other logistical routes that were cut off for many days, severely hampering the search and rescue and relief efforts. Long-term risks from cholera, malaria and measles to safe delivery for pregnant mothers continue to rise throughout an enormous area including not only Mozambique but parts of neighbouring Zimbabwe and Malawi as well.

By some estimates, at least \$1 billion in property damage has been inflicted upon these three countries. Each is more poorly placed than most countries to bear the burden of sudden shocks from natural disasters, particularly tropical cyclones. In terms of financial and human costs the 2018-19 cyclone season is now the worst ever recorded for the southern Indian Ocean region

There is every chance that hurricanes will do more damage in South Asia and Africa in the future as population densities increase in coastal areas. The number of people at risk may also rise if hurricanes become more intense as the world and oceans warm up.

### Precautions

Several kilometres of coastal forests are required in order to significantly reduce the devastating impact of the storm surge. Mangroves are more efficient at attenuating surface waves and wind as well as providing protection against erosion. There are ways to make the likely impacts of hurricane rise less damaging in the region. One solution is to improve the physical structures that protect people. For example, many new hurricane-resistant shelters are being built along the coast of eastern India. Deaths from hurricanes will certainly decline if more local people can be encouraged to use the shelters.

Improvements in government-built early warning and evacuation procedures will also help to save lives, although access to these may be limited because many communities suffer from isolation, language barriers, and poor transport and communication (including radio/phone) systems. Still, because of improvements, albeit slow, in the introduction and deployment of such systems, hurricanes that would have killed 10,000 people in Andhra Pradesh in the late 1970s kill around 1,000 today.

Governments and international agencies can also do a lot more to mitigate storm impacts through rehabilitation policies such as providing basic relief (food, shelter, cooking oil and clean water). It is also crucial that affected communities get better health services, since the spread of water-borne diseases (like typhoid and dysentery) after hurricanes often kills far more people than flooding, landslides or even storm surges.

EU funding provided people in need in Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Comoros with food, shelter, healthcare, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) as well as logistics support to reach isolated and cut-off areas. In Zimbabwe, in addition to helping people affected by floods, EU funding supported people affected by the food insecurity crisis.

Shishir Dube, of the Centre for Atmospheric Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology, suggests investing in detailed maps of areas vulnerable to cyclone damages to save lives in

Indian Ocean countries. Countries vulnerable to cyclones and storm surges are aware of the issues and very detailed vulnerability maps are available for many developed nations, like Australia and the United States.

But countries like Bangladesh, Myanmar, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and most countries in Africa lack the data and technology to produce such maps. Investing in both technology and data collection will help vulnerable countries develop the detailed physical vulnerability maps needed for efficient evacuation strategies. These are investments that can reduce the death toll of Indian Ocean cyclones in these vulnerable regions of the world. Overall, it is imperative for international community and national governments to boost key investments and innovations that will make countries around the Indian Ocean more resilient to the worst impacts of cyclone/hurricane.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS



•Decolonizing our  
Narratives, Warri

•Power Alternatives, Lafia

•Biosafety Conference 2020, Abuja

•School of Ecology:  
Blue Economy Blues, Lagos





# Open Letter:

## Call for a UN treaty to end fossil fuels

By Vishwas Satgar

*For more than 20 years, the United Nations has failed to hold fossil fuel corporations accountable. There is an urgent need for an 'End Fossil Fuel Treaty' that can be added to the Paris Climate Agreement and which is based on the principle of climate debt owed to all of us by fossil fuel corporations.*

*This is an open letter to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres.*

Dear Secretary-General Antonio Guterres,

The recent UN Climate Action Summit which you convened in New York has been a disappointment .

Major carbon-emitting countries are not rising to the challenge. These governments do not have excuses given that for more than 20 years they have been informed by the UN International Panel on Climate Change about climate science and growing urgency. On the streets, climate justice movements have been doing the same.

The problems with UN Climate multilateralism have to be engaged with openly and honestly. In this regard, it is important to share with you a demand made to the UN by the children, youth and climate justice forces that took to the streets for #GlobalClimateStrike on 20 September in South Africa.

However, before I get there it is important for you to understand my orientation to the climate crisis. I am writing to you from a society in which youth unemployment (aged between 15-24) stands at 55%. Hope for many young people has been stolen by Nelson Mandela's party, the African National Congress (ANC). Widespread looting of state resources by many in the ANC has deprived large parts of the post-apartheid generation a place in democratic South Africa.

When I was 11 years old in 1980, my family home was surrounded by apartheid police who detained my elder brother for his anti-apartheid activism. As a child, I was terrified for what would happen to my elder brother given that many were being killed in detention. I was moved by this injustice and attempted a school boycott the next day. The boycott did not last long but it sparked an uncompromising commitment to social justice and emancipation which has stayed with me for almost four decades as an activist. I continue to feel a deep sense of inter-generational solidarity, given my politicisation at a young age. Hence, I am deeply concerned about the bleak economic future faced by our youth and these concerns are exacerbated when I think about the intersection with a worsening climate crisis. In this regard, Greta Thunberg's powerful call for urgent action at your recent summit cannot be ignored.

Let me also be open about my ideological approach to the climate crisis. I have a climate justice perspective which has largely been excluded from the mainstream discourse in the UN system. It has had its strongest expression among movements struggling against extractivism, for climate jobs, food sovereignty, transition towns, solidarity economies, rights of nature, zero waste, socially owned renewable energy and generally system change.

My climate justice orientation goes back 20 years when I worked on an eco-village in a township community and contributed to the Green-House project in the inner city of Johannesburg. I brought my ecological consciousness into my academic work and designed a postgraduate course on Empire and the Crisis of Civilisation, almost a decade ago. This has enabled me to expose my students to the various socio-ecological crises plaguing our world, including the climate crisis.

In 2011, I took 120 of my students to the Conference of the Parties (COP17) Summit in Durban. We marched for a climate justice future and handed out pamphlets to delegates going into the conference, appealing to them to ensure they take the fate of human and non-human life seriously. I also participated in the Peoples Space at the COP20 Summit in 2014 in Lima, Peru. I spent time with some of the leading climate justice activists from the Global South grappling with systemic alternatives which were not being considered inside the UN negotiations.

We knew that after the Copenhagen COP (2009) we were defeated by the fossil fuel lobbies and pro-business agendas of most governments. The high point of the first cycle of climate justice activism was the Cochabamba Peoples Summit (2010) in Peru, which the UN also disregarded.

One cannot help but wonder: if the UN listened to climate justice movements over the past two decades, where would the world be today in terms of the climate crisis?

So, ecological politics and more specifically climate crisis and justice are not new to me. On Friday, 20 September, one of our main #SAClimateStrike targets was a protest outside the corporate offices of Sasol, the 45th highest carbon emitter in the world. I was proud of the children and youth gathered at this event and about 18 other such events across South Africa.

This was historic for South Africa. Besides affirming the scientific urgency of the climate crisis, these mobilisations affirmed the democracy deficit in climate policymaking, both in South Africa and at a UN level. One of the demands made to Sasol was for a just transition plan to be developed so that the country knows how Sasol is going to ensure we achieve a net-zero emissions target while ensuring that workers and affected communities benefit in this process. The South African government has failed in this regard and neither has the UN Paris Agreement compelled the likes of Sasol to put forward such a plan.

Despite South Africa being committed to the Paris Climate Agreement since 2015, according to Afro-Barometer, 54% of South Africans have not heard of climate change. This includes rural residents (63%), women (58%) and citizens without formal education (65%). The failure of the Paris Climate Agreement to engender urgency in South Africa is patently clear. Climate negotiations are elite negotiations, despite the climate crisis affecting all life forms on planet Earth. This disconnect between the UN system and local civil societies is an expression of the democracy deficit in climate negotiations and is certainly going to engender further conflict with increased planetary heating. In South Africa, climate crisis governance is performative and routinised. South Africa has a few policies on climate change, including work being done on an adaptation strategy.

These policies are not mainstreamed into governance. Moreover, the failure of the South African government's climate policy commitments is also expressed through a failed response to our current drought (2014 to the present). The El Niño-induced drought in South Africa (intensified through climate change) has been the worst in the history of the country. The ANC government only declared the drought a national emergency in early 2018, after our food system has nearly collapsed.

According to climate scientists in South Africa, the entire water system that the country relies on, including the Katse Dam in the Lesotho highlands, can handle a five-year drought. We are now in the fifth year of drought, and the Katse Dam, one of the main feeders into the industrial heartland of South Africa, has levels sitting at 16.9%. This is a serious crisis with “day zero” a looming possibility for the densely populated province of Gauteng (over 12 million).

Yet the ANC government is maintaining a carbon-based development path, including building one of the largest coal-fired power stations in the world, promoting fracking, offshore gas extraction and the importation of gas from Mozambique. South Africa continues to also have oil interests in Saudi Arabia, Angola and even in conflict-ridden South Sudan. The Paris Climate Agreement is not stopping any of these.

Actually, despite the excellent science from the International Panel on Climate Change, particularly the 1.5C report of 2018 and more recent work done on the risks, costs, benefits and consequences of addressing 1.5C, the ruling elite in South Africa are afflicted with cognitive dissonance. This is more than climate denialism but actually plain insanity. From the standpoint of the urgency raised by children across South Africa, we have an irrational and irresponsible ruling elite class that has not comprehended the implications of IPCC science. Despite the diplomatic narratives, self-congratulatory discourses and sensational headlines, after the Paris Agreement was put in place, the UN process to tackle the climate crisis is not efficacious and is facing a legitimacy crisis.

In my view, there are three reasons for this.

First, the Paris Climate Agreement is not legally compelling for signatory countries. The principle of voluntary co-operation has completely undermined the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. There is no regulated push for nationally determined targets to be achieved, which would have tackled immediately the major carbon-based industrial powerhouses on the planet. This is the triumph of neoliberal international relations, in which states are even understood as competitive market actors and therefore have the freedom to choose whether or not to act on the problem. Ironically, this is happening at a time when the eco-fascist Donald Trump is deepening the crisis of the liberal intellectual project, including in its neoliberal incarnation.

Second, the entire UN system is founded on the primacy of nation-states. The nation-state is a product of the emergence of capitalist modernity, secular nationalism and the imposition of Western colonialism. Sovereignty has a chequered and dubious history which I do not want to get into, but just to say, the consensus among many critical international relations scholars is that the marketised neoliberal state has a functionality shaped by the sovereignty capital and is extremely weak to deal with democratic pressures arising from deep inequality.

The third wave of the 20th century has also stalled in this context. Fossil-fuel-producing African states are some of the most illiberal on the African continent and they will certainly not empower their citizens to understand, let alone shape, the climate policies and just transitions required in their countries. These countries are trapped, “resource cursed” on one side, and worsening climate crisis on the other. Mozambique, Nigeria, Angola are all examples. The Paris Climate agreement with its present approach is not providing a way out for these countries.

Third, the carbon budget approach central to the COP process, while useful, merely expects countries to manage emissions through setting targets and implementing mitigation and adaptation measures. There is a huge gap in this logic.

This has to do with holding nefarious fossil fuel corporations (gas, oil and coal) accountable. While divestment campaigns have attempted to put pressure on shareholder-based fossil fuel corporations, this has not gone far enough, and as long as there are profits to be made, as expressed in the global energy mix, in which coal still dominates, with gas also beginning to be included, fossil fuels will not disappear any time soon.

In the Global South where about 77% of fossil fuel reserves are controlled by state corporations from Petrobras, China's state-owned companies as well as the fleet of India's state corporations, divestment of shareholders will likely not work.

The COP negotiations have not locked in fossil fuel corporations (state and non-state) in terms of their just transition plans. Pinning down fossil fuel corporations is crucial to give momentum to decarbonisation of all other sectors in the national and global economy. This is a civilisational and intergenerational necessity. There is an urgent need for an “End Fossil Fuel Treaty” that can be added to the Paris Climate Agreement, under Article 6 of the agreement, dealing with mitigation, and particularly Article 6.9 which seeks to elaborate a framework for non-market approaches. Such a treaty has to be based on the principle of climate debt owed by fossil fuel corporations to all of us. This will go a long way in addressing the weaknesses I have identified above, the failure of the UN process to hold fossil fuel corporations accountable, for more than 20 years, and it will ensure we move with greater haste to a peaceful resolution of the climate crisis.

Of course, this might be ignored by the UN, but this is how we framed the challenge in our memorandum handed over to Sasol:

A National and Global Call to #GridlockCarbon on May 1st, 2020 – 1.5C is Not Negotiable

We will be back next year to assess progress on Sasol's just transition plan but also to confront all other carbon corporations, investors and government institutions. Today is the start of an ongoing and rolling action to #GridlockCarbon.

Hence we call on South Africa and the World to stand with us on 1 May 2020 to #GridlockCarbon corporations everywhere.

On 1 May 2020, we will stand together with workers in South Africa and the world to demand:

1. Ambitious just transition plans from all carbon corporations and polluters so we accelerate the realisation of net-zero emissions and prevent a 1.5C overshoot.
2. No new investments in oil, gas and coal.
3. All governments to withdraw subsidies from fossil fuel industries and redirect this money to socially-owned renewable energy transitions.
4. The UN establish an “End Fossil Fuel Treaty” which ensures fossil fuel corporations pay the world a carbon debt for the harm they have caused, poor countries are compensated for a problem they did not create, including poor countries with fossil fuel reserves, and the oil, coal and gas industries are shut down in the next 10 years or sooner.

1.5°C is not negotiable. Our common future is in jeopardy and we are ready to fight for it. People and planet before profits.

Together with the children, youth, workers and citizens in the climate justice struggle in South Africa, we look forward to your response.

***Dr Vishwas Satgar is an Associate Professor of International Relations at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), editor of the Democratic Marxism book series, principal investigator for Emancipatory Futures Studies, Board Chairperson of the Cooperative and Policy Alternative Centre and co-founder of the #ClimateJusticeCharter process. He has been an activist for almost four decades.***

Culled from: <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2019-09-25-open-letter-call-for-a-un-treaty-to-end-fossil-fuels/>



# Why the Sudd wetland should be protected:

An exploratory essay

Bior K. Bior



**T**he Sudd wetland has always been our protector, both economically and physically for millennia. Historically, the Sudd, which is an Arabic word for barrier, has always frustrated adventurers whose intentions were to subjugate our unsuspecting populations. For instance, in 60 AD, the Roman Emperor, the notorious Emperor Nero, sent an expedition to Lower Egypt, a region which later came to comprise the Sudanese state, to hunt for the riches of the Nile basin.

Although the Roman legionnaires who were commissioned by the emperor made it successfully to the source of the Nile, their ordeal was extraordinary and when they arrived back in Rome, they firmly advised their emperor against venturing into such a wilderness. If these Roman legionnaires weren't frustrated by the Sudd swamp, the recorded history would have been different for our people. They would have been subdued and enslaved like other peoples all over the known globe who came in contact with the Roman imperialists.

Fast forward, during the successive Sudanese civil wars, the civil population in Southern Sudan sought refuge in the Sudd swamp to escape the Sudanese military expeditions. Many people, including this author, are alive presently because of the Sudd wetland. The Southern wildlife also escaped into and sought refuge in the swamp when they were threatened during the war. Many animal species exist today because the swamp protected them from poaching and hunting.

Economically, the Sudd wetland is indispensable for the livelihoods of the fishing and pastoral communities living around the Sudd, noticeably the Dinka, Nuer, and Collo. The economic survival of these communities is inextricably linked to the health and survival of the Sudd wetland. If the Sudd wetland was to simply vanish today, the livelihoods of these communities will be drastically changed, let alone the rich biodiversity that will be unquestionably lost. Losing the Sudd will be a tragedy of astronomical magnitude for the people of South Sudan and the world as a whole.

Currently, the Sudd wetland is challenged and threatened in so many ways.

(1) The Jongei Canal which was meant to divert water away from the swamp carries some serious environmental and ecological implications which need to be fully studied and understood. Rushing into its resumption, as it has been rumoured lately, will be an ill-advised undertaking.



(2) Oil exploration is another existential threat facing the Sudd wetland. Currently, there are ongoing oil drilling activities in/near the Sudd wetland, and as a result, there are already signs of this fragile ecosystem being degraded by the oil waste.

If oil exploration is encouraged in the Sudd, this wetland of international importance will be lost due to environmental degradation caused by oil pollution. As a nation, we really need to think hard about our priorities.

Since the Sudd Wetland has been identified by the UNESCO as a wetland of international importance, the government of the Republic of South Sudan has the obligation under the international laws to see to it that the Sudd is protected from any environmental abuse. Stopping oil exploration in the Sudd will be a vital step in the right direction.

However, legal instruments need to be instituted to make sure that this vital and fragile ecosystem is legally buffered from any environmental abuse

***Bior K. Bior holds a PhD in cells and Molecular Biology  
is the founder and Executive Director of Nile Initiative for Health and Environment (NIHE),  
an environmental and public health research think-tank operating in Juba, South Sudan.***





# WANT REAL CLIMATE AMBITION?

Keep Polluting Industries Out and Make Them Pay

Patti Lynn, Nnimmo Bassey, Lidy Nacpil

**T**he industries that have fuelled this crisis should have no part in dictating the solutions—rather, they should be made to pay to address the massive damage they have caused and to finance real solutions to the crisis.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres convened a climate summit (in September 2019), hoping it would spur ambitious actions by countries around the world. While the summit laudably galvanized people, organizations, and governments globally to gather in New York City, unfortunately, Secretary-General Guterres and many others demanding urgent actions are missing critical pieces of the puzzle. No truly ambitious solutions or actions can come to fruition when fossil fuel, agri-business, and other polluting industries are at the table. The industries that have fuelled this crisis should have no part in dictating the solutions—rather, they should be made to pay to address the massive damages they have caused and to finance real solutions to the crisis.

Without these pieces of the puzzle in place, we know what we will get at this summit: proposals that will set us firmly down the path of increased global warming. For example, carbon markets and offsets are sure to play a big role. These are false solutions that enable Big Polluters to continue burning fossil fuels and devastating the earth under the guise of climate actions.

This is particularly galling as the Amazon burns and people in the Bahamas recover from the death and destruction left by Hurricane Dorian.

“Holding these industries liable can unlock hundreds of billions of dollars to help finance the most ambitious, most equitable, and most just solutions we have.”

It is also galling because truly ambitious solutions are out there. Communities from the frontlines of climate change—those who have done the least to cause the crisis—have long proposed and advanced ambitious and equitable ways to address this crisis. For example: keeping fossil fuels in the ground, stopping deforestation, and implementing an equitable transition to 100 percent renewable energy.

What countries need to be doing is bringing such people-driven solutions to the climate summit. Just imagine what could happen if all the power and resources gathered in New York this week were focused on the quickest and most equitable ways to end fossil fuel extraction and transition completely to renewable energy. That would be true ambition and action.

This kind of ambition is exactly what people are demanding—and it will only be possible when polluting industries are not obstructing the process. For example, the International Emissions Trading Association (IETA)—one of the Big Polluters' most prominent trade groups founded by BP and includes Shell and Chevron among its members—is concurrently hosting a two-day “carbon forum” promoting “business-driven climate solutions.” If government leaders and civil society groups were truly serious about ambition, they would boycott the forum, knowing that such a forum is designed to advance false solutions leading us to a world where warming far exceeds safe limits.

In reality, these polluting industries, their front groups, and the governments representing their interests (like the U.S.) have spent more than 20 years in the UN climate treaty process delaying, watering down, and blocking solutions to effectively and equitably address climate change.

So, it's no surprise that they are doing the same during the UN summit.

And that's why it's vital that the movement to implement a conflicts-of-interest policy in the UN climate treaty succeeds. But removing the obstruction of Big Polluters and trade associations like IETA from policymaking is just the first step toward ensuring true climate solutions. Holding polluting industries liable for the damage they have caused is just as vital.

Take the fossil fuel industry: over the past few years, media exposés have revealed that corporations like Exxon knew for decades that burning fossil fuels would lead to climate change. The fossil fuel industry then spent decades and hundreds of billions of dollars manufacturing doubt about the causes of climate change, discrediting science, and buying political influence. It ensured decades of increased emissions accompanied by stagnated climate policies.

There is a groundswell of support in the US and beyond to make the fossil fuel and other polluting industries pay for the damage they have caused. Holding these industries liable can unlock hundreds of billions of dollars to help finance the most ambitious, most equitable, and most just solutions we have. Communities in the frontlines of climate change did not cause the crisis, but they are paying the highest price. They

need and are owed funding to implement real solutions that will actually turn the tide toward a just response to this global crisis. The UN Secretary-General and policymakers alike must wake up to the fact that polluting industries and their backers should no longer be allowed to obstruct climate justice. Rather, we must make them pay—and ensure those funds are used to respond to the enormous damage already done and implement the solutions we need to forge our way to a just, livable future for all.

*Culled from:*

<https://www.commondreams.org/views/2019/09/23/want-real-climate-ambition-keep-polluting-industries-out-and-make-them-pay>

*“Holding these industries liable can unlock hundreds of billions of dollars to help finance the most ambitious, most equitable, and most just solutions we have.”*





# Letter to the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo

**From: FEDERATION OF COMMITTEES OF INDIVIDUAL FISHERMEN OF THE LAKE EDWARD, (FECOPEILE) CONGO DR**

***Object: Transmission of the petition saying: “No to the exploitation of oil and other threats in the Lake Edward and the rest of the national park of the Virunga to contribute to the struggle against the climatic warming , no to the kidnapping and the insecurity in the cities and villages in the Virunga landscape. Yes to the promotion of responsible fishing, the non-polluting renewable energy and ecotourism for a lasting and sustainable development in order to contribute to the peace and stability in the Eastern part of the Congo DR.”***

We have the distinguished honour to remind you about our letter No 002/SG-KKMJ/FECOPEILE/2019 transmitted to you on February 19,2019.

We, individual and artisanal fishermen on the Lake Edward in the national park of the Virunga, united within the Federation of Committees of the Individual Fishermen of the Lake Edward, kindly remind Your Excellency about the petition which was signed by Eight thousand and eleven (8, 011) Congolese people and people of other nationalities on the occasion of the 6th Edition of the Amani Festival 2019 held on 14-19 February 2019.

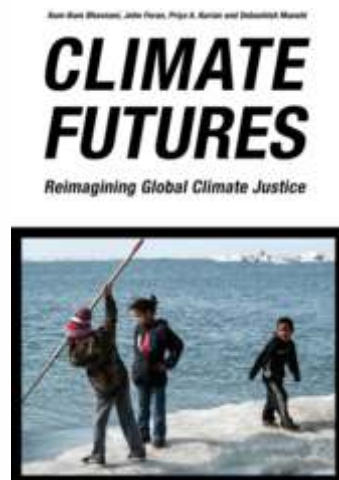
These signatures expressed the resolution of the festival participants to preserve the

natural ecosystems of the National Park and World Heritage Site, and Lake Edward in particular. The resolution was in view of the enormous and innumerable ecosystem services which Congolese people and all humanity have benefited from the region over the years.

As a reminder, the petitioners had accompanied the fishers and the population of North-Kivu to campaign for the preservation of the exceptional biodiversity of the National Park of the Virunga, the fishery resources of Lake Edward in particular and the insurance of the security and peace in the Virunga landscape in the Eastern region of Democratic Republic of Congo saying:

***Continues on Page 48***

# Books You should Read



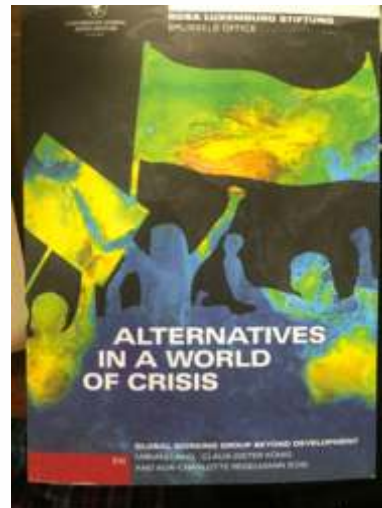
## **Climate Futures: Reimagining Global Climate Justice.**

Edited by Kum-Kum Bhavnani , John Foran ,  
Priya A. Kurian , and Debashish Munshi

Published by Zed Books, 2019

Approaching the issues of climate change and climate justice from a range of diverse perspectives including those of culture, gender, indigeneity, race, and sexuality, as well as challenging colonial histories and capitalist presents, Climate Futures boldly addresses the apparent inevitability of climate chaos.

Bringing together insights from interdisciplinary scholars, policymakers, creatives and activists, Climate Futures argues for the need to get past us-and-them divides and acknowledge how lives of creatures far and near, human and non-human, are interconnected.



## **ALTERNATIVE IN A WORLD OF CRISIS (2ND EDITION)**

Edited by Miriam Land, Claus-Dieter König and  
Ada-Charlotte Regelman

Published by Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, 2019

Since World War II, the narrative of development has been a very effective instrument in expanding capitalist social and economic relations into the postcolonial world.

In the name of development and modernization, a broad variety of other models of being in the world and understanding it have been labelled as poor, backward, and obsolete. The essays in this book show that seeking alternatives beyond development means seeking alternatives beyond this civilization that has led us into this crisis.

**Continued from page 46**

- No to the exploitation of oil in Lake Edward and the rest of the Virunga National Park in contribution to the struggle against the global warming.

- No to the kidnappings and to the insecurity in the Virunga National Park, on Lake Edward and in the cities, towns and villages in the Virunga landscape.

- No to all illicit fishing and other human activities in the bays and spawning-grounds of the Edward Lake.- No to the poaching of the hippos and other animals of the National Park of Virunga.

- No to the deforestation of the Virunga National Park by carbonization.

- Yes to the protection of the big mammals and aquatic birds (resident and migrating) in Lake Edward.

- Yes to the promotion of a rational fishing and to ecotourism for a lasting development in order to contribute to the stability and peace in the East of the DRC.

- Yes to the promotion of non-polluting clean renewable energy for the progress of the DRC.

- Yes to the security of the Virunga landscape to the profit of the Congolese nation, the countries bordering the lake and the world at large.

Your Excellency ,

Sustaining your efforts in the first year of your mandate and in the knowledge that the Congolese nation hosts the second lung of the world after the Amazon forest in Latin America, providing

oxygen to living beings while contributing to the ecological balance with its dense forests, we beseech you once again to receive and to take into consideration of the different recommendations of the festival partakers in order to secure the Virunga National Park, the cities, towns and the villages especially in the Virunga landscape.

We also call on you to end the massacre observed in the territory of BENI and preserve the natural ecosystems of the Virunga National Park and the fishery resources of Lake Edward for sustainable development.

In light of the above, we make the following request:

- To cancel the decision No 10/044 of June 18, 2010 on the approval of the sharing contract concluded in December 05, 2007 between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Dominion Petroleum Congo, SOCO Exploration-Production Congo and on the V block of the Graben Albertine of the Democratic Republic of Congo. This order allows the exploration and the exploitation of oil in the blocks V and IV in the Albertine rift – covering a major part of the Virunga National Park and parts of the Lake Edward. This remains a permanent threat to the exceptional biodiversity of the Virunga National Park and the livelihoods of millions of our people living in the Virunga landscape.

- To invest in agriculture, fishing and in the fight against famine, which is among the factors of underdevelopment.

- To promote

ecotourism and renewable, clean and non-polluting energy for sustainable development.

- To further invest in the struggle against corruption and impunity exhibited among Congolese “untouchables,” oil and other companies or multinational societies.

- To reinforce security in the Virunga landscape and in the territory of Beni in particular.

- To invest in the preservation of the Virunga National Park - as both a national heritage and a world heritage site, by the development of ecotourism We are making these recommendations on the strength of the fact that the Democratic Republic of Congo is a democratic state that must respect its engagements on international efforts to contribute to the struggle against climate change that threatens the planet which is our common home and protect the livelihoods of the local communities and the indigenous peoples in particular. We strongly recommend a vision of investing in projects that guarantee developments that respect the human rights of our peoples, brings benefits to them and do not impoverish them.

In the hope that the different recommendations will be transformed into action to the profit of the Congolese people, please receive, Your Excellency, the President of Republic, the expression of our patriotic preoccupations of the individual and artisanal fishermen in Lake Edward.

**On the behalf of FECOPEILE  
Secretary General**

# Eco-Defenders Corner:

## Snippets from Ogoni Monitors

*Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) had earlier in the year held trainings for Ogoni Ecological Defenders (Monitors) on monitoring of the Ogoni clean-up project. They were trained in the processes of the clean-up including how to gauge progress with regard to milestones and timelines. The monitors received direct information from officials of the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) as well as from consultants and officials of the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA) and campaigners from the impacted communities. The monitors were charged to see themselves as very critical stakeholders in the clean-up process, noting that the tasks ahead are enormous, and that Ogoni people are in the best position to monitor the clean-up activities and their environment.*

***In light of this, we bring you some reports from the clean-up sites as well as reports from communities in Ogoniland as reported by Ogoni Eco-Defenders:***

## Pollution Knows No Boundary:

Rainwater Also Polluted in Ogoni.

Nkpordee B. Basil.

Oil was discovered in large quantities in Ogoniland in the 1950s. Ever since the activities of oil exploration and exploitation commenced, the Ogoni environment has witnessed outrageous environmental disaster that has pillaged aquatic and farming activities.

Owing to pervasive pollution and the devastation of Ogoniland, UNEP in 2011 was invited to conduct an environmental impact assessment, and they recommended that the environment amongst other things should be remediated and restored immediately.

Consequently, Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project (HYPREP) was set up by the Nigeria government to undertake the Ogoni clean-up. One of the challenges of the local population has been to correct the misconception that pollution only affects host communities where oil wells and facilities are sited.

Experience has shown that pollution has no boundary. A lucid testimony is the colour of rainwater that fell in Kaani community in the early hours of Friday 6th September 2019.





Harvesting of rainwater for drinking and other domestic activities is a popular practice among communities in Ogoniland but owing to the high rate of pollution in the area, the water has become hazardous.

Even though Kaani community does not have oil wells, rainwater appears black here. The restoration of Ogoni environment should not be lopsided, rather it should be done across all communities as the effects of pollution is visible in every community in Ogoniland.



## **HYPREP LIVELIHOOD SENSITISATION PROGRAM**

*Ntogo Bakor Lucy*

On 3rd October 2019, officials of HYPREP was at Kono and Buan communities, Khana LGA for consultation with and sensitisation of women on their livelihood program.

Mrs. Josephine Nziidee, Head of HYPREP Livelihood, said the first phase of the program is designed to sustainably empower 400 women across the 4 LGAs in Ogoniland.

The visit was to inform the communities on what the program entails and how it will be carried out as well as to receive inputs from them.

Speaking at the programme, Mr. Isa Wasa, HYPREP's Head of Communications and Community Relations, said "The Federal Government is determined to not only clean up the land but also to restore livelihoods. This was why the government gave HYPREP the mandate to restore livelihoods."

# Download and read other Publications by HOMEF

@[www.homef.org/resources/](http://www.homef.org/resources/)

- Defending our Biological Diversity
- To Mint an Illusion
- Community Dialogue Guide (Oil/Gas)
- Community Dialogue Guide (Forest)
- Community Dialogue Guide (Fishery)
- A Highway Through the Forest
- Oil Power and a Sign of Hope by Klaus Stieglitz and Sabine Pamperrien
- Oil Politics: Echoes of Ecological war by Nnimmo Bassey
- Living in Fear by Juan Lopez
- Re-source Democracy
- Beyond Oil - Reimagining Development in Niger Delta Community
- Guide to Environmental Monitoring and Reporting
- Community Dialogue Guide on Food and Farming Systems



**VOLUNTEERS  
NEEDED**



## LOOKING TO HELP?

If you would like to join our team of volunteers, send an email to



[volunteers@homef.org](mailto:volunteers@homef.org)

