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# INSTIGATOR

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF HEALTH OF MOTHER EARTH FOUNDATION



Accelerating Climate  
Action by  
Design

No to Net Zero and  
other False Climate  
Solutions

Exoneration, not  
a Pardon for  
Ken Saro-Wiwa

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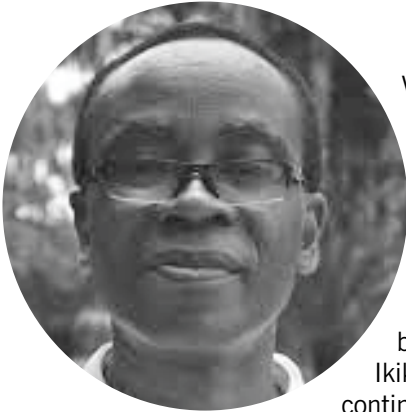
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# Home Run



We welcome you to the last edition of our quarterly magazine for 2021. It has been a tough but memorable year in many ways for us at HOMEF.

I salute the incredible HOMEF team and all our partners and supporters for their unparalleled commitment.

Our projects continued to hit the targets and our grassroots network base continued to increase on all fronts – Hunger Politics, Fossil Politics, Ikike and Alliances/networking. The fight for food and seed sovereignty continued even as we pushed our Stilt Roots stories. As in all our editions, we share with you the fruits of our learning.

In this last edition for 2021, we serve you a suite of articles on climate change as you would expect, coming close on the heels of the disastrous COP26. For us, the highlights of COP26 were the activities that took place in the people's spaces outside the official conference. One of such highlights was the Rights of Nature Tribunal that examined climate change cases as well as the right of the Amazon to exist.

As usual, our reports, poems, and books to reads are all geared to driving action to halt the slide to further environmental and climate chaos.

We also serve you reports and articles from our events and from our partners. As you read this edition, remember to drop us a line or share your feedback, stories, articles, poem, photos at [editor@homef.org](mailto:editor@homef.org). We look forward to hearing from you.

We wish all of our supporters, volunteers and partners a peaceful transition into the New Year.

Until Victory  
Nnimmo Bassey

**Nnimmo Bassey**



## Accelerating Climate Action

# by DESIGN

Nnimmo Bassey

**T**he theme for the World Habitat Day 2021, Accelerating Urban Action for a Carbon-free World, is a strong call on architects and all practitioners involved in the design and actualisation of the built environment and related services to be conscious of the fact that climate change is an existential threat to all living beings on earth and is thus poses a fundamental problem to the present-day design industry.

It is often stated that cities are responsible for some 70 per cent of the global carbon dioxide emissions with

transport, buildings, energy, and waste management accounting for the bulk of urban greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>[ii]</sup>

The process of building, delivery and their utilisation hugely contributes to global warming because of the energy needed to extract and process building materials and to maintain habitable temperatures, as well as the general maintenance of these structures.

The main culprits here, as you may suspect, include the emissions related to cement production and the burning of

fossil fuels for energy production. In the US, buildings consume some 40 per cent of energy annually, and they are responsible for nearly half of the carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emission in the country.<sup>[iii]</sup> Building materials with considerably high environmental impact include concrete, steel, wood, and insulation materials.

The theme for this year's World Habitat Day highlights carbon-neutrality. With the just-concluded COP26<sup>[iv]</sup> of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the world has been regaled with the vision of a “net-zero” carbon future. While trying not to jump into the carbon-neutral or net-zero arguments at this point, it is pertinent to state that these concepts require considerable unpacking as they centre on needed climate action and are embedded in the theme of the Day.

### **Why Do We Need a Carbon-Free World?**


The question is whether a carbon-free world is even possible. If the answer is in the negative, what then is the significance of considering the possibility at all? What message do we seek to convey when we prescribe the desirability of aiming for, or having, a carbon-free world?

A simple answer to these questions would be that we cannot have a carbon-free world but we can try to considerably reduce carbon emissions to a tolerable level of concentration.

Carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere have risen since the start of the industrial era from an annual average of 280 parts per million (ppm) in the late 1700s to 410 ppm in 2019. That is a hefty 46 per cent increase.<sup>[v]</sup>

The tolerable level is said to be 350 ppm. Besides carbon dioxide, other gases of concern in the atmosphere are methane and nitrous oxides. Ozone is also a greenhouse gas but is found mostly in the stratosphere and is useful in absorbing and preventing harmful ultraviolet radiation from the sun from reaching the earth.

Global warming occurs due to increasing concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Heat comes from the sun in short waves, but when bounced off the earth they go up in short and long waves. Whereas the short waves pass through the atmosphere without resistance, the greenhouse gases trap some of the long waves trying to exit the atmosphere. Scientists estimate that without the greenhouse effect, the earth would be as cold as minus 18 degrees Celsius. What this tells us is that we do need greenhouse gases in the



Carbon dioxide concentrations in the atmosphere have risen since the start of the industrial era from an annual average of 280 parts per million (ppm) in the late 1700s to 410 ppm in 2019. That is a hefty 46 per cent increase

atmosphere, otherwise we would all freeze. The trouble is when the concentration of the greenhouse gases gets higher than it ought to be, we set the stage to be roasted.



## Climate Impacts

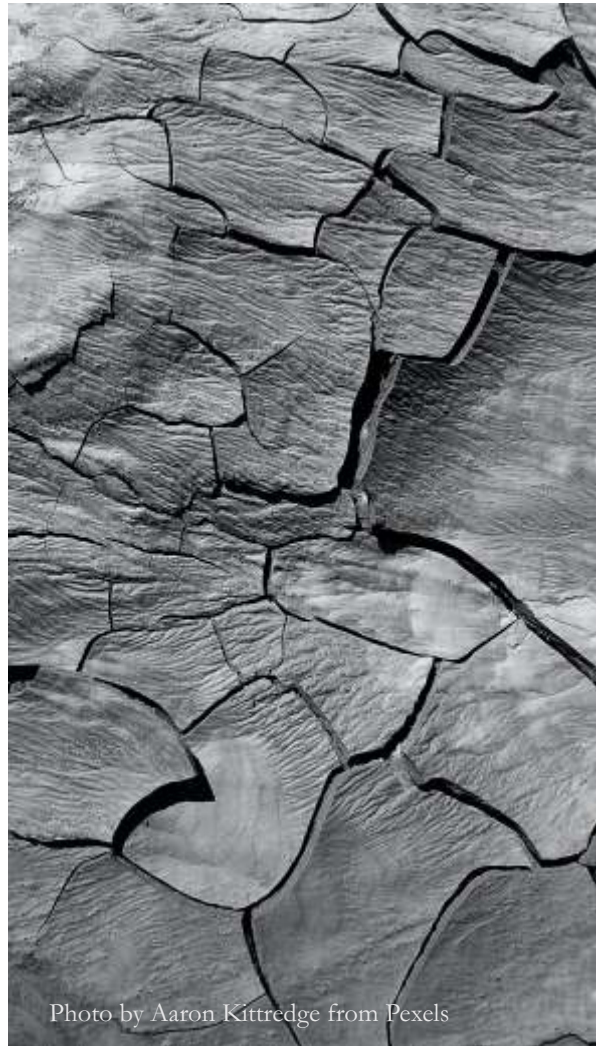
Nigeria, like many other countries, is severely impacted by climate change. The impacts include floods, droughts, increased heat, and water stress. There is persistent land loss due to coastal erosion in the South and desertification in the North.

Coastal erosion is accompanied by the salinisation of freshwater systems, thereby exacerbating species loss. Deforestation is a major contributor to global warming, with enormous impacts on food production. Unbridled flaring of associated gas poses threats to the climate, environmental/human health, and agricultural production.

Oil spillages equally add to the crisis through the dumping of highly volatile hydrocarbon products into the environment. In addition to desertification, water stress and the shrinkage of Lake Chad currently affecting at least 11 states in Northern Nigeria, gully erosion is a great menace in the Southeast and South-South regions. Lake Chad has shrunk from a size of over 25,000 square kilometres in the 1960s to a mere 2,500 square kilometres, breeding attendant social and economic upheavals in the area. Climate change has exposed over 33 million Africans (spread across Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Sudan, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya) to food insecurity emergencies.<sup>[vi]</sup>

The food crisis has been compounded by the erosion of food sovereignty due to the loss of biodiversity. Violent conflicts and poverty add another dimension to the dire situation and raise the number of the vulnerable to over 52 million.

Southern Africa and some other parts of Africa warm at two times the global rate<sup>[vii]</sup> and the Southern Africa region



experienced two massive cyclones in March 2019 and April 2021, leading to a loss of over 1000 lives and wreaking about \$2billion worth of infrastructure. Having so many strong cyclones in a short space of time is a record. The intensity and upward reach of the cyclones on the South-eastern coastline also broke the records.

Cyclones Idai and Kenneth impacted close to 3 million persons. Some researchers tie the cyclones to the warming of the Indian Ocean. If this is true, we can expect more cyclones, as well as the devastation of marine ecosystems in the region, which reflects IPCC's report (2021) that the warming in this region is higher than in other parts of the world.

Will the Climate Summit Turn the Tide? In November 2021, the world gathered in Glasgow to take stock of what has happened since the Paris Agreement of 2015.

The Paris Agreement consolidated the voluntary approach to tackling climate change, which was first introduced at COP15 held in Copenhagen in 2009.

The key proposal of the Agreement is that nations would voluntarily suggest what amount of emissions reduction they would make as their contribution to tackling the climate crisis, which is known as the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). Bear in mind that the Agreement also set temperature targets at 1.5 degrees Celsius or well below 2.0 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels. By the latest submission of countries to the UNFCCC, the aggregation and analysis of NDCs show that global temperature would rise by up to 2.7 degrees Celsius.<sup>[viii]</sup>

We remind ourselves that prior to COP15, industrialised nations were required to adhere to legally binding emissions reduction targets under the Kyoto Protocol. That requirement was based on the foundational justice principle of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDRs). Today, rather than a mandatory emissions reduction, what is expected is legally binding reporting requirements.

What a parody!

The voluntary emissions reduction regime is already pointing at catastrophic global warming, considering the freak weather events being experienced at the present 1.1 degrees Celsius level.

Moreover, as earlier noted, parts of Africa warm at double the global average, meaning that if the global temperature lurches upwards to a 2.7C scenario,

Africa will be literally uninhabitable. An important part of the Paris Agreement is Article 6 which seeks to establish a policy foundation for a carbon emissions trading system that allows polluters to buy the license to continue polluting from less polluting nations. The fossil fuels industry and partner nations love this article because it would require nothing but a monetary exchange for their climate sins.

The point is this: the polluters have the cash, and the vulnerable nations need the cash, but the planet will suffer. Science informs us that the world cannot afford to open new fossil fuel mines or fields. This sector is already responsible for about 80 per cent of all carbon dioxide pumped into the atmosphere since the industrial revolution. Rather than halt the extraction of climate-harming fuels, the industry is set to invest more funds for new oil and gas projects.<sup>[ix]</sup>

### **Net Zero Is Not Zero**

Now, let us look at carbon neutrality, net zero and other concepts of their ilk. A statement issued by Oilwatch Latin America offers a good analysis of the idea behind the concept of Net Zero, which has become so popular across the world. Countries, regions, and corporations are offering to achieve Net Zero by 2050.

Two things should be of concern here. The first is that net zero does not mean zero emissions. Secondly, 2050 may seem to be a distant date, but even if the proposed action were to be a true solution, the world cannot wait for 2050, considering the current rate and magnitude of catastrophic floods, fires, cyclones, and hurricanes.

The extraction, burning and industrial use of fossil fuels constitute the main cause of the climate crisis. Since 1830,



and at an exponential rate of increase during the last two decades, the planet has warmed due to greenhouse gas emissions. Just 100 energy corporations are responsible for 71% of the emissions generated since 1988. Policies focused on monitoring and counting carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) molecules are a part of the problem as long as they are used to divert attention from the central issue: the continuing exploitation of coal, oil and gas under an energy-hungry, petro-dependent economic model.

Carbon accounting – the basis of most official climate policies – is all about moving molecules around, creating false equivalences, erasing emissions with a “click”, and shirking responsibilities in order to carry on business as usual while covering up the roots of the climate crisis.

The focus is on inventorying emissions and percentages to be reduced (or rather, to be permitted) and using the numbers to claim that the transfer of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere can be “compensated for” by supposed future transfers out of it.

Quantifying CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is the smokescreen that allows the governments of the Global North to continue to finance the fossil industry in trillions of dollars, even after the signing of the 2015 Paris Agreement.

Pretending that addressing climate change is a matter of measuring and managing CO<sub>2</sub> molecules is a way of privileging the market and subjecting traditional communities to violations of the rights of humans and nature while at the same time making global warming worse.

Examples of this farce include proposals for “carbon neutrality” or “net zero emissions”, which, by assuming falsely that emissions generated in the fossil extraction chain can be offset by the carbon fixed by natural processes or

geoengineering, will only exacerbate global warming. Other examples include the Clean Development Mechanism, Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation Plus (REDD+), Nature-Based Solutions, “climate-smart” agriculture and livestock-raising, and Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS).

Although such proposals are usually presented as conservation programmes, they are in fact part of a speculative business model that has nothing to do with constructive responses to the climate crisis.<sup>[x]</sup>

### **What Can Architects Do?**

Architects and related designers have huge roles to play in climate-proofing our planet.

Climate change does not merely threaten the planet; it threatens living beings who inhabit the planet – humans and millions of other beings.

The problem is that the crisis is triggered by human beings and the economic and socio-political systems designed and built by us. It is important that architects understand these systems in order to design and deliver the built environment differently.

So, what can we do as architects? Sea-level rise is already on track to continue, and this places most of Southern Nigeria at risk of going under water due to the region's low-lying nature and the fact that the geographic Niger Delta is a naturally subsiding zone.

The immediate response here must include the use of flexible construction materials and designs that are responsive to the ecological peculiarities and needs of the region. Architects must pay more attention to the immediate and larger urban landscape in which their creations

sit.

As architects, we are often deeply concerned about form and efficient spatiality. We work to consciously ensure that our built spaces consume as little cooling, lighting, ventilation, and maintenance costs as necessary.

As good as these are, considering the threat of climate change, we should also be concerned about what is called embodied energy or the sum of energy required to produce goods and services.

Embodied energy includes the energy utilised in mining the needed raw materials. In the building sector, this also includes the construction and replacement/demolition of our buildings, quarrying, cement production, smelting steel, baking of the bricks, transportation of materials to sites and their installation, dismantling and carting away.

Did we say carting away? Let's say suitably disposing of the materials.

Hoping that this conversation will continue beyond the symposium, let us share some issues to ponder on.

- Raise awareness on the risks associated with the current levels of overconsumption that is pushing beyond planetary limits and leading to dramatic biodiversity loss and climate change. We must re-examine our romance with certain climate-harming building materials, such as concrete and steel while at the same time reducing wasteful use of materials.

- There is a real need to work with other professionals to promote the greening of our urban areas, set aside spaces for urban farming and avoid the cementification of spaces. Take a closer look at our traditional architecture in terms of design, materials, craftsmanship and theory, and encourage more organic



Idumuje Ugboko Residence - Demas Nwoko // <http://www.archidatum.com/articles/focus-demas-nwoko/>

approaches.

- Get involved in design for mass transit and other modes that encourage a rapid transition from dependence on fossil fuels. Integrate designs that are self-sufficient in terms of energy needs such as by using solar power, etc.

- Design and build multi-use spaces that are flexible and durable at the same time. Encourage the upgrading of existing buildings and retrofitting them for energy efficiency; and also design for circular use of resources and promote the recycling of wastes.

- Encourage vehicular free zones in our urban areas and encourage open meeting spaces rather than exclusive boxed-up spaces.

- In terms of theory, we should see buildings as living things that have birth, midlife, and terminal points and must be environmentally friendly with regard to materials and energy demands.

- Avoid the aping of postcard architecture; instead, we should design environmentally respectful and culturally sensitive spaces.

## In Conclusion

You may have heard the saying that we first shape our buildings and then the buildings shape us.

This perspective should encourage and challenge architects to generate designs that not only respond to current climate challenges but lay the pathways to provoke continued robust imaginaries and actions for upcoming generations. Permit me to close with a quote that urges us to consciously ensure that our narratives capture the story of our lives as told by us and dipped in our experiences:

*"...If there is any hope for the world at all, it does not live in climate change conference rooms or in cities with tall buildings. It lives low to the ground, with its arms around the people who go to battle every day to protect their forests, their mountains and their rivers because they know that the forests, the mountains and the rivers protect them. The first step toward re-imagining a world gone terribly wrong would be to stop the annihilation of those who have a different imagination – an imagination that is outside capitalism as well as communism. An imagination which has an altogether different understanding of what constitutes happiness and fulfilment."*<sup>[xii]</sup> —

## Endnotes

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- A paper by Arc Nnimmo Bassey, FNIA, MFR, at the World Habitat Day celebration of the Nigerian Institute of Architects (NIA), Akwa Ibom State Chapter on 4 October 2021.





# **The Climate Crisis: The Ignored Case for the Legal Personality and Rights of Mother Nature**

**Koikoibo Dieworimene**



**D**espite the glaring facts and science of climate change, and the need for urgent action, world governments continue to dabble and dribble around the needful: stopping emissions by stopping destructive extraction and changing the mentality that allows the continued exploitation of the earth – failing to keep oil in the soil and coal in the hole.

Rather, the proposed solutions by industry players and big shots include carbon offsetting, carbon capture and sequestration and other market-oriented mechanisms that encourage the continuous extraction and exploitation of the Earth – all false solutions in favour of fossil.

This worrying lack of desire or will to stop is further evident in the just-released Production Gap Report by leading research institutes and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which reveals that governments continue to plan to produce more than double the amount of fossil fuels by 2030, which is inconsistent with the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5°C.

The Earth will continue to burn and suffer without the needed redress, which is troubling and upsetting. It is against this backdrop, and as world leaders have gathered and made their appearances at the 26th Conference of Parties, that this piece sets out to present, again, the case for the Rights of Mother Earth.

### **The Declaration**

On Earth Day 2010 (22 April), approximately 35,000 people from over 100 countries, under the aegis of the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth ("the Conference"), convened in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

The outcome of the Conference was the

proclamation of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth ("the Declaration"). The Conference is widely praised for being an inclusive discussion on the vital issues resulting in the Declaration that demands respect for the Earth, unlike the preceding meeting in Copenhagen in 2009 which was reportedly "untransparent and undemocratic".

Drawing inspiration from previous documents like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the Earth Charter of 2000, the Declaration contains a Preamble and four Articles with provisions aimed at guarding the Earth.

The Preamble of the Declaration admits that ***“we are all part of Mother Earth, an indivisible, living community of interrelated and interdependent beings with a common destiny.”***

Thankfully, the Preamble also acknowledges ***“that Mother Earth is the source of life, nourishment and learning and provides everything we need to live well.”***

**Article 1**, entitled “Mother Earth,” states that the Earth is a living being with inalienable rights arising from the same source of existence; that these rights are to be accorded Mother Earth without distinction of any kind “such as may be made between organic and inorganic beings, species, origin, use to human beings, or any other status.”

**Article 2** enumerates the “inherent rights of Mother Earth.” The rights include the right to life and existence; the right to be respected; the right to generate its bio-capacity and to continue its vital cycles and processes free from human disruptions; the right to clean air; the right to water as a source of life; the right of every being to be free from torture or cruel treatment by human beings, etc.

**Article 3** enshrines the obligations of human beings to Mother Earth. It begins by stating that every human being is responsible for respecting and living in harmony with Mother Earth, and goes on to enumerate the obligations of both public and private institutions of the state, including the obligation to “establish precautionary and restrictive measures to prevent human activities from causing species extinction, the destruction of ecosystems or the disruption of ecological cycles.”

**Article 4**, the last, is entitled “Definitions,” and it defines the term “being” to include ecosystems, natural communities, species and all other natural entities which exist as part of Mother Earth.

### **Legal Status of the Declaration**

The provisions of the Declaration appear to stem from the legal and jurisprudential theory which opposes twentieth-century laws that address nature as a “resource” to be owned, used, and degraded.

Nevertheless, however attractive its provisions are, the Declaration remains a “soft law” as it is yet to be adopted by the United Nations General Assembly and made a binding instrument. Though it has the potential of morphing into a “hard law” in the future even as the world explores solutions to the climate crisis, it presently does not have any legally binding force.

### **Justification and Arguments for the Rights**

In Africa, as it is in other indigenous populations, there is a philosophy of reciprocity and respect for nature ingrained in the traditions of indigenous populations. There are forests one cannot touch, lakes one cannot fish in, fishes one is not allowed to eat (at least

not until a particular season arrives) and so on. This philosophy conceives nature as sacred and its resources are used only as long as nature can regenerate. By the way, these are the societies that are called “primitive” societies by supremacists.

### **The paradox.**

But it is quite simple. If human beings claim to have inalienable rights simply by virtue of their existence on Earth, then why should the Earth, which precedes the existence of humans, not equally have inalienable rights? The truthful answer to the logic has been denied in order to serve man's greed.

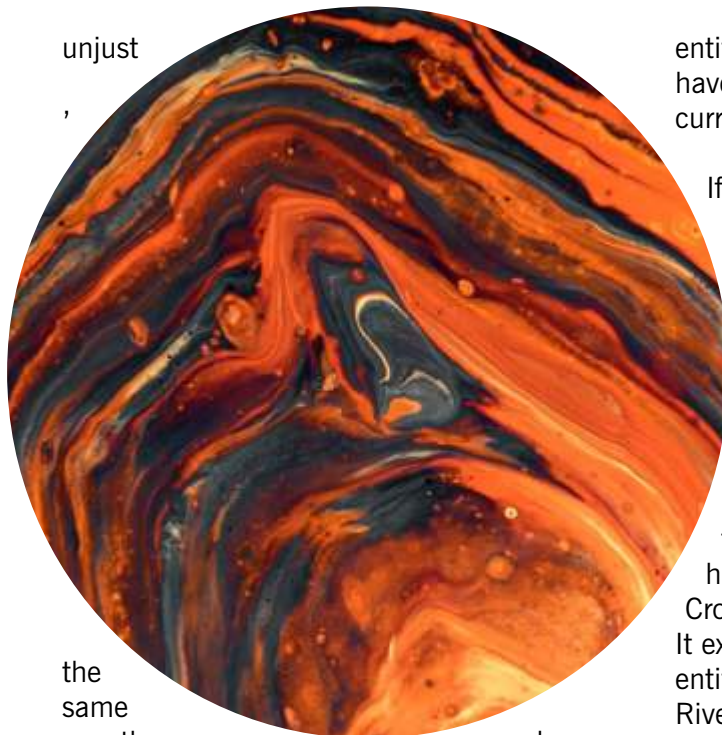
Man wants to dominate an idea that humans seem to have justified even in their religious texts: “multiply and have dominion over all the Earth.” But what kind of king destroys his own kingdom, the place of his dominion and throne? A failed king. Not to be overly religious, but human governments have failed in their “divine mandate” to dominate – no, scrap that – tend the garden.

Many human laws are centred around human beings and have been unable to protect the Earth. It has been an abusive relationship between humans and Earth, with the same character and consequences as colonialism.

The colonialists exploit the resources of a foreign land for their benefit or that of their home country, believing that any damage done in the foreign country will not affect them nor their home countries. Humans tend to believe that they have a “home country” apart from Earth, a delusion that has spurred people on to cook up laws that protect or promote their reckless exploitation of the “foreign country” Earth, a the-Earth-can-die-we-have-Mars-and-others mentality.

This human-centred legal system is





unjust

the same way the legal systems of countries that do not recognize human rights are considered unjust.

And because these human-centred laws have failed to prevent humans from degrading the Earth, they must be restructured to capture the very nature of human beings, that is, human-being-in-relationship-with-other-beings of Earth. No, this new approach should be adopted not just because humans will be affected by what happens to the other beings but also for the very existence of the other beings without distinction as to their use or service to humans. I mean, human rights are inalienable because we merely exist regardless of race, sex etc. and not because we serve Earth, right?

Likewise, it should be for the rights of Mother Earth. The river should have the right to healthily take its course to meet the ocean and should be allowed to 'sue and seek' redress when this right is violated.

The argument is that if we say that nature cannot stand in court as it is not a being, what about corporations and

entities other than human beings that have rights and can stand in court in the current legal system?

If corporations can have standing in court so should nature have rights and be represented in court.

It is not even a question of whether it can be done since it has been done before. In New Zealand, by virtue of Part 2, Article 14, of the Te Awa Tupua Act, 2017, the Whanganui River is a legal person that can be represented in court and has two guardians, one from the Crown and one from the Whanganui iwi. It explicitly grants legal personality to an entity within nature – the Whanganui River.

Similarly, the Uttarakhand High Court in India recognized that both the Ganges and its main tributary as well as "all their tributaries, streams, every natural water flowing with flow continuously or intermittently of these rivers" would be "legal and living entities having the status of a legal person with all corresponding rights, duties and liabilities."

The Ecuadorian Constitution also recognizes the rights of Pacha Mama. So no, it's not out of this world to recognize the legal personality of nature. Just recently, Pablo Escobar's hippos (illegally imported) and their offspring in Colombia have become the first non-human creatures to be legally considered people by US courts.

Again, it is clear that this is not out of this world.

Let it be noted also that there need not exist a link between legal subjectivity and the ability to bear duties.

For instance, children have the right to be represented in court but do not bear any responsibility. In fact, even unborn

children have been accorded certain rights and protection without reciprocal duties. Nature's rights do not need to have reciprocal duties.

The Promise of the Declaration to the Climate Justice Campaign  
The Declaration promises to revolutionize the public perception of our relationship with the environment as well as reform laws that address nature as a "resource" to be owned, used, and degraded. For example, under the Nigerian natural gas legal regime, there is no outright ban of gas flaring despite its scientifically proven capability to degrade the ecosystem; rather, companies are made to pay paltry sums for every cubic foot of gas flared to the continuous detriment of the ecosystem.

Another example is the law that permits partial environmental impact assessment for projects in areas that are not designated as "environmentally sensitive" in order to encourage development. All these laws place a premium on economic development rather than sustainable development, and no doubt need to be jettisoned for eco-centred laws.

The Declaration will serve as a catalyst for the reformation of legal systems, and the revision of global as well as national environmental laws & policies, such as the ones cited above, from being anthropocentric to becoming truly nature-centred.

The contents of the Declaration and laws inspired by it can be used to encourage court actions in defence of "ecosystems, natural communities, species and all other natural entities which exist as part of Mother Earth." It is in this vein also that the newly defined crime of ecocide will be leveraged by environmental justice campaigners. Ecocide, defined as the "unlawful or wanton acts committed

with knowledge that there is a substantial likelihood of severe and widespread or long-term damage to the environment being caused by those acts" is a direct affront on the rather dubious corporate personality of companies which had been exploited by big polluters to perpetuate damage to the environment without fear of personal consequences. That is to say that, when in force, the crime of ecocide threatens to not only force defaulting companies to fold but also to tear right through the corporate veil and force complicit directors to answer for the consequences of their decisions in the name of companies.

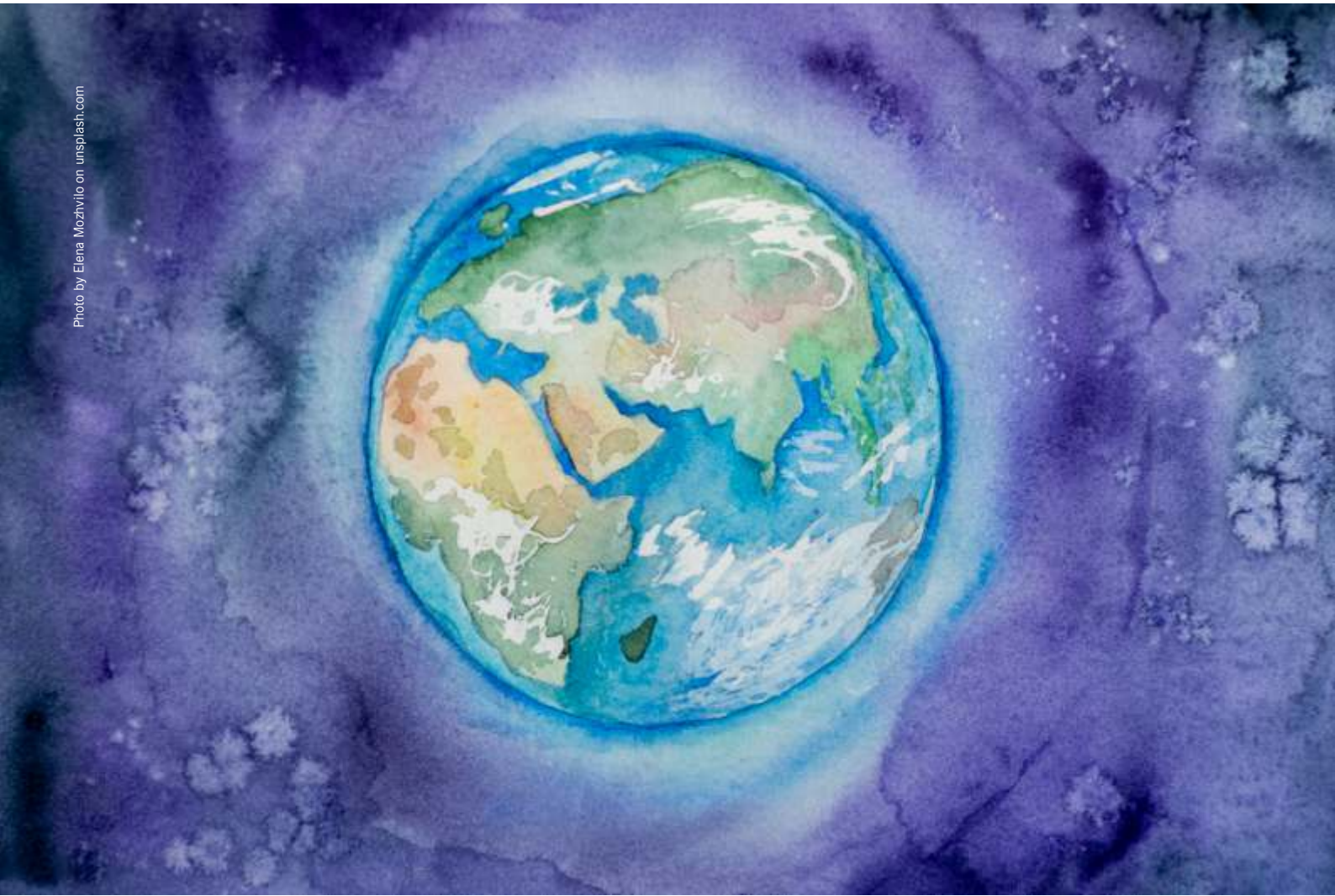
With ecocide, environmental litigants will go beyond the pay-to-pollute legal regime to a more effective you-pollute-you-pay-personally regime as officers of corporations who are complicit in environmental degradation would risk long terms of imprisonment, if not death.

## Conclusion

In the words of Dr Nnimmo Bassey, ***"the word 'resource' implies that nature's wealth is a bounty, ready for corporate robbery. But we as humans frame this dilemma of extraction incorrectly if we don't point out the intrinsic right of nature to survive on its own terms. Most importantly, we are part of Mother Earth, not apart from her. Her rights to exist and reproduce the conditions for all species' existence are not to be violated."***

We have seen the consequences of not heeding this warning.

The world has to be humble enough to recognize Mother Nature for who she is if we are to survive the crisis. Fortunately perhaps, on 22 December 2010, the same year the Declaration on Rights of Mother Earth was made, the United



Nations General Assembly passed a resolution that enabled the issue of Mother Earth's rights to be on the UN agenda.

It is also noteworthy that the idea of the rights of Mother Earth has already made it into the national jurisprudence of many countries, including Bolivia, Ecuador, India, Colombia, and New Zealand. This, however slow, is a great deal of progress for the Rights of Mother Earth. Let us note that initially even the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a declaration of hope into a post-war world had no legal basis as a document.

Presently, however, over six decades later, its various provisions have become so respected by states that it can now be

said to be Customary International Law and has been incorporated into the laws of many countries and also form the basis for the International Criminal Court.

So there is hope.

But how much time do we have left before the Earth burns out? For how long do we intend to deny Mother Nature her rights and legal personality?

The world must act with a sense of urgency.

**O**ilwatch International network members, community representatives from oil regions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), academia and the media met in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria, between 19th – 21st of October 2021, physically and virtually, for the maiden edition of the Oilwatch International Global Gathering.

The gathering, with the theme “Demanding Real Zero, Not Net Zero,” aimed to present the way out of the climate quagmire and present real options for climate action. The Global Gathering looked critically at the false solutions to Climate Change, including the Net Zero concept which world leaders, corporations and investors were echoing before COP26. Participants deliberated on the failure of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's Conference of Parties (COP) which over the years has become an avenue for trade talks, commercial pledges, and avoidance of real action irrespective of the unfolding yet glaring climate catastrophe.

At a time when the world is experiencing extreme weather events, including droughts, wildfires, cyclones, hurricanes and floods, leaders are getting sucked into false solutions that lock in dependence on fossil fuels with the promises of techno-fixes for carbon removals, solar radiation management and/or carbon offsets.

The implications of fossil fuels exploitation on human rights and on primary economies, including agriculture, fisheries, and livelihoods of community folks, were also discussed. Participants observed the following: That big polluters, the perpetrators of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions globally, have continued to wield untoward influence on the climate negotiations as evidenced in the new mantra of Net Zero, a suite of algorithms and technologies, an updated version of the myth of carbon offsetting, which now dominates climate change discussions, rather than real climate actions as espoused in the Paris Agreement. Net Zero not only erases the very essence of history and the responsibilities to cut down emissions; worse, Net Zero and other similar false solutions also allow polluters to continue



# DEMANDING REAL ZERO NOT NET ZERO

Oilwatch International

Image by luis cortes on unsplash





to pollute and be locked in extractive and other obnoxious activities that empower the fossil fuel industry.

Findings reveal that countries and territories in the Global South that have not contributed significantly to the problem are disproportionately impacted by climate change.

And finally, the fossil fuel industry and their allied political leaders are seeking ways to expand destructive fossil extraction in places such as

the Okavango Basin in Namibia and Botswana, Saloum Delta in Senegal and Delgado in Mozambique while continuing their polluting activities in the Niger Delta of Nigeria, the Amazon, and other places.

Flowing from the intense debates and discussions, participants at the Global Gathering declared as follows:

a) There must be a halt to the propagation of false narratives such





as Net Zero Emissions at a time the world requires Real Zero Emissions as the way out of the ongoing calamitous climate change. Also, that the use of Nature-Based Solutions should not be an excuse for land and sea grabbing and displacement of indigenous communities.

b) COP26 in Glasgow UK should not be an arena for deliberations on false notions such as Nature-Based Solutions, Net Zero, Carbon neutrality, carbon offsetting but rather real actions should be pursued, including keeping fossil fuel resources in the ground.

c) All governments need to urgently go back to a binding global emissions reduction rather than the so-called Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) which according to the UN computations of submissions made so far will lead the world to a calamitous temperature increase of up to 2.7oC above pre-industrial levels.

d) There should be no new coal, oil, or gas extraction expansion plans in line with the best available science as outlined by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the United Nations Environment Program.

e) The existing extraction of fossil fuels should be phased out in a manner that is fair and equitable, considering the respective dependency of countries on fossil fuels and the importance of transitioning workers in the fossil fuels industry to more socially, environmentally and climate-friendly sectors.

f) The need for Parties that attended COP26 to reintroduce the distinction

between the Kyoto Protocol Annex 1 Countries and consider the creation of the Annex 0 countries and the payment of ecological debts to communities that have been sacrificed over the years while fossil fuel corporations rake in blood profits

g) Ensure a global just transition to 100% access to renewable energy, with no corporate and no extensive base, which contributes to energy sovereignty; support for oil-dependent economies to diversify away from fossil fuels; and enable all peoples and communities, especially those in the Global South, to flourish.

h) Communities should play major roles and be heard in negotiations at the COP as they are at the forefront of the climate disasters occurring globally.

i) The communities that suffer impacts of the extraction of fossil fuels, such as the Niger Delta, or Ecuadorian Amazon, must be properly cleaned up. Oil companies should be held accountable for this and stopped from continuing their environmental impunity.

j) Fossil fuel and other extractive companies and their enabling governments linked to human rights abuses must be held accountable, compelled to divest, and obligated to justly compensate environmental defenders, climate activists, and the communities they have victimized.

k) An immediate release of the arrested staff of Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO) — Oilwatch Africa members in Uganda— and a halt to further harassment of earth defenders across the world.

# NNPC'S PUSH FOR THE RESUMPTION **OF OIL EXTRACTION IN OGONILAND**

IS INSENSITIVE AND  
IRRESPONSIBLE

On the 20th of August 2021, following an Appeal Court ruling denying Shell the ownership of and access to OML 11 located around Ogoniland, and handing over the same to the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC), a statement from the NNPC has instructed the Nigerian Petroleum Development Company (NPDC) to immediately take over assets and operations in the area and commence full extraction of oil.

According to the Corporation, the Federal Government had endorsed this plan. As Civil Society Organizations in Nigeria, we have keenly observed the scheming and unhindered contestations over the resumption of extraction of oil in the disputed oilfields of Ogoniland.

While Shell on the one hand has been in court trying to revalidate its mandate to drill for crude oil with its attendant environmental, social and security recklessness, the NNPC is celebrating what it considers its court-given mandate to extract in the area.

It is important to recall that this is only the latest episode in a long-drawn battle over the resumption of oil extraction in Ogoniland. These efforts have seen an ugly contestation between the Rivers State Government, Shell and NNPC.

In March 2019, a memo signed by Chief of Staff to the President, Mr Abba Kyari, and addressed to the Group Managing Director of the NNPC (dated 1 March 2019, with reference number SH/COS/24/A/8540), asked the NNPC and NPDC “to take over the operatorship, from Shell Petroleum Development Company, of the entire OML 11 not later than 30 April 2019 and ensure smooth re-entry given the delicate situation in Ogoni Land.”

This action necessitated a court action by Shell seeking the affirmation of their right to operate in the area. In a related development, on the 30th of September 2019, the Rivers State Governor, Nyesom Wike, announced that the Rivers State Government has fully acquired Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria's (SPDC) 45% interest in Oil Mining Lease (OML) 11 situated in Ejama Ebubu Community in Eleme Local Government Area and the adjoining Ogoni and other communities of the State. It is unfortunate that this prolonged and desperate controversy

over resuming the extraction of oil in Ogoniland is happening without any form of consultation with the Ogoni people or consideration for their hard-fought battle for environmental justice.

It is pertinent to recollect that in 1993 Shell was forced to abandon its OML 11 operations located in Ogoni and pull out of the area.

This was the direct outcome of passionate but peaceful campaigns by the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) led by environmental rights activist Ken Saro-Wiwa. MOSOP had called the attention of the world to the poverty, neglect and environmental destruction which decades of oil exploitation had visited on the Ogoni people.

MOSOP demanded fairer benefits to the Ogoni people from oil wealth, as well as the remediation and compensation for the ecological damage caused by the reckless activities of oil companies.

Rather than address the genuine and legitimate concerns of the Ogoni people, the Nigerian government and its oil company partners responded with terror and horror. MOSOP was brutally repressed by the Nigerian armed forces. The mass killings and widespread carnage which the military visited on the Ogonis remain largely undocumented.

Thousands of Ogonis lost their lives, and many others went into forced exile around the world. In May 1994, capitalizing on the unfortunate killing of 4 prominent Ogoni leaders by a mob of yet-to-be-identified persons in Gokana Local Government Area, Ken Saro-Wiwa and other leaders of MOSOP were arrested and detained.

After a few months of predetermined trial by a special military tribunal, a sentence of death was pronounced on Ken Saro-Wiwa and 8 others on 31 October 1995.

Within the period the accused persons could appeal against the judgement, the nine were immediately executed on 10 November 1995 against a backdrop of outrage, global condemnation and, eventually, international sanctions on Nigeria.

Again, it is important to note that 31 years after the Ogonis made their demands, contained in the Ogoni Bill of Rights, for which they were so brutally suppressed and killed, none of their concerns and prayers have been satisfactorily addressed.

## We are deeply concerned about the neglect of the key issues around ecological and social justice in Ogoniland.

This is disappointing, and it demonstrates insensitivity on the part of the government to imagine that those concerns have simply withered away with time. Those of us who remain connected to the communities know for a fact that the Ogoni people remain resolute in their resistance to any renewed hydrocarbon extraction in their domains.

It is not clear whether any consultation has been initiated with the affected communities, or whether their rights to a safe environment and interests have been taken into consideration. We consider these latest attempts insensitive, ill-advised and capable of inflaming suspicions and conflict in an

area that is already very tense and prone to conflicts.

It is gravely disconcerting that in the ongoing frenzy, the concerns raised by the Ogoni people 31 years ago, which led to the termination of oil extraction, have not been raised or addressed. Similarly, there has been no attempt to secure justice for the countless families that lost lives, livelihoods and properties in what remains the worst attack on a peaceful indigenous population by Nigerian forces.

Those who committed these acts of genocide and abuses against unarmed populations, and boasted publicly about it, have still not been brought to justice. For the majority of Ogonis, the events of the 1990s remain an open and sour wound, begging for the healing of truth and justice.

It is also pertinent to observe that the move to resume the extraction of oil in Ogoniland, happening against the backdrop of the contentious clean-up of polluted sites in Ogoni, raises fears and fuels cynicism.

It is worrying that the government would think of resuming oil extraction in Ogoniland when the pollution of the last decades is yet to be cleaned, when decrepit installations are yet to be decommissioned, and when the many recommendations of UNEP are yet to be fully complied with.

How can it be explained that a site supposedly being cleaned up will resume oil extraction activities with all the pollution that comes with it?

Before any conversation on resuming the extraction of crude oil in the area, it is the demand of the Ogoni people and other stakeholders that the clean-up process be fully and urgently completed in compliance with the recommendations of UNEP.

We are deeply concerned about the neglect of the key issues around ecological and social justice in Ogoniland.

The world recognizes that the people of Ogoni have suffered unprecedented pains and losses on account of oil extraction.

No apology has been rendered for the destruction of their environment, the killing of their people, the loss of their livelihoods, the destruction of their villages, the forced exile of their people and the murder of their leaders.

a stop to any planned attempt to resume oil activities in Ogoniland.

If anything, it should rather concentrate on redeeming the ecological disaster in the area, decommissioning aged oil infrastructure, replacing the lost livelihoods of the people and securing justice for the countless Ogonis waiting for closure.

This statement is signed and endorsed by:

1. *Nnimmo Bassey (Health of Mother*



To assume that the extraction of oil can commence whilst these issues remain on the front burner is to be naïve at best and cruel at worse.

It is the demand of the Ogoni people that a first step towards demonstrating goodwill is to exonerate the Ogoni 9 who were murdered by the Nigerian government for peacefully protesting the destruction of their environment.

Maintaining the obvious and insulting cover-up that these leaders were tried and convicted for murder is a great disservice to their memory, their selfless service and an insult to the Ogoni people.

Flowing from the foregoing, it is our recommendation that the government put

*Earth Foundation)*

2. *Ken Henshaw (We the People)*

3. *Celestine AkpoBari (Peoples' Advancement Centre)*

4. *Chima Williams (Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria)*



# SILENCE IS STILL TREASON!

*For the Ogonis, you stood firm*

*For the rights of the Niger Deltans, you fought*

*For our environment, you died*

*Your death fuels our voices*

*We have not stopped the fight*

*We have not kept silent because silence is still  
treason.*

*Until Victory, we shall not be silent.*

**Babawale Obayanju**

*(In honour of **Ken Saro-Wiwa**, 1941-1995)*



Image by George Digalakis



# 5TH INTERNATIONAL RIGHTS OF NATURE TRIBUNAL OFFICIAL VERDICTS

**T**he 5th International Rights of Nature Tribunal took place on Wednesday, 3rd November and Thursday, 4th November at 4 pm (GMT) each day in Glasgow, alongside the United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP26). Due to COVID and travelling restrictions, this Tribunal was a hybrid event – online through Zoom and in-person at the Auditorium of the University of Strathclyde.

The Fifth International Rights of Nature Tribunal heard two fundamental ecological cases facing the world today: the false solutions to the Climate Change

crisis and the Amazon, a threatened living entity. The cases were presented by frontline, impacted communities and experts from around the world, and were heard by a panel of globally recognized judges, who examined and ruled on the cases from a Rights of Nature perspective: Enrique Viale (Argentina), Alberto Acosta (Ecuador), Nancy Yáñez (Chile), Atossa Soltani (EE.UU.), Rocío Silva Santiesteban (Perú), Osprey Orielle Lake (USA), Nnimmo Bassey (Nigeria), Lisa Mead (UK), Carolyn Raffensperger (USA), Yaku Pérez (Ecuador), and Princess Esmeralda (Belgium), and Leonardo Boff (Brazil) who presided over the Tribunal.

## VERDICTS

### FALSE SOLUTIONS TO THE CLIMATE CHANGE CRISIS

In the context of the current climate emergency and increasing global ecological breakdown, the International Tribunal for the Rights of Nature, founded upon existing normative frameworks of universal law, which are inviolable, non-negotiable and applicable to all living beings, and applying the Universal Declaration for the Rights of Mother Earth, has found that the practices set out violate a number of the rights of Mother Earth and members of the Earth Community of some of the living beings of which she is composed, including but not limited to, the right to life and existence;

right to be respected; to continue their vital cycles and processes free from human disruptions; to maintain its identity and integrity as a distinct, self-regulating and interrelated being; to integral health; to be free from contamination, pollution and toxic or radioactive waste; and the right to not have its genetic structure modified or disrupted in a manner that threatens its integrity or vital and healthy functioning.

Taking from this premise, the Tribunal gave recommendations on the following fields:

1. Geoengineering and its various techniques
2. Carbon Offsets
3. Net Zero Emissions and Nature-Based solutions
4. Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS)
5. UNFCCC
6. Rights of Future Generations

As regards the two cases brought before the Tribunal in relation to gas flaring and

venting in Ecuador and the sacrifice zone of Quintero Bay in Chile, which both serve to demonstrate the kind of extreme pollution that is being caused by fossil fuel extraction, the Tribunal gave further recommendations for the Sacrifice Zones in Chile and gas flaring and venting in Ecuador.

### AMAZON, A THREATENED LIVING ENTITY

The Tribunal assessed the scale of the damage and impacts caused to the Amazon, and condemns those directly responsible for the crimes of ethnocide, ecocide, and genocide against the Amazon and its peoples, namely

banks, financiers of megaprojects in the Amazon; transnational companies, including mining and agribusiness corporations; states, for permitting these criminal actions against the Amazon, violating international law and national legislation, and for the systemic violence that has installed itself in these territories, availing the actions of criminal organizations that operate on the fringes of the law and that invade the territories of the traditional peoples and who are the unpunished authors of murders and the kidnapping of indigenous leaders, activists, and defenders of human rights and the Rights of Nature.

The Tribunal thus proposes measures for the recognition and guarantee of the Amazon as a Subject of Rights, its integral reparation, de-mercantilization of nature, the recognition of the Indigenous Peoples as Defenders of the Amazon and tribunal actions in the territory.

# BEAUTIFUL SPEECHES

A. S. AFERENO

The COP is standing in different places,  
Paris-Warsaw-Copenhagen-Glasgow every year;  
Many abound from beautiful races,  
But with cups of watering speeches.

Suddenly Net Zero becomes their saviour,  
But not to us who adore Real Zero;  
This COP shall one day pass over us,  
This polluted cup of anti-humanity.

The battle line has long been drawn,  
Fighting evil from dusk till dawn;  
No retreat in this street of heat,  
Our lives depend on our victory.

Welcome to the COP!  
Where there are no cops to make arrests;  
Promises brighter than the noon sun,  
Withered away by lack of commitment,  
How long shall this commercial evil exist?

This bride-looking evil we must stop,  
That which smoothly destroys us;  
Hydrogen and carbon though a wealth to some,  
But to others poverty and death.

Giving up is never an option,  
Lest we continue in these sorrowful songs;  
I love your beautiful speeches so friendly to our ears,  
Sweet and lovely they sound yet enemies to our hearts.

Till we make a fossil-free society,  
We shall not stop;  
Talking,  
Fighting,  
Not until your beautiful speeches give Mother-Earth a chance,  
To live without fear of being burnt down someday.

Keep your speeches, o COPers,  
Give us life.





Image by Babawale Obayanju // The People's Summit COP26

# TIME FOR A PEOPLE'S COP

Nnimmo Bassey

**T**he 26th Conference of Parties (COP26) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) took place from 31 October to 13 November 2021 and had a loud but uncertain achievement. No, this was not just about the Glasgow Climate Pact which highlighted the phasing down of coal.

It was the facing down of the victims of climate change who are fighting a tough battle against a crisis to which they did not contribute. It was a COP that left its justice foundation on life support and offloaded the burden of climate action unto generations yet to be born.

While COP26 went on, there was a parallel COP26Coalition's People's Summit which centred on forging real climate action rather than being driven by vested fossil interests. The urgency shown by the popular People's Summit exposed COP26 as a Conference of Polluters, Conference of Profiteers

or Conference of Procrastinators.

The badge of procrastination in the face of an emergency was displayed in the emblematic Net Zero pledges of the parties.

The concept was so pervasive that posters with elephants and whales were displayed at train stations and other public spaces in Glasgow to celebrate it and possibly to announce expanded threats that could emerge with big animals being designated carbon sinks.

COP26 was an avenue for world leaders to showcase their ambition towards tackling the climate menace.

The reality was that all they could display was their voluntary pledges to cut emissions iced or capped with pledges on when they would attain net zero carbon emissions. The voluntary suggestions on what levels of reductions countries would take are the linchpin of the Paris Agreement. Nations were excited to endorse and celebrate the Agreement with its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) because it afforded the big polluters the opportunity to avoid making emissions cut based on science and historical responsibility.

The Paris Agreement set paradoxical temperature targets that were considered ambitious and chose the voluntary



Image by COP26 Youtube

pathway to achieve it. That was a paradox that attempted to seal the pandora box. The temperature targets set in the Paris Agreement appear to have been purposely ambiguous rather than ambitious.

As was noted by the Prime Minister of Barbados during the COP, it is unlikely that



NDCs can solve a global problem. The truth in this position has become evident by the projected outcome of the NDCs and Net Zero pledges.

The best possible outcome of the present pledges is given as a 2.4C average temperature increase above pre-industrial levels. That average stands beyond the 1.5C and well below 2.0C targets of the Paris Agreement.

We note the apparent contradiction in those targets when we realize that anything that is “well below” 2.0C should be less than 1.5C. The question arising from this is whether an upper limit can be lower than the lower target?

For regions like Africa that have temperatures about 50 per cent above global averages, a 2.4C global average possibility translates to an incinerating 3.6C average. It beats the imagination that anyone from these

**“ When it comes to climate finance, the Glasgow Climate Pact sounds as if it were a draft or recommendation for people other than parties to implement...”**

vulnerable regions would accept that possibility as a laudable target.

There was a loud debunking of the concept of net zero before and during COP26. It was shown that net zero is not zero and does not herald the stoppage of emissions.

It merely projects some mythical action whereas it means a continuation of business as usual, a continuation of burning fossil fuels and stoking the atmosphere with carbon while proposing carbon capture, carbon removals or some measures of solar radiation management.

Net zero has also been shown to be a glorified name for carbon trading which helped to portray COP26 as a carbon trade fair.

While nations trade in hot air and negotiate inaction, children and youths are becoming more strident in their denunciation of the procrastinating leaders. They see the pledge to achieve arithmetic net zero by 2050 or 2060 or 2070 as a blatant insult and an attempt to deny them a future. For the youths, the struggle is about justice today and not a promissory note that may not ever be fulfilled, or that would be of no consequence by 2050 should the planet have already stepped into catastrophic climate change by that time.

The unwillingness to follow the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) was also manifested in the way the issues of climate finance and that of loss and damage were handled. When it comes to climate finance, the Glasgow Climate Pact sounds as if it were a draft or recommendation for people other than parties to implement.



It “Notes with deep regret that the goal of developed country Parties to mobilize jointly USD 100 billion per year by 2020 in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation has not yet been met, and welcomes the increased pledges made by many developed country Parties and the Climate Finance Delivery Plan: Meeting the US\$100 Billion Goal and the collective actions contained therein.”

This may sound like excellent diplomatic phraseology but should be seen as unbecoming in an emergency.

A section was also allocated to platitudes on the matter of loss and damage. If the UNFCCC had listened to the call for the recognition and payment of a climate debt accumulated over centuries of rapacious exploitation of peoples and colonial plundering of nature, there would be no debate over climate finance.

The COP26 outcome could not call for a phasing out of fossil fuels even though science clearly shows that it is their burning that is roasting the planet because of the undue influence of the fossil fuel industry. Rather than stop funding fossil fuels, the industry is set to pump more finances into the dying sector.

In Oil Change International's report, **‘Sky's Limit Africa**, we learn that the fossil fuel industry plans to sink \$230 billion into the development of new extraction projects in Africa in the next decade and up to USD \$1.4 trillion by 2050. Tone-deaf?

The COP could not make any move that would hinder the plans of the fossil fuel sector because, with 503 delegates from 100 fossil fuel companies at the conference, including being part of 27 national delegations, such a suggestion was dead on arrival. The industry had more delegates than Brazil who, with

479 delegates, had the largest national delegation at the COP.

The climate pact is a study in the choice of words to leave room for the avoidance of further consideration. A critical example is with reference to climate justice.

The pact says, ***“Noting the importance of ensuring the integrity of all ecosystems, including in forests, the ocean and the cryosphere, and the protection of biodiversity, recognized by some cultures as Mother Earth, and also noting the importance for some of the concept of 'climate justice', when taking action to address climate change.”***

How on earth can a framework ostensibly predicated on justice state that climate Justice is only important “for some”?

Given the outcome of the COPs, we conclude that it is time to replace the COP with a Climate Change Conference of Peoples.

When Copenhagen flopped, Bolivia convened the Peoples Summit on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth in Cochabamba in April 2010. With more than 30,000 delegates from over 100 countries, the peoples of the world came out with a clear roadmap for climate action as well as the Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth.

It is time to denounce net zero myths and demand real zero emissions. It is time to echo the truth that climate change is a global problem that must be tackled not by xenophobic nationalist self-interest tagged NDCs but by binding emissions cut based on CBDR.

**T**he shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy is becoming more urgent as climate change impacts force the world to respond.

The handwriting on the wall boldly declares that the burning of fossil fuels has taken up the carbon budget and wrapped the earth with a thick blanket of greenhouse gasses that have resulted in the hottest days in recent history.

Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Foundation and Health of Mother Health Foundation (HOMEF) co-hosted a public forum on the theme "***What after Oil, Climate and Environmental Resilience in Extractive Communities?***" to discuss the implication of waning oil fortunes for the Nigerian economy as well as oil field communities.

Nnimmo Bassey in his welcome address stated that "While climate change is a global crisis, we cannot deny the fact that we face peculiar impacts at both national and sub-national levels.

For one, the global shift towards more sustainable energy technologies is bound to provoke a precipitous reduction in the global demand for hydrocarbon fossil fuels, such as coal, oil, and natural gas.

With nearly 86 per cent of Nigeria's export value coming from fossil fuels, the global energy transition will have profound effects on our economy. The prospects of a zero-carbon future will also have far-reaching environmental, social, and governance impacts on Nigeria.

Most affected by this will be the impoverished communities who have been treated as sacrificial



Image by Caudio Pavione on unsplash

# THE GLOBAL TUMBLING OF OIL FORTUNES & THE SHIFT TO SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

zones since the first commercial oil well was sunk in Oloibiri 65 years ago. The impacts of climate change are already being experienced through sea-level rise and coastal erosion.

These impacts are multiplied by the massive pollution whose intensity, going by NOSDRA report, amounted to 1,300 spills or an average of 5 spills a day in 2018 and 2019."

The panel discussion that followed was moderated by *Amara Nwankpa of Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Foundation. Panellists included Mr Nnimmo Bassey, Director, HOMEF; Martha Agbani, Executive Director, Lokiaka Community Development Centre; Dr Lanre Shasoru, Representative from the Office of the Vice President of Nigeria; and Bekeme Masade-Aolowola, Chief Executive, CSR-in-Action.*

Image by Nazrin Babashova on unsplash



The panellists expressed their thoughts on the neglect faced by the affected communities and proffered solutions on what should be done.

Martha Agbani who spoke on behalf of the communities noted that "The Niger Delta is a disaster zone due to high levels of environmental pollution." She decried the high level of deforestation in the area and opined that there were cases of desertification also due to the pollution that has made it impossible for vegetation to thrive. She also spoke of the ubiquitous gas flares and pollution which has led to poverty, hunger and violence. She noted that the area has a very low life expectancy due to poisoned water, air and land.

Bekeme Masade-Olowola of CSR-in-Action noted that, although there has been some improvement in the way the oil companies operate, they still perform poorly on all sustainability indices. "There is room for more improvement," she said, adding that the Petroleum Industry Act may provide some impetus for changes.

From the Office of the Vice President, the representative Dr Lanre Shasore noted that the visit of the Vice President to the Niger Delta yielded useful information. "One thing we found in the Niger Delta is that there is a great deal of oil pollution and environmental degradation in that area, and we also have intervened in those areas as regards things to be done in terms of remediation.

In 2010-2014, over 7 trillion Naira was invested in the region. Since the tour of the Vice President to the Niger Delta, many things have been done to improve the area.

There have been the implementation of the Ogoni clean-up and the introduction of modular refinery and the PIA which

will address the challenges faced by the host communities.

As we prepare to put an end to oil, it is easy to divest from oil but it will affect us and our livelihoods. We will like to see a continuation of oil but not to the detriment of the Niger Delta communities as we want to promote a safe environment.

Nigeria is not ready for the end of oil [because] we are a gas community; this is what we live on and as long as it is safe for our community, we should continue. The world has taken the position to move away from oil but they are not discussing this position with us, and they do not seem to want to take us along as they end oil."

Dr Nnimmo Bassey while responding to the question on the end of oil stated that "Nigeria had the warning before now and we have had enough time to move from fossil fuels to cleaner energy but apparently not much has been done.

We do not see indications that we are taking the matter as seriously as we ought to. There are vast numbers of Nigerians who do not have energy today, and yet gas flaring continues unabated.

The government keeps ignoring its deadlines to end gas flaring and there is

no serious reason to believe that the practice will end in 2030 as the government has announced.

Oil companies are beginning to divest from onshore fields and are moving further offshore because they wish to be unaccountable for their polluting activities and wish to pay less in royalties to the government." Bassey also enumerated the pitfalls in the PIA and the fact that communities will not be better off with its coming into being.

The forum pushed for a just transit away from fossil fuels as further investment in the sector amounts to climate change denial. The forum also recommended greater investment in and commitment to cleaning up the Niger Delta and in building resilience in the area. It was recommended that the loss of revenue from exploiting new oil fields can be offset by stopping oil theft.

In her closing remarks, the Regional Director, Ford Foundation, Dr Chichi Anigolu-Okoye, noted that oil will not completely disappear from the soil, but if we do proper planning, the transition from oil will not affect the country or the region the way the transitioning from agriculture and others left affected communities impoverished.



Image by Emiliano Lasalvia/AFP via Getty Images

"If oil companies cannot be held responsible before the divestment, how do we intend to hold them when they have left?" she asked rhetorically. If we look at the fact that oil may not be relevant in the next 30 to 40 years from today as oil companies continue to divest, civil societies should change their language and the manner in which they engage the system in ways that yield positive outcomes.





# Nigeria, a dumping ground for failed international experiments, Says HOMEF

**H**ealth of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF), in a two-day training and dialogue with the media and CSOs on Agroecology as a viable solution to climate change, urged journalists and civil society actors to fight against the colonization of our food process. The issue of GMOs is something that Nigeria is championing without the knowledge of its health implications to Nigerians.

Agroecology as a food system will solve the food and climate crisis being faced today as it does not encourage the chemicals which our government is pushing on us.

Agroecology as a system builds on the traditional practices which make farmers remain in control of all aspects



of food production.

The Executive Director of HOMEF, Nnimmo Bassey, clearly stated that one critical challenge facing Agroecology is the continued dumping of oil waste in the system, with nothing changing even with regard to issues of climate change.

"We should move away from oil, which will encourage us to appreciate agroecology. There are wildfires, storms, hurricanes because of climate change.

These are potent crises for Africa and Nigeria, and these situations should not be treated as normal. We see international organizations dumping things which have failed in the USA, South Africa and other parts of the world into Nigeria and they have been accepted because they believe it will survive in Nigeria, but this is false."

"It is alarming how they have failed to look at issues raised by researchers about GMOs. The best crops that will stand drought in our nation are the indigenous crops we have.

These indigenous crops have evolved over time; they understand the environment. Nature gives us the very

best seeds that are resilient and can survive floods and drought. The artificial crops are just here to colonize our food system."

Mariann Bassey-Orovwuje, during her presentation on Agroecology as a viable solution to the climate crisis, noted that the only way to put an end to the issue of food scarcity is to connect all food plants and products in the farmland.

"Agroecology embraces all forms of food systems; it works with nature. We are here to make a case that Agroecology is working and should be fully accepted because it works harmoniously with nature and it preserves the earth.

Agroecology works to ensure food and livelihood security; it respects the life of our food; respects farmers knowledge; cools the temperature of the planet and; it is a community-based approach. The media as the voice of

**Agroecology  
works to ensure  
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of the planet**

reason and conscience should act fast.

If things are wrong and the media remains silent, then everything will go wrong."

We see Agroecology as the opposite of industrial agriculture. Agroecology uses cultivation methods that do not rely on chemicals; it helps to protect seeds for the next farming system, which is the best way of farming. All chemicals used in farming are toxic and destroy the land and sometimes the crops/seeds. Agroecology keeps farmers in control of the system with sustainable food for all.

John Baaki, one of the trainers, showed participants how Agroecology can feed the world. He noted that the absence of food storage bans will result in a continued decline in the availability of food if we begin to depend on foreign seeds.

"Agroecology can feed the world; 70% of the food we consume come from the small local farmers who farm using Agroecological methods. Agroecology strikes a balance between agriculture and the climate; it is the only thing that heals the world of the decades of loss it has suffered. Agroecology can feed the world if it gets the required support and

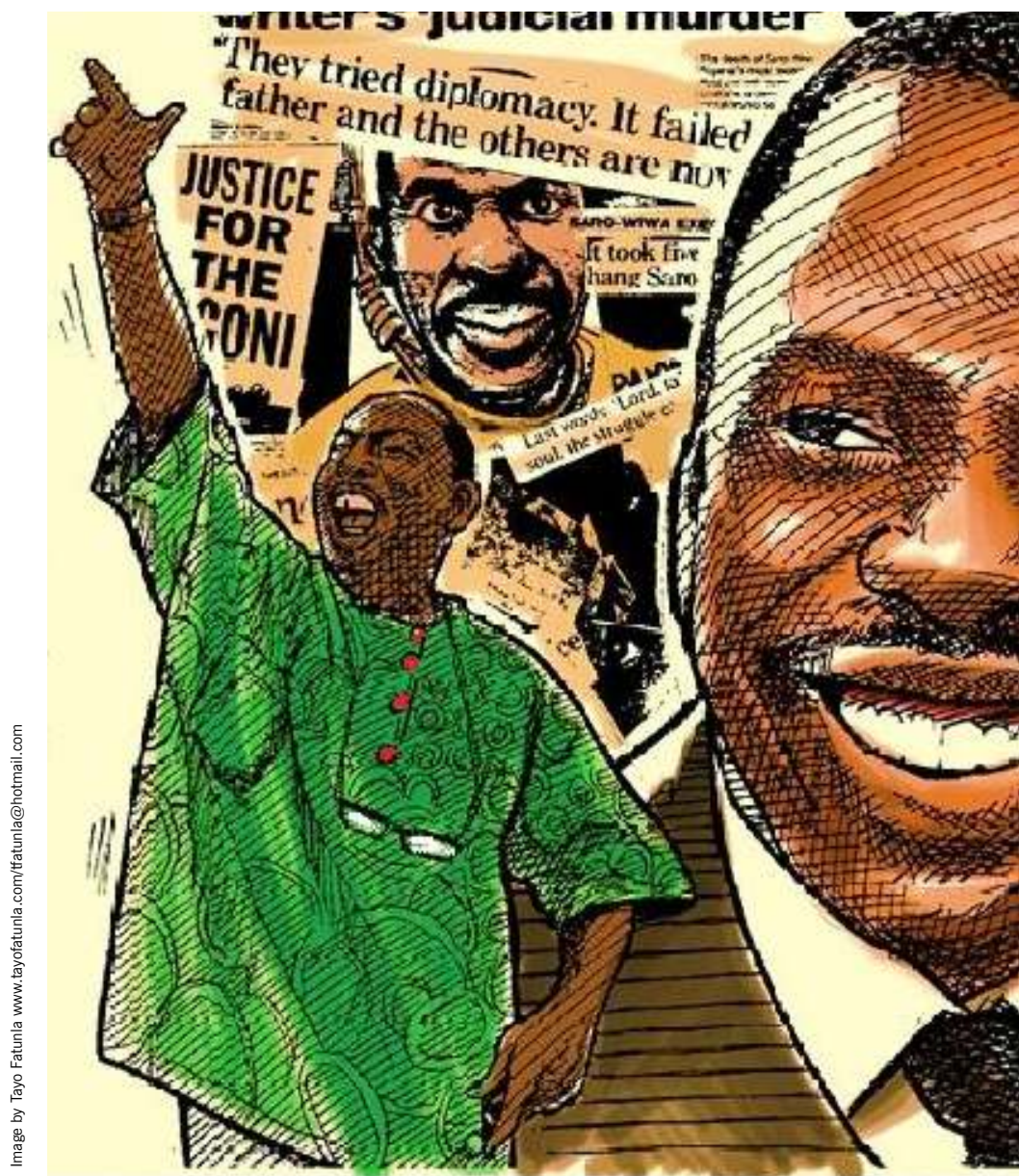
attention. Let us begin to encourage the practice of agroecology, first as a process wherein we can heal the soil. If this process continues, we can be assured of nutritious and healthy food"

At the end of the training, civil society members resolved to join the push for the use of Agroecology. They pledged to take the message further to help stem the use of chemicals for farming as they embrace agroecology as a practice.

HOMEF recommends that the government should commit to actions that ensure resilience to climate change and support the transition to Agroecology as opposed to industrial agriculture. The issue of insecurity in the country should be addressed as it impacts the ability of farmers to produce sufficiently. The government should also create and sustain policies for the preservation of indigenous seeds which are now threatened by the introduction of GMOs. The modification of the genetic configuration of crops is a false solution to the climate and food crises facing us, and should therefore not be accommodated.







# **EXONERATION, NOT A PARDON, FOR KEN SARO-WIWA AND 8 OTHER OGONIS MURDERED IN 1995**





On the 22nd of October 2021, a select group of Ogoni leaders attended a parley at the State House with President Muhammadu Buhari. Among other issues, the President stated that the “federal government will consider the request for the grant of pardon to finally close the Ogoni saga.”

The President made this commitment to “consider” a pardon immediately after he declared that “the unfortunate incidents of the early 1990s leading to the loss of lives of distinguished sons of Ogoni land and the collateral judicial processes are indelible in our memories.”

Based on the above, it is important to note that no civil society organization in Nigeria has asked for a presidential “pardon” for Ken Saro-Wiwa, Saturday Dobee, Nordu Eawo, Daniel Gbooko, Paul Levera, Felix Nuata, Baribor Bera, Barinem Kiobel, and John Kpuine, who were unjustly murdered by the Sani Abacha dictatorship. The Ogoni 9 were denied the opportunity to appeal their sentence and were hurriedly executed amidst tremendous international pressure, including sanctions against Nigeria.

What we have consistently demanded is an admission that the quasi-judicial process which resulted in the conviction of the Ogoni 9 was a mockery of justice orchestrated by the military government with the active collaboration of Shell to quell community demands for resource and ecological justice.

What we continue to demand is the complete exoneration of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Ogoni 8. It is also important to note that the President's suggestion of granting a “pardon” is tantamount to saying that the Ogoni 9 were guilty and rightly executed.

We deem the proposal to “consider” a pardon for Ken Saro-Wiwa and his comrades insensitive and offensive to their memory and that of other victims of environmental injustice. We also consider it a denial of the need to bring closure to the thousands of Ogonis who were victims of government-driven repression characterized by murders, rape, torture and forced exiles.

*...we continue to demand is the complete exoneration of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the Ogoni 8... granting a “pardon” is tantamount to saying that the Ogoni 9 were guilty and rightly executed.*

The President also used the opportunity of the parley to state that the Nigerian Petroleum Development Company Ltd (NPDC) had been granted a license to re-open and operate OML11. It is pertinent to recollect that in 1993 Shell was forced to abandon its OML 11 operations located in Ogoni and pull out of the area because of the environmental threats it poses to the communities where it is sited.

This was the direct outcome of passionate but peaceful campaigns by the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) led by Ken Saro-Wiwa. MOSOP had called the attention of the world to the poverty, neglect and environmental destruction which decades of oil exploitation had visited on the Ogoni people.

MOSOP had also demanded fairer benefits to the Ogoni people from oil wealth, as well as the remediation and compensation for the ecological damage caused by the reckless activities of oil companies. These have still not been addressed.

In 2007, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) carried out a scientific assessment of the impact of oil pollution on parts of the Ogoni environment, which found massive soil and water contamination in Ogoniland.

The assessment noted that the contamination has significantly compromised the people's sources of livelihood and was slowly poisoning the inhabitants. UNEP was so alarmed by its findings that it recommended that the inhabitants of the area immediately stop using water from all their traditional sources, while the government was to immediately commence a clean-up exercise which could take up to thirty years.

It was only about 3 years ago that the government began the actual clean-up with a new agency called HYPREP.

It is, therefore, shocking that while the clean-up is ongoing, the government is prioritizing the restart of oil extraction in the same area being cleaned up, with all its polluting impacts.

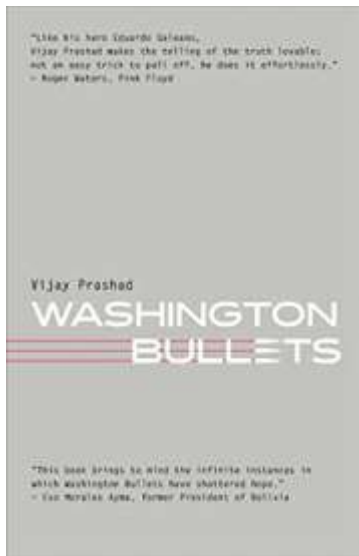
We also know for a fact that the level of soil and water contamination in other parts of the oil-producing areas of the country are similar to Ogoni or even worse. The ecological disaster in Ogoniland provides a cue for the government to take action towards the clean-up of the entire Niger Delta.

It is important to reiterate that proposing an unnecessary "pardon" for the Ogoni 9, in order to curry support with the people to reopen OML 11, is in bad faith and capable of breeding conflict. If the President is interested in reversing the injustice which the murder of the Ogoni 9 represents, the appropriate action is to exonerate the Ogoni martyrs and apologize to the Ogoni people. We also advise the President to institute strategies for a region-wide clean-up of decades of environmental pollution, which have stolen community people's livelihoods and poisoned them.

This statement is signed and endorsed by:

1. *Nnimmo Bassey, Health of Mother Earth Foundation*
2. *Ken Henshaw, We the People*
3. *Celestine AkpoBari, Peoples' Advancement Centre*
4. *Chima Williams, Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria*
5. *Abiodun Baiyewu, Global Rights*
6. *Umo Isua, Peace Point Development Foundation*
7. *Philip Jakpor, Corporate Accountability and Public Participation Africa*
8. *Iyngi Irimagha, Gender and Development Action*
9. *Olumide Idowu, International Climate Change Development Initiative*
10. *Tijah Bolton, Policy Alert*
11. *Rev. Williams Probel, Ogoni People's Assembly*

# Books You Should Read



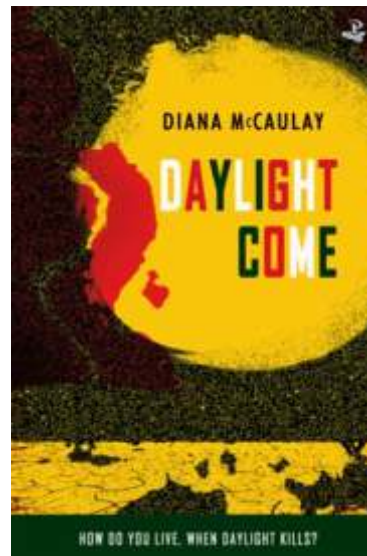
## Washington Bullets

by Vijay Prashad

Washington Bullets is written in the best traditions of Marxist journalism and history-writing. It is a book of fluent and readable stories, full of detail about US imperialism, but never letting the minutiae obscure the larger political point. It is a book that could easily have been a song of despair – a lament of lost causes; it is, after all, a roll call of butchers and assassins; of plots against people's movements and governments; of the assassinations of socialists, Marxists, communists all over the Third World by the country where liberty is a statue.

Despite all this, Washington Bullets is a book about possibilities, about hope, about genuine heroes. One such is Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso – also assassinated – who said: 'You cannot carry out fundamental change without a certain amount of madness. In this case, it comes from nonconformity, the courage to turn your back on the old formulas, the courage to invent the future. It took the madmen of yesterday for us to be able to act with extreme clarity today. I want to be one of those madmen. We must dare to invent the future.'

Washington Bullets is a book infused with this madness, the madness that dares to invent the future.



## Daylight Come

by Diana McCaulay

It is 2084 and climate change has made life on the Caribbean Island of Bajacu a gruelling trial. The sun is so hot that people must sleep in the day and live and work at night. In a world of desperate scarcity, people who reach forty are expendable. Those who still survive in the cities and towns are ruled over by the brutal, fascistic Domins, and the order has gone out for another evacuation to less sea-threatened parts of the capital.

Sorrel can take no more and she persuades her mother, Bibi, that they should flee the city and head for higher ground in the interior. She has heard there are groups known as Tribals, bitter enemies of the Domins, who have found ways of surviving in the hills, but she also knows they will have to evade the packs of ferals, animals with a taste for human flesh. Not least, she knows that the sun will kill them if they can't find shelter.

Diana McCaulay takes the reader on a tense, threat-filled odyssey as mother and daughter attempt their escape. On the way, Sorrel learns much about the nature of self-sacrifice, maternal love and the dreadful moral choices that must be made in the cause of self-protection.





Image by Babawale Obayanju, March for Climate, COP26, Glasgow



# RECOOPERATING FROM GLASGOW

Nicolas Eliades

Only after time has allowed the dust to settle upon Glasgow following the global stampede of delegates, journalists, and activists alike, can its value, or lack thereof, truly be pondered upon. The sensory overload of chasing humans, their experiences, thoughts and emotions takes time to distil. Regardless, the climate and ecological emergency insist on not being forgotten.

Much has been written, and to some, the subject might even seem stale. They may be right. As far as the news cycle is concerned, the world has moved on. Its focus shifted from a global gathering to massive flooding in Canada - 2021's poster child for climate calamity - and immigrants drowning in the English Channel and even a new Covid strain. The new normal, mayhap. Earth's newsrooms moving on from the “*bla bla bla*” aside, nature is forcing the conversation.

And so, like a fine single malt Scotch, a slow distilled look at the global voices which congregated in Scotland is worth reminiscing about. What follows are snippets of conversations had in the halls outside the plenary where a final tug of war between “*phasing out*” or “*phasing down*” coal played out among “the powers that be.” Passing the mic to these voices, we can in fact glean how so-called “leaders” will ultimately be powerless to stop the unstoppable.

In the weeks leading up to COP26, a team of Al Jazeera journalists ventured as far north as Greenland which was “both beautiful, deeply shocking, and even sad, at the same time,” explained a member of their production team.

*“We spoke to an ex-mayor in Kulusuk, an Inuit town on the east coast of Greenland. He told us how he essentially grew up in the stone age; in a stone hut with a grass roof. Due to climate change, their area has lost all its ice in the winter as well as the summer. They used to live a good, happy life off the*

*land, but thanks to climate change, their environment changed so drastically that they've been forced off the ice..." described Ben, the production team's cameraman.*

Despite his home country being first in line to face the onslaught of our globally heating world, Pacific island nation Tuvalu's Finance minister, **Seve Paeniu**, explained how he *"came ... with a high level of hope that Glasgow would deliver on the fight against climate change... I am glad Glasgow has delivered a strong message of hope. What is now left is for everyone and every country to take action and deliver on the promise of Glasgow."*

Climate Action Network's **Harjeet Singh**, from India, ultimately lamented how *"the proposal developing countries had put forward on setting up a loss and damage facility," was clearly off the table,*  
*"Instead they offer a dialogue, unacceptable to developing countries, because we have seen how such dialogues happening earlier did not result in any money. It's like telling a family, or a woman who has lost her home, 'we are going to talk about it, but we won't help you at all,' That is not acceptable."*

*Developed countries need to "show leadership," he adds "and come forward, of course, to avoid the crisis by reducing their emissions, but also help developing countries with a greener transition and for protecting people from climate impact."*

*"It's free to make (pledges)," says Ingmar Rentzhog CEO and Danish founder of climate NGO named We Don't Have Time, "there's no accountability if you follow them or not, it doesn't cost anything to make a pledge. I think if pledges are going to work, we need pledges which cost something if you don't follow through."*



Mother, grandmother and member of the Tuvalu delegation **Mala Maa** confessed how she *"came with high hopes and ambition that this COP26 will do something to save us, to save our small islands, to save our people, save my children and my grandchildren and, save the world."*

Zombying through the endless concourses which make up the "diplomatic" Blue Zone of COP26 on what would ultimately be its last day, the overwhelming failure of a can being kicked down the road and off a cliff was almost palpable.

As tired, haggard and homesick journalists milled outside plenary rooms where desperate attempts by some 200 nations waited for the final gavel to mark the end of yet another failure, the sense of doom hung around many hearts.

Country officials desperately tried to reach a final agreement that would make



this 26th Conference of the Parties a success, while activists, observers and some pens decried the farce which would emerge: defanged, defiled and subservient to national and economic interests of governing and corporate egos and elites.

“This is 200 nations which have to basically reach consensus, so we realise it's tough for everybody. I think developing countries, and very vulnerable countries, like Palau, have been very vocal about the climate action which needs to take place.

We hope our words are heard, and I think it's really up to the entire (global) community to rally behind us.... We're hopeful, but we're not there yet.... If we are not successful then (it's) a terrible disaster. I think we would have to look to the private sector and to civil (society) to try and solve the problems which

clearly governments have not been able to solve,” reflected another Pacific islander, Ilana Seid, Palau's ambassador to the United Nations.

Speaking during the final plenary as observers were asked, once again, to vacate the premises, Dutch youth climate activist and member of YOUNGO, **Bas Tuenter**, was disappointed how despite “*some great things ... came of it, and... we were absolutely moving in the right direction, the exclusivity of COP26, the lack of access we had to negotiators, has severely impacted our ability to represent [the] youth from all over the world. We could have done so much more...*”

A Peruvian Oxfam delegate, Clemence **Abbés Castillo**, described the process as “pretty disappointing... The last version of the agreement is actually really weak. We're seeing that there is not sufficient progress on loss and damage, no sufficient progress on wealthier nations reducing their emissions, and I also think there is not enough progress related to really protecting the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities.”

Politically speaking, **El Hadji Mbaye Diagne**, Director of Afrique – Energie – Environnement from Senegal described how “The G77 doesn't consider (that developed nations' leaders) have given the (talks) the necessary level of importance at a ministerial (or) political level to reach a deal... technicians have worked very hard to bring some proposals. But when it comes to reconciling political positions, there was not enough inclusivity to reach a deal.”

“With regard to inclusivity,” added

**Disha Sharkar**, a Global Youth Development Institute delegate from India, “especially access to negotiation rooms, it was somewhat hampered due to Covid protocols...”

For Global South people, it was not very accessible: the vaccination process. Also with regard to funding, there were a lot of problems. However there was a lot of progress in the kind of work which was done, and we are looking forward to the implementation, and the youth are optimistic”.

As eyes, hearts and minds move away from COP26, the focus shifts to COP27, to be celebrated in Egypt, prompting

“What will have  
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some to express concern for the lack of freedom of expression which may greet detractors, activists and protesters next year. The said concern abounds, despite it being held in Africa, the continent least responsible for the climate emergency but set to bear the brunt of it.

“What will have to happen at an African

COP(27) is for them to pick up the pieces left behind by this COP(26) for vulnerable people, for the millions and millions who are suffering. And the fact that it is being held in Africa makes it an African COP. It should be a COP for the vulnerable, and so the issue of whether there is going to be a democratic space or not... is up to civil society...

Of course, we're going to have to fight for that space, and we will take space. So it doesn't matter what people think the situation will be, we have power, we will use power and we'll do the same in whatever venue the COP is being held,” declared South African activist **Taseem Essop**, from Climate Action Network International, after staging a final die-in within the halls of political power. But what about the United Kingdom's efforts to lead the charge to steer humanity away from the brink of catastrophe.

Is all lost?

“There's always cause for hope,” says **UnaMay Gordon**, Head of Jamaica's delegation who has been attending COPs for over a decade.

“As people from small island states, if we lose hope, then we lose humanity... There's always cause for hope.

There have been some great agreements even from some developed countries, and there have been some disappointments. But, overall I think there is hope. What needs to be done, having been here, having hosted a COP successfully within a pandemic - because we should not lose sight of the fact that there has been no major (Covid-19) outbreak among the 20,000 people who have been here- ... There have been some gains, not a lot, but I think the bar has been moved.”

Standing outside the final plenary



“As people from  
small island states, if we  
lose hope, then we lose humanity...”

session, moments before the final gavel fell and silenced COP26 once and for all, **Melissa Jimenez-GT**, a young scientist and Extinction Rebellion climate activist from Mexico, pondered on the purpose of COP and what the palpable climate struggle surrounding it represents: “We fight for what is worth defending: nature, biodiversity; all living organisms are worth defending.

*When we say they, our leaders, are not quite fighting for that, this is true. They are fighting for a system, to keep the status quo and carry on with business as usual. In fact, it is this which should be destroyed, and changed completely, and revolutionised.*

*We need to generate a revolution. This is just the beginning. The beginning of a new awakening.... We know what the problem is... the science has already told us what it is. Now the issue is how are you going to fix it, how are you going to deal with it. Instead of saying we are the virus...no, we are ourselves part of this organism called Planet.*

*Therefore instead of being a cancer, let us act, join forces, actually do something for this organism, for Our planet, for Our Mother Earth. We must, in order for us to survive. And if not then we are going to go extinct.”*

**Nick Mulvey** sang the soundtrack to the moment one night in Glasgow from the beautiful fringes of climate diplomacy:

*“The dreamin' of the land  
And the calling of the rain  
We are life itself  
Remembering our way  
We are life itself  
The dreaming of the sea  
We still have time*

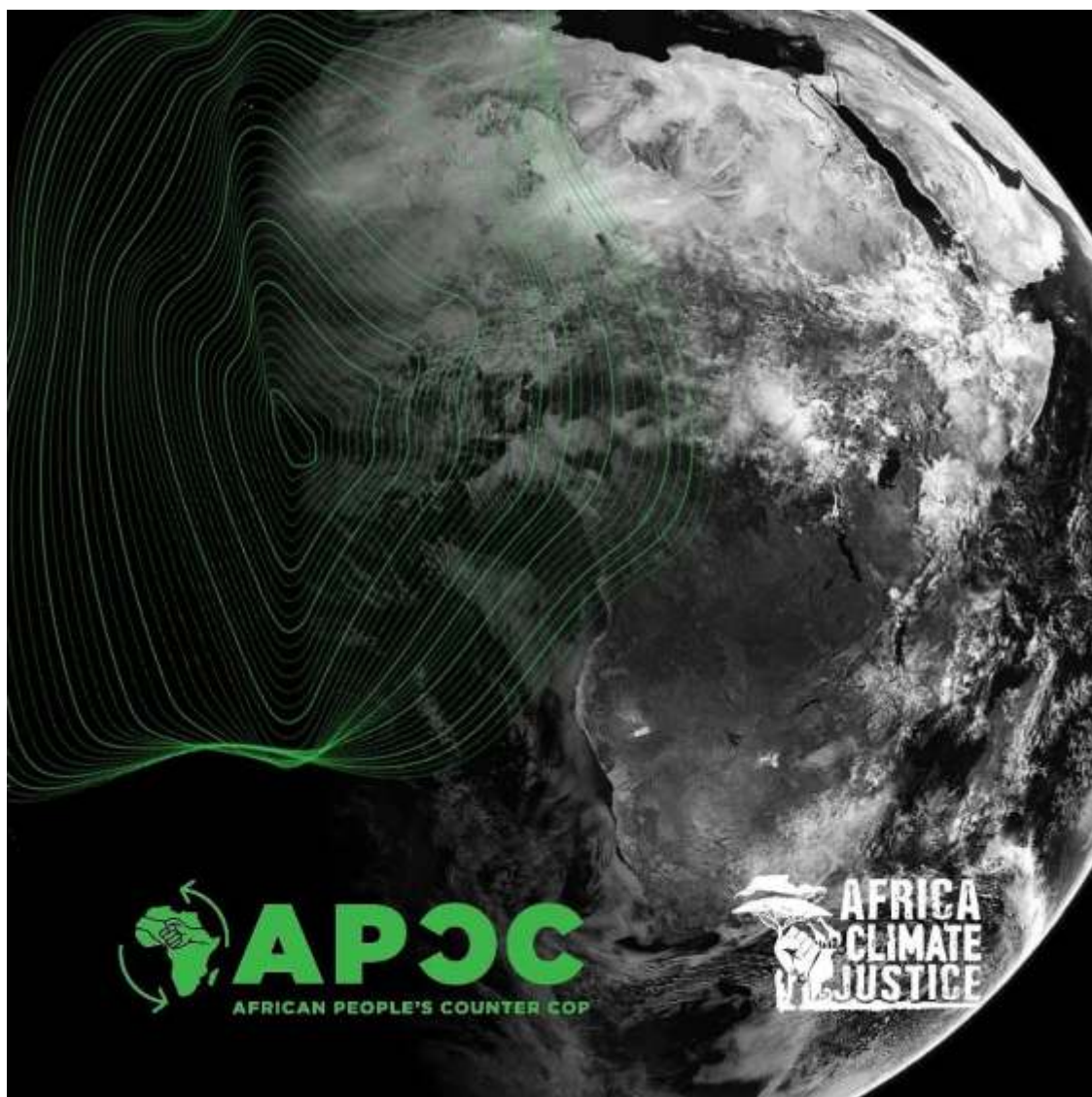
...In the Anthropocene, what does your freedom mean?”

The British singer belonged to an army of uncountable, badgeless delegates in Glasgow. Artists, adventurers, film-makers, live streamers, even a glass-blower just lending her car, and the beautiful families of Human Hotel who opened up hearts and homes to strangers. All of them were brought together for life and the planet. These exemplary humans are the leaders Barack Obama and Greta Thunberg called for just days before.

Hope remains in the voice of the youth and the mycelial network of humans brought together for this climate feast; humans waking from the slumber of a pandemic to fight another day – for you, for me, for life, for Earth.

That's what freedom means.

**\*Nicolas Eliades is with The Clima – communicating change**



African People's Statement on COP26

# Rise Up *and* Demand Climate Justice!

Adopted at the African People's Counter COP

**W**e, the African people, women, peasants, social movements, community-based and civil society organisations have gathered at the first-ever African People's Counter COP 2021 to build a unified understanding and shared political action towards real solutions to the climate and ecological and social crises facing Africa!

We are now calling on our African governments, including the African Group of Negotiators, and those in the Least Developed Countries (LDC) group to go into the forthcoming COP26 in Glasgow and negotiate in the interests of the African peoples and our planet, not in the interests of the elites and polluters.

Africa is living the climate crisis now! Our continent is being hit by heatwaves, droughts, wildfires, dried soils, cyclones, storms, locust plagues, flooding, sea-level rise and other climate-related disasters. Since 2000, Mozambique, Madagascar, Zimbabwe and Kenya have been among the hardest-hit countries in the world, even though their emissions are minimal. Our ten hottest years have all been recorded since 2005.

The temperature across Africa is projected to be hotter than previously experienced in the recorded past and will

rise faster than the global average across most parts of the continent. With about 60 per cent of our people depending on agriculture and local food systems to survive, most of whom are peasant women food producers, food insecurity levels are being intensified and African lives and livelihoods are at severe risk.

Whilst Africa and its people continue to suffer the most devastating impacts of the crisis, the tragic irony remains that the region has contributed least to the climate crisis!

We must deal with the root cause of the crisis!

Climate change and its impacts are linked to our colonial past and imperialist development, which were and still are based on a capitalist, extractivist model. Indeed, the modern economy has created the climate, ecological, economic and social crises we face today. These intersecting crises continue to be deepened by a colonial, patriarchal and neoliberal model of accumulation, which is driven by a logic of domination, exploitation and destruction of human beings and nature.

The Global Climate Summits have failed us. To make matters worse, we watch

with dismay as over the last 26 years, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Conference of Parties (COPs) as annual spaces for intergovernmental negotiations have been unable to progress towards real solutions to the climate crisis. This is because their agenda and actions have been skewed to preserve the profit-driven, vested interests of powerful corporations and their allies in governments.

They continue to undermine solutions that address the core causes of climate change. Corporate polluters and the government negotiators at the UNFCCC don't want to take financial, legal or any responsibility for the damage caused, or to genuinely reduce carbon emissions and pollution.

For these 26 years, climate negotiations have been blocked and curtailed at every turn. Big corporations have captured this space to promote false solutions such as "net-zero", carbon markets, and supposed "nature-based solutions" (including timber plantations and genetic crop modification), which would provide them with the means to protect and expand their control over global populations, their lands and territories, and natural resources, all to profit off the crisis.

In fact, these and other false solutions are causing massive land grabbing across our continent, illegal logging is not decreasing and dangerous monoculture plantations are spreading. What is needed is an end to fossil fuels, an end to industrial agribusiness, rapid reduction in wasteful consumption and a fundamentally changed economy and society that prioritises care for people and the Planet.

The COP26 in Glasgow is particularly worrying, as it continues to perpetuate global injustices and inequities even

during this critical pandemic. The UK government has insisted on hosting the COP this year despite the likely poor participation of governments and especially civil society of the Global South because of high costs, lack of access to vaccines, now popularly dubbed "vaccine apartheid", visa difficulties and onerous, constantly-changing and biased quarantine and travel requirements. The calls for a postponement to ensure a fully representative and participatory COP fell on deaf ears.

The voices of Global South women, people of colour, working-class people, frontline communities and others vulnerable to the climate crisis are likely to have been silenced at this COP. The big corporates and governments of the Global North will capture the negotiations with their destructive narrative and decisions.

Our African delegation and Global South governments also suffer ever-diminishing power, so it is safe to predict that the COP26 outcomes were unfair, unjust, and lacking the needed ambition and justice.

Given this situation, the world - and especially our African Delegation to the COP – were called upon to push for the following outcomes in Glasgow:

Cut Greenhouse Gases (GhG) to Zero:  
Adopt GhG emissions reduction requirements to keep the average global temperature below 1.5C recognising that Africa is close to 1.5 degrees already and warming at twice the global average. Ensure that cuts are based on science and justice so that those who have polluted most must carry the brunt of drastic emission cuts at source and pay compensation costs.

Hold those who continue more to pollution to account by penalising them



through legal means, as well as naming and shaming, divestment, and sanctions. Reduction of emissions from the military, maritime and air transport should also be treated as an urgent priority since the UNFCCC has historically ignored them due to political pressure.

**Ensure a Just Recovery and Transition:**

A just Recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and its intersecting crises must focus on creating a 'new normal' that centre on people and the planet, and not on profit.

Ensure a just transition away from carbon-intensive and high consumption economies, which would support affected workers and communities and radically transform our energy, transport (and tourism), education, agriculture, urbanisation, production, consumption and disposal systems.

This agenda should include consultation with labour unions and informal worker collectives, with a focus on decent work,

growing public sector jobs and livelihoods, and ensuring public investments in social protection and public services, such as early learning and care centres, education, welfare, as well as primary and secondary health services. There should be a special focus on mass education on climate change and systemic transition in all their dimensions.

**Stop False Solutions:** Abandon all false solutions including net zero, failed emissions-trading and offsetting gimmicks, so-called nature-based solutions and other tech-fix false solutions like geoengineering, timber-plantation sequestration, dangerous genetic modification and manipulation. Nuclear energy, big dams, and 'Green' and 'Blue' Economy must be called out as scams and be abolished. Lands and forests must be removed as a way to implement Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, which focuses on advancing false solutions to climate change. Governments, civil society and social



movements must fight together for system change and demand real zero, not net zero.

**Formalize the Rights of Nature:** Legally institute the rights of nature and make ecocide a criminal offence so that the planet is restored for the present and future generations. Ban any technological 'scheme' that aims to pervert and abuse the natural order, including, for example, seeding clouds for rain, depositing iron filings in the seas to absorb sunlight, and injecting aerosols into the atmosphere to cool the planet.

**Manage Technology as a Public Good:** Allow the transfer of climate-friendly technology and localised production techniques without imposing any Intellectual Property restrictions or loan conditionalities. Commit to universal clean-energy and public transport access, and adopt far-reaching food-sovereignty reforms.

**Leave Fossil Fuels Underground:** Financiers, owners or managers of oil, gas and coal reserves must stop all new exploration (and phase out current extraction), and at the same time revalue the reserves that they are exiting from and account for this as 'stranded assets.'

To do this, end the \$6 trillion worth of annual government fossil fuel subsidies. The free, prior, informed and continuous consent of women, indigenous peoples and their communities, and their #Right2SayNO to fossil fuels extraction and combustion projects, as well as harmful mega infrastructure projects, must be recognised and respected.

**Honour and Pay Climate Debt:** Ensure that the historical 'polluter-pays' responsibilities for the 'climate debt' that large emitters owe is honoured and paid to oppressed women, indigenous and other local communities in the Global

South. Governments should develop sustainable participation mechanisms that bring small-scale food producers' voices to the policy table to create people-centred policies.

Climate debt should acknowledge the ways in which the climate crisis impacts different groups. Women carry the heaviest debt burden of climate change. Climate debt settlement must provide redress in the forms of particular support to the work of care, such as education, health services, land rights and support to household food production etc. and replace debt-based finance with grants. Climate debt should fully cover 'loss and damage' reparations, costs of climate-proofing adaptation and resilience, and compensation for low-emissions countries' use of carbon space.

**Make Climate Justice Possible with Economic and Debt Justice:** The global transition to a more sustainable and equitable economy will not be possible without sustainable, sufficient, fair and non-debt creating finance. It is critical that the financing of the transition does not exacerbate debt vulnerabilities in the Global South. The cancellation of odious debt is needed for countries not only to be able to fight the COVID-19 pandemic but also to address the challenges of climate change and pursue a green and inclusive just recovery. Illicit capital flows away from Africa and the Global South must be urgently stopped and compensated for.

**End Sacrifice Zones:** Ban new infrastructure projects which displace indigenous and other local communities from their territories, pollute the water, air and soil, and destroy nature, all in the name of so-called 'development.'

Fenceline communities' Right to Say No to these projects must be heard, honoured and treated as legally binding

decisions. Recognise that we cannot mine our way out of the climate crisis. Interventions must protect local people in areas affected by destructive mining activities and 'green extractivism.'

Those that inflicted harm must pay for the damage caused and fair reparations must be given to those already affected. Special attention and support must be given to coastal communities, whose territories are among the hardest hit.

**Stop Waste Colonialism:** We must reject waste dumping in the Global South and exclude waste-to-energy incineration from national and other climate plans. Stop petrochemical expansion, reduce plastic production, and phase out single-use plastic and packaging across different sectors.

Plans must include investment in waste reduction measures and zero-waste circular economic systems, including reuse-based alternative product delivery systems.

Hold polluter companies accountable for plastic pollution and their enormous contribution to global warming, in line with the "producer pays" principle.

Finance a just transition model with robust social protection and decent income for workers including waste pickers engaged in recycling, reuse, and waste prevention, recognising their contribution to climate change mitigation, and protecting them from climate change impacts.

Recognize peasant agroecology and other truly sustainable food production and distribution models as alternatives to the industrialized food system.

This is a core foundation of climate justice and a part of real solutions to the climate crisis in Africa and the world. Governments should increase national

budget allocations to agriculture, guided by the principle of free, prior and informed (and continuous) consent by small-scale food producers and consumers. Governments and other actors should mainstream agroecology in its agricultural policies, and promote it through research and extension services.

**Listen to Solutions from the Impacted and Marginalized:** We must support the youth who will inherit the future to inform themselves, speak out, raise their voices, and mobilize in solidarity to bring about change. The youth have a pivotal role to play in food production and must be urgently and effectively integrated into sustainable food production.

The struggle for climate justice is feminist, so we must all fight for and support the meaningful representation of women and girls, children, youth, persons with disabilities and the poorest of the poor in policy and other interventions addressing climate change.

We must be led by the stewards of people and planet- women and indigenous peoples. Advancing feminist economic and ecological alternatives and revalorising indigenous knowledge systems is an existential priority.

***Africans Rise Up and Demand Climate Justice!***

***CLIMATE JUSTICE NOW!***

***A NEW AFRICA IS POSSIBLE!***

***IT IS TIME TO TRANSFORM!***

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10 November 2021

# KEN SARO-WIWA DAY

LET'S NOT FORGET THOSE THAT STOOD  
UP TO CORPORATE POWER AND THE ELITE

(In memory of Ken Saro-Wiwa, Fikile Ntshangase and 'Bazooka' Radebe)

by Lorraine Chiponda/ Bobby Peek



Africans commemorate the day that Ken Saro-Wiwa and his fellow activists were murdered by the Nigerian state 26 years ago as a result of their resistance to Shell in Ogoniland, Nigeria. The eight other community activists were **Saturday Dobee, Nordu Eawo, Daniel Gbooko, Paul Levera, Felix Nuate, Baribor Bera, Barinem Kiobel, and John Kpuine** – all from Ogoniland. They – popularly known as the Ogoni 9 – were hanged by the government of Sani Abacha because of their resistance and opposition to the exploitation of oil by Shell.

Between 22nd and 24th September 2021, more than 260 Africans representing 70 organisations from 26 countries gathered to reflect on their resistance to coal and dirty energy expansion, and energy poverty on the African continent. The meeting reflected on the violence of coal and other extractive industries on the continent. After 3 days of dialogue, the 3rd Africa Coal Network gathering took a decision to call on President Ramaphosa to act with urgency and sincerity in tracking down and bringing to justice those implicated in the murder of Mama Fikile Ntshangase: “Today we address this media release to the President of South Africa to act with speed and personal commitment to finding those that murdered Mama Fikile Ntshangase.”

At the Africa Coal Network gathering, we heard of coal mining struggles in Tete, Mozambique, to resistance to coal-fired power station proposals in Lamu, Kenya. We heard of the resistance to Chinese financed development in Sengwa, Zimbabwe to Ekumfi, Ghana. We heard of gender justice and the dismantling of patriarchy from activists in Morocco, Nigeria, Kenya and Zimbabwe. We recognise that a just transition must be one that is rooted in democracy, gender justice and non-violence.

We not only heard about struggle, but we also celebrated our victories. China is no longer going to fund coal in Africa. We also heard of many mobilisations across our continent building a movement for a just transition and saying No to Coal and Dirty Energy, and mobilisations in Cameroon, Tanzania and Togo for a renewable energy future.

We are, however, saddened by how our political elite work with (foreign) corporations to make Africa poorer and more vulnerable to climate change because of their fixation on coal, oil and gas. This fixation has resulted in violence, and in October 2020, the murder of Mama Fikile Ntshangase for her stance against coal. A year later despite various calls the South African government has not acted to find those responsible for her murder.

We also heard from activists that had to go into hiding in Nigeria, and those being shot with rubber bullets in Mozambique and South Africa. We (re-)committed ourselves to continuing our resistance and the fight for a new Africa and a new world. We called for a stop to violence and the closing of democratic spaces, and we (re-)committed ourselves to strengthening our work and demands for a just transition.

We remember Saro-Wiwa, Ntshangase, Radebe and all others who sought to protect our earth. Let's protect those that protect the earth.

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# No to Net Zero and other False Climate Solutions

Magdalene Idiang

Climate change is perceptibly affecting people now: people from the coastal region of Nigeria to the toxic neighbourhoods in Niger Delta where oil companies continue to dump their poisonous gases on communities; from the growing number of refugees in Africa, made homeless because of unprecedented drought followed by floods, erosion, storms, heatwaves, to those losing their land to the insatiable corporate demand for further extraction of fossil fuels and minerals.

The climate crisis is closely tied to the burning of oil, coal and gas. A third of all carbon dioxide emissions come from burning coal. Fossil carbon is being taken out of the ground, run through combustion chambers, and transferred to a more active and rapidly circulating carbon pool in the air, oceans, vegetation and soil. Some types of this active carbon build up in the atmosphere in the form of carbon dioxide, trapping more of the sun's heat, warming the earth and destabilizing the climate.

Yet, in spite of the glaring evidence of global warming and considerable knowledge of possible paths to take, our societies are hesitant to combat it. It is not that they lack the political will to do anything about it. They have the surplus political will for dealing with the climate crisis, just as they have plenty of political will for trying to turn any other crisis to their advantage. The problem is that almost all of this “will” is directed towards technical, informational, or 'market' fixes entrusted to a handful of undemocratic institutions and corporations.

*“The powers that be prefer profit to people and the planet. So, business as usual continues and disaster brings even more profit through the displacement of poor people and the grabbing of resources”*

The powers that be prefer profit to people and the planet. So, business as usual continues and disaster brings even more profit through the displacement of poor people and the grabbing of resources that the poor and the vulnerable are unable to access or return to.

The Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) repeatedly confirm that the world's largest industrial powers have refused to meaningfully reduce their climate emissions, shifting attention to what they called climate's Plan B "Net Zero" and finding value in corporate plantations and slower forest destruction.

The term "net zero" has recently burst onto the scene, backed by some major players. The World Bank, the G7, a coalition of business leaders led by Richard Branson, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and oil companies like Shell have all endorsed it.

Talk has begun to shift from "emission reduction" to "net zero emissions." It has become the newest buzzword of these groups and businesses whose activities have continued to endanger our world!

The latest IPCC report on climate change insists that action must be taken to ensure that the store of carbon in the atmosphere is brought to net zero; what is meant by that is that the amount of carbon released from excessive consumption and burning of fossil fuels and the like must be equal to the amount of carbon that is captured and stored somewhere, locked in sinks or deflected by some other means.

Rather than actually reducing emissions to zero, 'net zero' means that some emissions can keep rising but be offset via the removal of emissions from the atmosphere ('negative emissions').

The suggested aim is to reach 'net zero' emissions, and deadlines range from 2050 to the end of this century.

### **Why the sudden consensus?**

From the beginning, climate technocrats have been under heavy pressure to try and operate a 'system of credits and debits wherein emission or sequestration of carbon in the biosphere is equated with emission of carbon from fossil fuels.

They have been pushed into trying to prove that a world that shuts down a certain number of coal mines or oil wells will be climatically equivalent to one which keeps them open but plant more trees, ploughs less soil, fertilise oceans with iron and so forth. On closer examination, net zero is actually a shiny package for variations of old geoengineering schemes.

The idea of net zero depends on the massive use of offsets, which in turn means that fossil fuels will keep being burnt, while corporations promote themselves as carbon-neutral, green, sustainable or any other attractive term that sounds environmentally friendly but do more than greenwash destruction.

### **So, what is to be done?**

In 2015, the Paris Agreement on climate change agreed to limit the increase of the global temperature to "well below 2 degrees," including to "pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5 degree Celsius above preindustrial level" before the end of this century.

The report finds that limiting global warming to 1.5 degree Celsius would require "rapid and far-reaching transitions in land, energy, industry, buildings, transport and cities. Global net human-caused emissions of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) would need to fall by



Image by Babawale Obayemi, March for Climate, COP26, Glasgow

about 45 per cent from 2010 levels by 2030, reaching 'net zero' around 2050.

This means that any remaining emissions would need to be balanced by removing CO<sub>2</sub> from the air. For example, a company emitting 10 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> in place A would need to buy credits from an offset project that absorbs 10 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> in place B. This logic ignores the uniqueness of any one place and is based on the false assumption that the life and the interconnectedness of a place can be swapped, replaced or recreated.

All of the scenarios put forward by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) for net zero involve the extensive use of Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS)

**Is this dangerous?**

The International Energy Agency (IEA), whose core mission has been to promote and secure affordable energy supplies to foster economic growth, recently issued a report with the intent to end fossil fuel expansion and transition to net zero energy emissions by 2050.

The report sets out clear milestones on how it will transform the global economy from one dominated by fossil fuels into one powered predominantly by renewable energy. It also described the pathway to building a net zero energy sector in the next 30 years with the extensive use of geoengineering techniques, such as BECCS.

The reality is that not all projects that go under the name of 'renewable energy schemes' promote real climate solutions, foster autonomy, or help in the transition





away from fossil fuels. Other types of 'renewable energy' projects may turn out to be of equally questionable climatic or social value when integrated into the carbon market as supports for a system dominated by fossil fuel technologies and corporate expansion.

BECCS is a multi-phase process that, in theory, removes carbon from the atmosphere. It involves harvesting biomass, burning it for energy, capturing the resulting carbon emissions before they enter into the atmosphere, and then permanently storing these underground.

The idea is that, since the biomass crop absorbs CO<sub>2</sub> while they grow, the repeated use of BECCS will reduce the amount of carbon from the atmosphere. However, this technology is purely hypothetical and many scientists have raised alarm about the implications of basing a plan to address climate change on BECCS.

Keeping global warming below 2 degree Celsius with BECCS would require about 6 billion hectares of land to keep climate emissions from heating the earth by more than 2 degrees.

The total area of India is 328 million hectares, which means that according to the most conservative estimate, the land grab required to get the planet to "net zero" is over one and a half times the world's seventh-largest country. Farmland that people rely on for their livelihoods and ecosystem worthy of protection would be sacrificed for the gigantic BECCS plantations and other carbon capture approaches.

Land conflicts would ensue. The consequences of today's land-grabbing illustrate how this would impoverish people, stoke violence and destroy communities.

The claim that dangerous climate

solutions like BECCS, Carbon Offsetting, REDD+, Nature-based Solutions, Climate Smart Agriculture, Clean Development Mechanism+, land-use change offsets will halt the climate crisis is false. This crisis has been caused more than anything else by the mining of fossil fuels and the release of their carbon to the ocean, air, soil and living things. This excessive burning of fossil fuels is now jeopardizing Earth's ability to maintain a liveable climate.

### **No to Net Zero, real climate solutions exist**

"Net Zero" is a false climate solution that entrenches and magnifies social inequalities in many ways. People around the world need to be made aware of this commodification and privatization, so they can actively intervene to ensure the protection of the Earth's climate.

The much-lauded goal of net zero emissions by 2050 isn't zero at all. It is based on 'offsetting' emissions, not cutting them, and relies on unproven technologies to suck carbon out of the atmosphere.

Developed countries must commit to real zero. Not net zero. We demand legally binding targets, not promises from big businesses.

'Offsetting' will result in poorer countries, pushing communities from their homes to make way for 'carbon farm' forests.

The transition we need is not only out of fossil fuels but also away from capitalism. The renewable energy that we should promote is not big plantations of BECCS projects, solar panels or wind farms that evict indigenous and rural populations. Instead, we should promote family, community and municipal renewable energy projects that empower society and transform people from being mere consumers to becoming producers of energy.



Image: site.google.com

# LET'S NOT BE GOADED BY GREED TO POLITICISE **POLLUTION:**

Reflecting on the Current Gas Leak  
at Conoil Facility

By Morris Alagoa

It is no longer secret that an oil industry operational failure occurred on the night of 31st October 2021 off Sangana in Akassa Kingdom of Brass Local Government Area of Bayelsa State. For proper identification of the location in line with industry practice, the incident occurred in Otuo Oilfield, OML 59 (Otuo South).

The Adriatic 1 rig owned by Shelf Drilling Nigeria Ltd was operating for Conoil Producing Nigeria Ltd when the accident happened – a serious gas leak.

As a result of the accident, company workers evacuated immediately. But the spewing of raw gas from the bottom of the sea to the surface has continued.

Earlier, information from Sangana revealed that a strange odour (suspected to be gas) was perceived in the community, which made people become apprehensive and scared of fire accidents and their implications for their health.

Some of the observations of a joint fact-finding team, which included the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA), Bayelsa State Ministries of Environment and Mineral Resources, community leaders and media was that the usual rainbow colour sheen associated with hydrocarbon was on the water up to the community waterfront and dead fishes were also sighted. The joint report also confirmed that no worker was seen at the gas leak site and no visible signs of any action taken to stop the leakage.

This reminds us of the KS Endeavor rig explosion at Chevron's North Apoi facility on 16 January 2012. The KS Endeavor rig was being operated by FODE Drilling Nigeria Ltd for Chevron. That incident happened within the Funiwa Oilfield of Chevron. The argument of this article is that playing politics with pollution would not serve the common good of our communities and people. Oil spills/gas leaks occurring on land and those occurring on moving water bodies have different characteristics when it comes to their ability to spread and the scope of impact. This is the same for airborne pollution.

There is no way any properly conducted investigation would limit the impacts of the ongoing gas leak to just one community. Even if at the time of visit the wind and water current were sailing in the direction of Sangana – because we know these wind and water currents can change direction at any time – it is only logical to think that other communities in the Akassa Kingdom would be affected in varying degrees. Not only that, other coastal communities in Southern Ijaw Local Government might be impacted too, either in terms of health or fish poisoning. Politicians should take broader views of issues even outside the immediate communities, kingdoms and constituencies.

At this juncture, one would appreciate Senator Douyi Diri, Governor of Bayelsa State. When he was at the Federal House of Representatives, even though he was representing Yenagoa/Kolokuma Opokuma Federal Constituency, he was interested in what happened in other parts of the State. That was why he acted on the menace posed by Trawler operators on our Atlantic coastline (even though the matter didn't receive sufficient attention in the House).

ERA/FoEN's first reaction to the KS Endeavor rig explosion in January 2012 was that unless adequate efforts were made to contain the situation, other coastline communities would be affected. And that was how it happened. Communities in Brass, Southern Ijaw and Ekeremor Local government areas were impacted by that incident. So, when politicians sponsor news and limit water and airborne polluting substance to a particular location or community, it leaves much to be desired. In the past, we have heard of cases where communities allegedly denied neighbouring communities from benefiting from electricity, road or some other projects oil companies were willing to extend to their neighbours. This is retrogressive and unwholesome, if true. We can do better by being our brother's keepers.

*\*Morris Alagoa is head of the Niger Delta Resource Centre, ERA/FoEN, Yenagoa Office*

We read with utter shock and disbelief the remarks made by the Director-General, National Biosafety Management Agency (NBMA), Dr Rufus Ebegba, at a one-day workshop organised by the Environment Media Correspondents Association of Nigeria, where he described those campaigning against the approval of TELA Maize by his agency as terrorists.

When does speaking the truth and requesting that NBMA, which is saddled with the duty of managing and protecting our biodiversity, should withdraw the permits it had granted to a failed product that had been deemed unsuccessful in other jurisdictions result in the agency descending so low to attack the critics with such label as terrorists? We recall that this agency recently concocted a guideline for biosecurity. It may be a good time to critically examine the agency to find out if their spate of approvals, as well as wilful blindness to several unauthorised imported GM products, do not constitute acts of terrorism against the unsuspecting people of our nation.

To be clear, we restate our stand that the so-called TELA Maize approved by NBMA is a failed product. If the agency had bothered to do a thorough job, they would have reached the same conclusion.

It might interest Nigerians to know that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) found that the performance of this genetically modified maize variety acclaimed to be drought-tolerant is poor both in terms of yield and adoption by farmers when compared with non-genetically modified drought-tolerant maize.

In October 2018, the South African biosafety authority rejected the GM maize for commercial

growing as it found that the data provided by Monsanto could not sufficiently prove the claimed drought-tolerant and insect-resistant capabilities of the maize. There was no yield nor agronomic performance advantage of the GM variety over the conventional varieties.

In fact, the SA authorities found that the yields of the GM variety were inconsistent and, in some cases, the GM maize had lower yields than conventional maize,







Image by Babawale Obayanju // GMOs Rally Abuja

# NIGERIANS AGAINST GMOS ARE NOT TERRORISTS,

Activists Reply DG of NBMA

according to the kernel count per row and the kernel count per ear data.

Similarly, in November 2018, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries in Tanzania, Mathew Mtigumwe, ordered an immediate halt to all

ongoing field trials on GM maize crops promoted as drought-tolerant.

The trials conducted by the Tanzania Agriculture Research Institute (TARI) were ordered to be immediately stopped and the test remnants destroyed. It is important to note that the Permanent Secretary gave the order after the unauthorised use and release of the trial results by TARI.

In Kenya, this WEMA Project has been rebranded as TELA Maize and is being hyped by the promoters of modern agricultural biotechnology as effective against drought and the Fall Army Worm (FAW), although only a conditional approval has been given for National Performance Trials (NPTs) pending the results of a full and proper Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

Recently, Mexico announced it would replace 16 Million tonnes of GM corn with native varieties and ban the toxic herbicide glyphosate.

All these compelling cases reinforce and reaffirm what we and other movements, real farmers and peoples all over the world already knew. GM revolution has not met its promises, not lived up to its hype and can therefore be considered failed!

We would continue to denounce the introduction of all unwholesome products, food and seeds in Nigeria, and we reiterate that Nigeria is neither an experimental field nor a dumping ground. We know that the GM Maize is being pushed tactically into Nigeria and the rest of the continent through the WEMA project, now rebranded as TELA Maize.

South Africa has already rejected a triple-stacked variety including the drought-tolerant trait. Tanzania cancelled trials in their nation. The drought-tolerant trait does not work. It failed in the US. We are not guinea pigs and certainly not the

site for dumping junk technologies. We must call a spade a spade by denouncing the lax manner by which failed technologies are being celebrated in Nigeria while officials saddled with defending our environmental integrity feel bold enough to make flippant assertions when their judgement is questioned.

It is obvious to any sincere observer that Nigeria is becoming a willing tool in the pursuit of destroying Africa's biodiversity and entrenching industrial and extractivist forms of agriculture.

It is crystal clear that Nigeria and indeed the whole of Africa is facing an onslaught and there is a need for concerned citizens and all stakeholders to speak out to save Nigeria and indeed Africa from the shackles of corporate profiteers, whose only interests are markets, investments and profits.

There is an avalanche of evidence of successful indigenous African solutions in agroecological agriculture (in the context of food sovereignty) as an alternative to the so-called green revolution model being promoted by the cult of GMO promoters.

***Mariann Bassey- Orovwuje is the Coordinator, Food Sovereignty Program, Friends of the Earth Nigeria and Africa.***

# History of Political Thought from *Alternative* Perspectives in India

Dr Sonali Narang

Nature is the source of existence and everything was so simple at the beginning of human civilization until humans started the notion of possession; complexity grew and led to the birth of all disciplines. Any event in society like climate change that knows no border has its wider implications for all other disciplines.

The geography of Hind Mahasagar (Indian Ocean) is known for its knowledge, that is, the science of knowing oneself. Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam is a Sanskrit phrase found in Hindu texts such as the Maha Upanishad, which means "*the world is one family*."

With this, we learn that there was no idea of a Developed or Developing World; we were all equal, as we moved under the same universe and were part of the

same nature. When human beings went away from nature, they developed different religions and established orthodoxies and rituals among themselves in the name of the Almighty.

The core of Politics revolves around humans, resources, power, and the establishment of authority. This we have witnessed in all the ages of human civilization.

The history of the subject of politics is as old as human civilization on earth. The struggle for power and the contest for resources and land have characterised politics in every age.

In Hinduism, the world begins with the history of Satyug and is considered to be the first and best of the four yugas (world ages) in a Yuga Cycle. Still, we could not escape the conflict.



The conflict during this period of time was about the supremacy of authority; the king of that age Hiranyakashipu was an Asura (devil) and king of the Daityas from the Puranic scriptures of Hinduism.

He wanted control over everyone and was using every immoral means to control his population, even with education in schools just praising Hiranyakashipu, but his son Praladh revolted against his own father as he was the follower of Truth (Vishnu). Hirnakaspu created all hurdles to end his son's life but could not succeed.

Finally, Narasimha came and saved the life of Praladh by killing Hiranakaspu. This way, the kingdom was saved from the cruel king and peace was restored. The next age is of The Treta Yuga.

In Hinduism, this is the second-best of the four yugas (world ages) in a Yuga Cycle and was followed by Dvapara Yuga.

During this period, Lord Rama had to go to exile due to his stepmother who wanted his real son, Barat, to become the King of Ayodhya.





While in exile, the King Ravana of Lanka, which is now Sri Lanka, took Rama's wife forcefully and made her a captive in his kingdom. There was a rise of evil in the form of the demon king of Lanka, Ravana.

He conquered the three worlds, namely Earth, Heaven and the Netherworld (Patala), and terrorized everyone. Hanuman was one of the central characters of the Hindu epic, Ramayana who was sent as a peace mediator. Rama made every effort to prevent the war but Ravana was not ready to compromise by returning Rama's wife.

As a result, a war began as a need of the period. Rama ended the era by killing Ravana and establishing some sort of social order.

The next era was of Dvapara, the third of four Yugas, which ended 5117 years ago. During this era, brothers Kaurav and Pandavas were conflicting for a piece of land and the resources of Hastinapur which is a city in the Meerut district in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh.

Every immoral means was used by Kauravas to encroach the Pandavas through members of the same family but equally as powerful actors. These actors (Kuarav) did not give the rights to their brothers (Pandavas).

Krishna was the key political figure during that time. He worked as a peace mediator and tried his best to convince Kauravas to just give five villages to Pandavas and can keep the whole land and resources with them but Kauravas didn't agree to it.

The war could not be prevented through dialogue and so, it finally led to the Great War which was called the Mahabharata War in which soldiers and the armies of both sides got killed and Pandavas emerged victorious under the supervision of Krishna. In this war, a discourse of Geeta was also narrated by Krishna to Arjuna on the art of living with the universe in which he clearly stated that our universe is within ourselves.

The Shrimad Bhagavad Gita is considered to be 'The Song by God' often referred to as the Gita. The Gita is set in a narrative framework of a dialogue between the Pandava prince, Arjuna, and his guide and charioteer Krishna.

At the start of the Dharma Yuddha (righteous war) between the Pandavas and the Kauravas, Arjuna is filled with moral dilemma and despair about the violence and death the war will cause in the battle against his own relatives.

He wonders if he should renounce and seek Krishna's counsel, whose answers and discourse constitute the Bhagavad Gita. Krishna counsels Arjuna to "fulfill his Kshatriya (warrior) duty to uphold the Dharma" through "selfless actions." The Krishna-Arjuna dialogues cover a broad range of spiritual topics, touching upon ethical dilemmas and philosophical issues that go far beyond the war Arjuna faces.

Then, the age of Kaliyug started which is our present age (era) in which we see that boundaries and fences are being drawn with



the perspective to end the conflicts but, with that, new conflicts and challenges continue to emerge among state actors.

Today also, wars and conflicts continue in the name of resources and land boundaries. When humans go away from nature, it leads to their own destruction which we can see through the present human rights violations, governance issues and challenges, environmental issues, terrorism, climate change, religious fundamentalism and many other social problems we are witnessing today.

When feelings of possession and separation arise among human beings, leading to the creation of boundaries and borders, there is the emergence of a political science discipline and when people start living together as a society, their different interpretations of texts and growing orthodoxies lead to the emergence of the discipline of sociology, as there are misinterpretations of text that lead to many social problems among the masses since centuries.

When the urge for modernization and earning grows among people, which gives birth to industrialization, there comes the discipline of economics and when people go away from their real-self for acquiring materialistic things, then the discipline of psychology grows deeper.

The history of every discipline is interrelated and the quality of life reduces when human beings start exploiting nature rather than preserving and saving it for future generations.

The West says that political thought started from the Greeks, from Socrates, but this is a myth. Political thought is as old as this earth and the West, in their biased understanding, did not attempt to study political thought from the beginning of the world.

So, now there is an urgent need for the revival of the understanding of political thought with the history of the east by considering the understanding of it as contained in extant literature. Political thought is evolutionary in nature and as with the passage of time, the actor changes but the core values of politics remain the same.

***Dr Sonali Narang***

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# UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

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**Consultation and Team Building**

.....

**Community Diagnostic Dialogues**

.....

**Oil Field Dialogues**

.....

**Learning from the Wise**

.....

**Always visit [www.homef.org](http://www.homef.org) for upcoming events and how to participate.**

# VOLUNTEERS NEEDED



## LOOKING TO HELP?

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