

Message from Mr. Legborsi Saro Pyagbara, President, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) on the occasion of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples 2013

By resolution 49/214 of 23 December 1994, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 9th August as the International Day of the World's Indigenous People to be observed every year to draw global attention to the issues of Indigenous peoples and engender collective actions aimed at enhancing their dignity as emphasized in the theme of the second international decade for the world's Indigenous peoples entitled "A Decade for Action and Dignity."

This year's International Day is being celebrated under the theme of "Indigenous peoples building alliances: Honouring treaties, agreements and other constructive arrangements." The 2013 International Day celebrates the importance of building alliances, agreements and arrangements to protect the rights of indigenous peoples.

In an Ogoni today that is undergoing profound environmental changes and experiencing deep political transformations, building alliances and maintaining solidarity with other peoples and groups remain the best way to go — solidarity embodied in alliances amongst our people and non-Ogonis and with our friends in order to safeguard our dignity and promote our unique identity, our language, our culture, our health and our environment. This is critically important considering that just on June 29, 2013, right at this venue, we launched our Project 2015. In Project 2015, we have taken a dispassionate assessment of all aspects of Ogoni life since 1990 when we launched the Ogoni Bill of Rights and designed decisive activities and actions about what needed to be done between now and 2015 marking the 25th anniversary of the Ogoni struggle. Through this, MOSOP will also be shaping a new post 2015 development agenda for Ogoni.

My co-travelers, the biggest question that confronts us today is why the alliance? Considering the urgency of the actions needed at the moment to deal with some pressing issues, the central role of alliance-building cannot be over-emphasized particularly in addressing these pressing issues, some of which include:

IMPLEMENTATION OF UNEP REPORT

Since the release of the UNEP report two years ago, despite the alarm bells that were raised with that report, the Federal Government of Nigeria have maintained a stunning lukewarm attitude towards the implementation of the report that has defied all human understanding. The Jonathan-led administration had only deceived the world and distracted all of us with the setting up of a befogged HYPREP. More than a year after its set up, HYPREP has no framework of intervention in Ogoni. Two years down the line, the pollution of Ogoni remains and the Ogoni Genocide continues.

In the light of the foregoing, MOSOP gives a 90-day ultimatum to the Federal Government of Nigeria to set in motion the process for the full and effective implementation of the UNEP report beginning with the scraping of HYPREP, setting up the Ogoni Environmental Restoration Authority and establish the Ogoni Restoration Fund as recommended. Implementation of the UNEP report will define Ogoni response to the federal elections in 2015.

POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

The political under-representation of the Ogoni people at the Federal and State levels need to be addressed. The situation where the Ogoni people continue to suffer unmitigated exclusion can no longer be tolerated. Under Project 2015, MOSOP is currently involved in a campaign in which we are requesting the political elites in this country to provide the needed platforms for Ogoni people to contest for the Governorship of Rivers State in 2015.

MOSOP is embarking on this campaign conscious of the fact that as at 1998, two issues had confronted the Nigerian-state, the issue of the cancellation of June 12 elections and the Ogoni issue. On return to democracy, the political elites of the Nigerian-state agreed consensually to provide the platforms of their political parties to only Yoruba candidates to assuage their feelings over the cancellation of June 12 elections believed to have been won by a Yoruba. Nothing was done to the Ogoni people. We are saying, it is time to remember the Ogoni People.

OGONI AUTONOMY

As enunciated by our fathers in the Ogoni Bill of Rights (OBR), MOSOP remains committed to the request by the Ogoni people to be granted political autonomy within the Federal Republic of Nigeria. MOSOP has stated from the outset that other peoples in Nigeria are already enjoying this political autonomy with the "State arrangement" which is empowering them to deal with issues affecting all aspects of their lives.

It is to this extent that we call on the Federal Government of Nigeria to initiate the process of the creation of a Bori State without preconditions. It is time to reassure the Ogoni people that they are still part of the Nigeria project and the prelude to 2015 provides the opportunity.

SHELL INCURSIONS INTO OGONILAND

MOSOP views with condemnation the recent incursions of Shell into some communities in Ogoniland in the name of carrying out clean-up activities, which has left some communities in crisis.

As far as MOSOP is concerned, any clean-up process in Ogoniland based on the UNEP report which is carried out without a clear framework of intervention and a coordinating entity outside Shell is suspicious and doubtful. MOSOP already have credible evidences of shoddy clean-up practices being carried out currently by Shell.

MOSOP therefore calls on Shell to stop forthwith its current incursions into some Ogoni communities in the name of UNEP report.

To build on our vision under Project 2015 and to protect Ogoniland, MOSOP definitely need new alliances, Ogoni definitely need new solidarities. It is in this regard that MOSOP seize this opportunity of the 19th Celebration of the World's Indigenous Peoples Day to invite all Ogoni People, friends of the Ogoni People and sympathisers to join us in building a strong alliance to struggle against the forces of oppression and suppression masquerading as the rudderless Nigeria nation-state, multinational corporations, and kleptocratic political leaders.

I wish you all a happy World's Indigenous Peoples Day Celebration!