

**TESTIMONY OF ANSLEM DORNUBARI JOHN-MILLER
TO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
FOREIGN AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE ON
AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS
JULY 10, 2012.**

Mr. Chairman and all respected members of this committee, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you. I will be discussing some of the troubles with Nigeria and its Niger Delta region, particularly Ogoni-land and the Ogoni people.

My name is Anslem DornuBari John-Miller, Chairman, Caretaker Committee of the Council of Ogoni Professionals (COP International, USA), an umbrella body of Ogoni professionals in the United States of America. I also Chair the Advocacy & Fundraising Committee of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) Chicago Chapter. I was resettled in Chicago on September 17, 1996 after spending seven months in the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Refugee Camp in Benin Republic, West Africa as a result of persecution in Nigeria for my role as the leader of the students' wing of MOSOP - the National Union of Ogoni Students (NUOS). I and the entire Ogoni people remain grateful to the United States for coming to our aid when we needed help.

OVERVIEW AND CURRENT SITUATION IN NIGERIA

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with abundant human and natural resources, especially oil and gas. As such, Nigeria's strategic importance to regional stability and global energy supply cannot be overemphasized. It is this realization that instability in Nigeria will not only affect the country's over 130 million people and its large immigrant community in the United States, but will have far-reaching security implications on the West African sub-region and beyond, that led to the establishment of the US/Nigeria Bi-National Commission. That concern about the security situation in Nigeria is currently heightened by Islamic fundamentalism in Northern Nigeria, Suppression of minority rights to self-determination in the Niger-Delta and the lack of political will on the part of the Federal Government of Nigeria to seek genuine resolutions to these pertinent issues. It is common knowledge that despite the abundant natural resources, Nigeria continues to increasingly slide into miserable economic and social turmoil.

It is an open secret that the culture of corruption is prevalent in every sphere of government, without due regard for rule of law, rather successive political regimes preoccupy themselves with ethnic and or personal interests. The effects are: a regressive pace of development, high

youth unemployment, brain-drain due to emigration, massive poverty and a dangerously trending insecurity situation in the country.

The root cause of the problems in Nigeria is not far-fetched; it is mismanagement and corruption by those at the helm of affairs. As long as these problems are not adequately addressed, any expectation of development and stability in Nigeria will remain elusive. The solution is not a handout of food supplies, medical supplies, or material needs. The solution is the United States' and international community's resolute demand on the leadership of Nigeria to implement a clear roadmap to drastically clean-up its government of corrupt practices and looting of public resources within a specific time frame. The problem is not lack of resources, it is a problem of mismanagement of resources.

These wanton public corruption and mismanagement of public resources as well as suppression of minority rights to self-determination has an adverse effect on the overall development and stability of Nigeria. The most affected areas are the oil-bearing ethnic minority communities of the Niger-Delta region, particularly Ogoni.

CURRENT SITUATION IN THE NIGER DELTA

The oil-rich Niger Delta is situated in Southern Nigeria. Oil was discovered in the area in 1956, and since then, the area had remained the main foreign exchange earner for Nigeria. The region had since the last three decades, account for 95 percent of Nigeria's export earnings and over 80 percent of the Federal Government's revenue. Despite the indisputable enormous contributions to national coffers, the area remains the least developed and the most environmentally destroyed region of Nigeria.

The Ogoni is an ethnic minority of about one-million people in the Niger-Delta. The Ogoni situation had been, and remains, the worst of all the other ethnic groups in the region. After many years of negotiations and dialogue failed to address the political, economic and environmental challenges facing the people resulting from oil exploration in Ogoniland, Ken Saro-Wiwa mobilized the Ogoni people in 1990 under the auspices of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP). He internationalized the campaign to save the people and their environment from further ruins by Shell Oil and the Nigerian government. The grievances and demands of the people were articulated in the historic Ogoni Bill of Rights (OBR). The bill calls for, among other core demands, the Right to control and use a fair share of Ogoni economic resources for Ogoni development and the Right to protect the Ogoni environment and ecology from further degradation.

Instead of addressing the concerns of the Ogoni people articulated in the OBR, the government resorted to suppression, repression and persecution. The height of it was on November 10, 1995 when against all international appeals, the government of Nigeria hung Ken Saro-Wiwa

and eight other Ogoni activists after being convicted by a military tribunal that was adjudged by international organizations such as the Commonwealth to be a kangaroo court.

The steps and processes implemented by the Federal Government of Nigeria in an attempt to address the Ogoni crisis were to create the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and the Niger Delta Ministry. The establishment of these two entities runs contrary to the core demands of the Ogoni people namely the devolution of power from the center. In effect, the establishment of these two agencies further concentrate power at the federal level of government.

On August 4, 2011, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) released a comprehensive report indicting the Nigerian Government and Shell for environmental devastation in Ogoniland and recommended immediate clean-up. It is sad to note that President Goodluck Jonathan has refused to implement the report - see article published in the Punch Newspaper of February 1, 2012, titled "Ogoni clean up not in 2012 budget - Minister. The President's insistence that he would prefer a clean-up of the entire Niger Delta instead of Ogoni is nothing but a convenient excuse to sweep the report under the carpet in the same manner that the 1996 United Nations Fact-Finding Mission Report and other reports on Ogoni and the Niger-Delta had been treated over the years.

While the Amnesty Program could be credited for the reduced level of violence in the restive Niger-Delta, especially in the Ijaw areas, it is important to note that any peace recorded is temporary because the underlining problems of environmental devastation and economic marginalization that led to the crisis are yet to be resolved. Granting Amnesty to militants who engaged in violence and other illegal activities on one hand and, ignoring the genuine demands of the Ogonis who are peaceful and non-violent in their agitations on the other hand is wrong, immoral and unjust. It is an encouragement for violence and a recipe for further disaster in the country. It is at a point where the Ogoni people are beginning to feel that nonviolence campaign may not work in Nigeria where morality or world opinion means nothing to the powers that be, especially now that the Ogoni people are beginning to feel abandoned by the international community because of the interest in the Nigerian oil supply.

RECOMMENDATIONS

* This Committee and the Congress should adopt the concurrent resolution - H. CON. RES. 121 submitted by Rep. Rush and Fortenberry on April 27, 2012.

* Political Autonomy: A practical way of addressing the self-determination yearnings of the Ogoni people is the creation of Bori State that guarantees political autonomy within Nigeria, at the minimum. Creation of a separate State for the Ogoni people and their neighboring minorities will ensure adequate and equal representation in Nigerian institutions of

governance, and also ensure equitable resource allocation. The manpower to run the affairs of the state is in abundance and the economic viability of a 'Bori State' is unquestionable. I earnestly appeal to the United States Government to impress on the Nigerian Government to take this issue very seriously in the upcoming Nigerian Constitutional Amendment exercise - (see attached Memorandum On The Creation Of Bori State), as this may be a lasting solution to the over a decade long problem in the Niger Delta and a pathway to true reconciliation between the Ogoni People, Nigeria Government and Shell Oil. The proposed Bori State will liaise with the Federal and Shell in the implementation of the UNEP Report.

*The Nigerian Government should be encouraged to immediately implement the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) Report on Ogoni because continued delay imposes eminent threats to the existence of the Ogoni people.

The US Congress is requested to prevail on the Nigerian authorities to stop Rivers state government from further attacks and killings of innocent villagers in Sogho community in Ogoni, where Rivers state security police is presently 'shooting aside' in a government's raid for a forceful expropriation of land in the already overcrowded Ogoni area.

* The United States Government should continue with its strategic engagement with Nigeria but such engagement should include a carrot and stick approach.

* To tackle corruption, the Congress should mandate the Justice Department to henceforth investigate and prosecute all Nigerian government officials who engage in corruption. Any loot recovered should be re-directed towards various poverty alleviation programs being undertaken by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in impoverished communities in Nigeria.

* U.S. Visas should not be issued to corrupt Nigerian officials and their immediate and extended families who benefit from such corrupt practices.

* The U.S. should mobilize the G8 Countries and other powerful financial institutions to freeze accounts of corrupt Nigerian officials.

* The remaining Ogoni refugees left behind in the UNHCR Camp in Benin Republic during the U.S. Resettlement exercise from 1996 to 2001 should be considered for resettlement, especially now that they are facing forced repatriation to Nigeria, while the government of Nigeria is yet to address the demands of the Ogoni people enshrined in the Ogoni Bill of Rights or have a rehabilitation plan.

* The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has not embarked on any developmental projects in Ogoni. I therefore appeal to the House to bring this concern to the attention of the USAID.

* The Nigerian Government should be encouraged to dialogue with true representatives of Ogoni people over the various other demands enshrined in the Ogoni Bill of Rights (OBR). The government to date has not addressed any aspect of the Ogoni Bill of Rights.

Thank you all very much for your time. I must add that the hopes of the Ogoni people recline on the continue support of the United States of America.