

# #STOPTHESOOT CAMPAIGN

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The Secretary General

**United Nations**

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USA

**ATTN: António Guterres**

## RE: MUST THE WORLD CONTINUE TO LOOK AWAY WHILE WE DIE?

We make this petition as affected and concerned citizens of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, residing and doing business in Port Harcourt. Port Harcourt is the business and political capital of the Niger Delta and the administrative seat of power of the expression called Rivers State in the Nigeria federation. The Nigeria federation consists of a federal Government, 36 state governments and 774 local government authorities with each tier expressing a 'supposed separation of powers' by having the Executive, Legislature and the Judiciary at each tier. The semi unitary nature of our federalism have placed the management, security, accounting and regulation of the hydro-carbon industry and the environment purely in the hands of the federal government even though the operators of the other two tiers of government have a moral burden as they regularly swear to protect the 'lives' of the populace domiciled within its sphere of authority on whose behalf they gladly receive and expend millions of petro- dollars on a monthly basis.

We have enclosed four scientific studies that highlight the dangerous effects of the particulate matter (Soot) on the residents and the environment in Port Harcourt and they are namely:

1. Air Pollution Monitoring IOI : Chicoco Maps (10/04/2018)
2. Private Gain Public Disaster : Social Context of Illegal Oil bunkering & Artisanal Refining in the Niger Delta : Ben Naanen & Patrick Tolani
3. Black soot in Port Harcourt: sources and health implications : by Best Ordinioha FMCPH
4. The Port Harcourt "Black Soot" phenomenon: Cause and effects on Public Health and Environment: Dr.Giado,Ferdinard D.
5. "Port Harcourt Soot...endangers lives " Daily Trust Publication August 06,2018



We make this petition to bring to the notice of the United Nations the incubating epidemic and impending regional crisis occasioned by the unending poisoning of the air and environment of Port Harcourt and neighboring communities with deadly with sub-micron particulate matter or soot. The air that we have breathed for the past 22 months in Port Harcourt consists of heavy metals and carcinogens occasioned by the gross negligence of the governments at all tiers to protect us from the harmful effects of gas flaring and artisanal refineries thus exposing us to the worst kind of respiratory diseases and cancerous attacks. Since 2016, residents; including children, pregnant women and the elderly have continued to face daily bombardments from this deadly chemical compound. Studies have shown that the continuous consumption of the soot exposes the population around here to the possibilities of epidemic diseases which could lead to a regional health crisis.

While we have continued to protest this situation by ways of civil representation to places of authority and placing our plight before the global media, the world seems to have gone deaf and dumb on our plight like in the case of the Ogoni clean up and it's "outdated" 7 year old UNEP report that have now been sacrificed on the altar of partisan politics and unable to even provide basic portable drinking water. We view this stance as unfair and not in consonance with the objectives of this great institution.

We appreciate the accomplishments of the United Nations on issues such as human rights, environmental protection and wellbeing of the human race and to deepen these accomplishments, it has created agencies to proactively deal with these issues and others so as to better the lives of the people of the world. We have exhausted all local Nigeria channels and have no option to come to you with the question **"MUST THE WORLD CONTINUE TO LOOK AWAY WHILE WE DIE?"**

#### **Recent scientific study of the problem:**

We write today for the enforcement of our inalienable fundamental right to life as enshrined in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the United Nations Charter. There has been various studies on the prevalence of sub-micron particulate matter over Port Harcourt and its environs for the past 22 months but for want of space we refer to just one research. Our call for the enforcement of our right to life is strengthened by the recent study and publication by an **Environmental Geologist Dr. Ferdinand, D. Giadom, of the University of Port Harcourt** and he states that :

"Soot particles sampled during the 2016 soot pollution episode were described as black (elemental carbon) to greyish black in different particles size ranges. Gas-phase soot contains polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). The PAHs in soot are known mutagens and are classified as a "known human carcinogen" by the International agency for Research on Cancer (IARC).

Results from the investigations into the composition of the pollutant load within the air in Port Harcourt revealed the following:

Pollutant Type	Concentration	Allowable Limits (ug/m <sup>3</sup> ) (WHO/EPA)
PM 2.5 & PM 10	0.035-396.8 (ug/m <sup>3</sup> )	10 & 25 (Annual and 24 HR Means)
Lead (Pb)	<0.01-1.10 (mg/Kg)	0.5 (ug/m <sup>3</sup> )
Nickel (Ni)	<0.01-0.15 (mg/Kg)	0.5 (ug/m <sup>3</sup> )
Cobalt (Co)	<0.01-0.07(ug/m <sup>3</sup> )	0.5 (ug/m <sup>3</sup> )
PAHs	<44-190 (ng/m <sup>3</sup> )	1 (ng/m <sup>3</sup> )
TPH	16.2 -96.0 (mg/Kg)	

" From the foregoing, the particulate load over Port Harcourt during the 'Black Soot 'incidents revealed that the concentration of the particulate matter ranges from 16.6-360 ug/m<sup>3</sup>, 62-270 ug/m<sup>3</sup> & 0.035-180 ug/m<sup>3</sup>.(SPDC 2017; RSME 2017,Ede & Edokpa 2017) respectively.

Thus the particulate matter within the lower reaches of the boundary layer over the Port Harcourt region exceeds the national limits of 40-60 ug/m<sup>3</sup> and also World Health Organization limits of 10-25 ug/m<sup>3</sup> for the suspended particulate matter and black smoke."

The author posits that laboratory analyses of the particulate matter in Port Harcourt reveal them to be of petroleum combustion origin.

### Historical:

Port Harcourt is the hydro carbon hub of Nigeria's and the Gulf of Guinea's oil and gas sector. For five decades and counting, there has been no environmental audit of the adverse impact of oil and oil related activities in and around communities that experienced exploration activities or hosted oil facilities, besides the one conducted by the United Nations Environmental Project in Ogoni. The said UNEP report on Ogoni is yet to be implemented by successive governments to date as the implementation of the cleanup have become an issue of partisan politics. The government(s) is so concerned with the optics of the cleanup that they all have forgotten that a 7 year old report will require to be updated to reflect current realities of the said environment which today from studies is a major theatre for artisanal refinery. This crass attitude for the lives of the people and the health of the environment is what is being experienced in the face of this outbreak of poisonous sub-micron particulate matter in the atmosphere over Port Harcourt and its environs for the past 22 months.

The particulate matter or soot of about 2.5 microns was first noticed in August 2016 as we started experiencing black and grey matter in our nostrils that also covered every exposed space in and around our homes. The air got thicker and darker with every passing day and there was a spike in the diagnosis of respiratory related diseases particularly amongst children (even though the statistics are hush-hush). In November 2016 we made representations to the various strata of governments and met with strong assurances that the problem would be eradicated through '**inter government collaborations, a robust security framework, sharing of data and an intense public health campaign**'. As we write this

petition, all these pledges and typical institutional gesticulation have naturally died on the altar of bare rhetoric.

It is on record that various government officials had acknowledged that the sub-micron particulate matter contain carcinogens and heavy metals and that these are being inhaled by the populace which they claim is akin to consistently smoking cigarettes without a filter for 22 months on a daily basis. May we be reminded on the massive resources expended by the world to curb third party smoking and the law was even domesticated in Rivers State.

The prevalence of soot in our homes and resultant spike in respiratory related ailment amongst children and infants and pregnant women fueled by the inaction of government led to a massive public protest on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2018 by this group.

**Our recent effort to make stakeholders live up to their responsibilities:**

Our protest of the April 19, 2018 was to highlight industry and administrative failure as a direct cause of the soot. These loopholes have embolden illegal artisanal refiners of stolen crude to expand their production architecture while the security agencies saddled with the responsibility to combat the operators set fire to seized stolen crude oil and products and thus releasing toxins into the already seriously compromised environment.

We made representations to the Federal Government (a) Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (b) Department of Petroleum Resources, Rivers State Government and the Rivers State House of Assembly. Our submissions had clear recommendations for bi-partisan and intergovernmental collaborations for the local government authorities in Rivers State, the National Assembly and the Federal Government owned security architects on the way forward to solving the problem. **We hereby attach copies of our demands to the various tiers and arms of government in Nigeria and cite two examples.**

1. One of our submissions concerned the absence of staple fuel kerosene which the mass of the populace depend upon for cooking and the scarcity of 'affordable kerosene' creates a massive lucrative market for the illegal artisanal refiners. The federal government owned agency Nigeria National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) currently is the sole owner of three non-functional refineries with over 5000 staff that are resourced monthly at great cost and sole importer of petroleum products including kerosene, this agency have arrogantly remained mute on the absence of kerosene for the mass of the people in Rivers State. The taxes that enhance the landing cost of the kerosene product, it is our belief that these taxes can be tweaked to make it affordable or competitive against its local unburnished cousin.
2. In our submission we called on the Rivers State government to prioritize the environment and become a repository of data on the state of affairs of the environment after five decades of hydro-carbon activity and also the health of its citizenry. These data would have been produced

from diverse state sponsored research on the environment to reflect current realities and also capture noticeable spikes or trend on ailment afflicting its populace. The said data we prayed would have been stored on its website. We are yet to see any scientific publication by the government on the current pollution of the state for fear of de-marketing the state to potential investors.

### **Our cry for help:**

The prevalence of active ingredients of Carcinogens in the atmosphere of Port Harcourt is a crisis waiting to happen and Nigeria lack the facilities to diagnose, manage or treat the kind of ailments that will abound on a grand scale if this is not nipped in the bud.

We are aware that the United Nations and its agencies respect the sovereignty of nations by always dealing with the people through their governments. Thus even when projects and alarms are raised by the agencies of the United Nations, sometimes these efforts are swept under the table by these governments. Our position is further reinforced by the silence of the United Nations and its agencies over the pollution of the atmosphere in Port Harcourt and the state of implementation of the UNEP report on Ogoni despite having physical official representation in Rivers State. The question is: who should matter, the lives of the powerless children, women and men or the egos of the transient political actors that manage the affairs of government at a point in time?

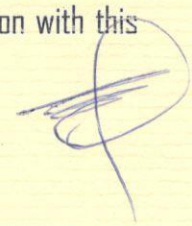
We are persuaded by the general principles governing your organization and agencies and cite some of them:

- United Nations is: "To foster worldwide cooperation in solving economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems.
- World Health Organization is the attainment by all peoples of the highest possible level of health. Health, as defined in the WHO Constitution, is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."
- And UNEP & UNDP are programed to avert crisis and discourage practices that will endanger the future generations.

We come under this umbrella to solicit your immediate intervention to help save us from this avoidable catastrophe. It is our belief that your timely intervention will avert a potential health crisis not too long from now. **If our appeal is ignored, at least history will remember that we did all we could for our children and the unborn generations.**

### **Our Prayers:**

- I. We are calling on the United Nations to urgently declare Rivers State as an "Environmental Disaster Zone": the agency to fund an environmental audit of the state in conjunction with this group, civil society, Rivers State government and Federal government of Nigeria.



2. That the world Health Organization in partnership with Medecins Sans Frontieres in Nigeria(Doctors without borders), Nigeria Medical Association, Association of Public Health Physicians of Nigeria, Medical Women's Association of Nigeria and the Federal ministry of health and the Rivers State Ministry of Health to synergize and begin the mining and collation of data in the state about the wellbeing of residents of the state.
3. If spikes or trend are discovered for ailments that measures are immediately put in place to contain treat and contain them.
4. A massive door to door public health campaign to be pursued and monitored for the purpose of educating all and sundry with a detailed presentation of the consequences of injecting sub-micron particulate matter into atmosphere and the multiplier effect of patronizing these products .
5. That the UN through its agencies avail daily Air Quality Index (AQI) or readings for the city of Port Harcourt and environs; these readings will be carried at no cost by the 18 radio stations and four television stations in Rivers State.
6. The establishment of inexpensive air quality reading sites backed by the appointment of voluntary United Nations whistle blowing Marshalls spread across the 23 local government areas of Rivers State for the purpose of reporting the activities of illegal artisanal refineries will put the operators and security agencies in check and eventually curb these activities.
7. We are appealing that the United Nations through the World Health Organization should facilitate the provision of affordable Oncology test kits or facilities for the citizenry particularly for children, the aged and pregnant women.
8. The acceptance of the United Nation to intervene will attract other institutional stakeholders to support the cause.
9. That an MOU be signed with the International Oil Companies that will indemnify them for this project so that they can bring their scientific expertise and resources to bear in the mining of data.
10. A call for the Federal Government of Nigeria and the other tiers of government to stop receiving payments for gas flared and give a specific date for stopping of this obnoxious practice .

Thank you

For : **STOP THE SOOT CAMPAIGN**



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Cc:

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The Minister of Petroleum, Nigeria  
The Minister Federal Ministry of Environment, Nigeria  
The Minister, Federal Ministry of Health, Nigeria  
The National Security Adviser, Nigeria  
The Minister, Ministry of Defense, Nigeria

The Senate President  
The Speaker, House of Representatives

The Executive Governor, Rivers State of Nigeria  
The Rivers State House of Assembly

World Health Organization  
United Nations Environmental Program

Nigeria Medical Association Rivers State  
Medecins Sans Frontieres Nigeria

The Pope, Vatican Rome  
The President, United States of America  
The Prime Minister, Canada  
The Prime Minister, United Kingdom  
The Prime Minister, Netherlands  
The European Parliament

The Rector, Greenpeace  
The Country Head, Amnesty International