

IKWERRE MOVEMENT FOR
JUSTICE
3A Aguma Street, Off
Ogbunabali Road
Port Harcourt, Rivers State,
Nigeria.

UNITED NATIONS
COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Sub-Commission on the Promotion
Protection of Minorities
Tenth Session
1st March, 2004

Intervention to Agenda 3(a)

Thank you members of the audience,

My name is Modestus Achinonu:-

I am here to represent the Ikwerre Movement for Justice, (IMJ) Nigeria.

I am an indigene of Obelle in Emohua Local Government of Rivers State, Nigeria. Ikwerre is an indigenous minority community living in the Niger Delta, this region is rich in oil and gas resources. Oil and Gas exploration and exploitation started in 1957. Since then, the inhabitants of the villages in Ikwerre are left with nothing but damaged farmlands and polluted rivers with no electricity, good drinking water and other basic social amenities. The locals in many of the oil-bearing communities in Ikwerre still live under primitive conditions akin to that of the *Stone Age*, side by side with the high tech and modern facilities of the multinational companies that they play host to. The advent of oil business in Nigeria has not really brought with it any tangible benefits; instead it ushered in high degradation of the Ikwerre environment, with concomitant poverty and much strife to the Ikwerre people.

Just as a very challenging political environment, made worse by a failure of leadership, confronts us so also is the Ikwerre ethnic nationality confronted by daunting circumstances in the socio-economic realm. As a result of environmental pollution, the self-sustaining capacity of our lands and rivers to feed our people have been severely degraded. Coupled with the neglect and failure of the Nigerian state to provide necessary infrastructural facilities in our communities, the daily existence of our people have become nightmarish, leading to a state of despondency and a collective sense of doubt in our ability to sustain ourselves. Our communities have been worst affected by the mal-administration of the

Nigeria nation. This is evident in the large number of our unemployed professionals and non-professionals. Even in the oil and gas sector that dominates Ikwerre landscape, our people are still discriminated against when it comes to employment. Social values that have long sustained our peoples are severely being challenged if not completely being eroded.

It is grief-stricken to note that even at the presence of the natural resources in our land and at the expense of the hazards thereof as a result of oil and gas exploration and exploitation, the people still live below \$1 per day. This is a complete violation of Article 4 (5) and Article 2 (2) of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.

Mr. Chairman,

I wish to further state that our government has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD). This ratification has not made any difference to the lives of the Ikwerre people.

Bringing together the scenario, the effect on the people of Ikwerre and the entire environment. It would be understood that the government has failed to live up to its responsibilities. Thus, violating all the laws set out in article 4.5 of the United Nations Declaration on Minorities.

In our crusade for democratic rights, justice, equity and fair-play, we therefore recommend:-

- i. That Ikwerre people be allowed to participate in the control of their resources as set out in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), Article 1.1, 1.2; United Nations Declaration on Minorities (UNDM) Article 2.2 and article 4.5
- ii. That Ikwerre people be involved in decision making concerning development in Ikwerre land as set out in United Nations Declaration on Minorities (UNDM) Article 2.3
- iii. That parents in every family of Ikwerre Community be paid on Monthly basis either by the government or oil company operators, to help augment their living affairs as clearly stated in Article 11 of International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

- iv. That government without further delay, should provide the communities with (Electricity, improve the standard of education in the Ikwerre, provide employment opportunities for the young people, provide internationally certified healthcare etc. Article 24 - African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and Article 11 (1) of International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.
God bless you all.

Achinonu Modestus
National Secretary