

## **Joint statement by Nigerian and International civil society on clean-up of Ogoniland**

*Clean-up programme must finally address decades of oil pollution in the Niger Delta*

2 June 2016

We the undersigned civil society organisations welcome today the commitment by the Nigerian Government to finally begin a clean-up of oil pollution in the Niger Delta, and urge the Government and the oil industry to ensure that this translates into meaningful action on the ground to tackle the impacts of decades of oil spills in the region.

The Government today launched the start of a programme to act on the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) landmark 2011 report that confirmed the devastating extent of pollution in the Ogoniland region linked to the oil industry. President Buhari reiterated his promise to implement UNEP's recommendations, and said he expected to see visible improvements to the environmental conditions in the region. The Government must now follow through on this commitment.

UNEP also exposed how Shell has systematically failed to properly clean up oil spills. However, years on from the report, spill sites identified by UNEP remained heavily contaminated even after the company claimed it has carried out clean-up operations.

In order for the clean-up programme to be effective, Shell must match the Government's commitment to tackle pollution by properly cleaning up previous oil spills, and by overhauling its practices for remediating future spills in line with UNEP's recommendations.

Following decades of being forced to live with pollution linked to the oil and gas industry, the people of Ogoniland and the wider Niger Delta now urgently need to see a resolution to the ongoing impacts on their access to water, health, livelihoods and the environment.

As a first priority, the Government must now take immediate action to fully implement the emergency measures which UNEP outlined to address urgent public health concerns. In particular, alternative drinking water should be provided to all communities whose water supply has been polluted by toxic hydrocarbons, many of whom are still forced to rely on contaminated wells.

The Government must also strengthen regulation of the oil industry to ensure that oversight bodies, including the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency, are able to fulfil their mandate and hold the oil industry to account.

The role of the oil companies should be limited to providing the resources for the clean-up, so that they are not in the position to decide how the clean-up is managed or determine the methodology used, which should be left to independent experts.

In the long term, the programme should go beyond a focus on Ogoniland, and extend to a clean-up operation across the entire oil-producing region. During today's launch of the programme, the Minister of Environment Amina Mohammed recognised that oil pollution is not confined to Ogoniland, and committed to look at the wider Niger Delta.

Crucial to the success of implementation of the UNEP report will be the continued and active engagement of communities and civil society in the structures to implement the report. To that end we recommend that civil society representatives are included on the HYPREP Governing Council mandated to lead the clean-up programme. The process should also be transparent with regular updates made available to the public on the progress of the clean-up.

A comprehensive clean-up of Ogoniland cannot take place without adequate financial contributions from those who have benefited from the oil industry in Ogoniland. Beyond the initial fund of \$1 billion to begin the process of clean up, it is imperative that all parties, and in particular the international oil companies, commit to fully funding the clean-up costs. The oil industry cannot use the clean-up programme as an excuse to avoid meeting their outstanding liabilities with regard to historical and ongoing oil pollution, and its negative impacts on the people of Ogoniland.

The people of Ogoniland have waited long enough for a clean up to take place, and cannot be left with a job half done.

