

# VANCOUVER MODEL UNITED NATIONS

*The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference · January 20-22, 2012*

## BACKGROUND GUIDE

*African Union*





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Dear Delegates,

My name is Kachau and I am the African Union Director for VMUN 2012. A grade 11 student studying at St. George's School, I am an aspiring linguist currently studying four languages. I attended my first MUN conference in Grade 8 and have seen all aspects of the conference from being a delegate to helping organize the conference itself. Not only are MUNs a great opportunity to expand your knowledge on world issues, they are also an excellent opportunity to meet interesting and unique people from diverse backgrounds. As a delegate at VMUN, I have had amazing experiences both educationally and socially and I hope you will as well.

The two topics that have been selected are both very important to the continent of Africa, and I truly hope you will enjoy discussing them as much as we enjoyed writing about them. The first topic revolves around the pursuit of a sustainable and oil industry, which, although much less prominent in the headlines than many other issues, is vital for Africa and Africans especially in terms of long-term economic growth and improved living standards. In our second topic, we will address the issue of the recent Somalian famine of the summer of 2011 that devastated the lives of millions. The African Union did very little in terms of humanitarian aid and even less in terms of financial aid. Without throwing blame around, the African Union must figure out a way to avoid future disasters of this kind.

I believe that both topics are fascinating and will lead to fervent debates. I am excited to see everyone at the conference and to hear the points you will bring to the table. Please do not hesitate to contact me or any of the African Union staff if you have any questions.

Regards,

Kachau Leung  
Director, African Union  
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## Topic A: Niger Delta Oil

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### Introduction

In Nigeria, the Niger Delta has garnered a stunning degree of international attention for its troubling situation. Often called “the Oil Rivers”, the Niger Delta, as Africa’s largest petroleum source, has been plagued with human rights abuses, environmental issues, and corruption problems. Nigeria simply cannot offer the same stability and oversight that comparable oil operations enjoy in more developed countries. The productive region has, of course, garnered attention from eager businesses and investors, but also from detractors such as environmentalists, human rights activists, and fair trade advocates. Problems in the Niger Delta first arose in the early 1990s, between foreign oil corporations and Nigeria’s native ethnic groups, the Ogoni and the Ijaw, and continue today.

In 1957, oil was first discovered in Ogoniland, a southeastern region in the Niger Delta. The Nigerian government forced the Ogoni people, natives of the area, to abandon their lands so that oil companies

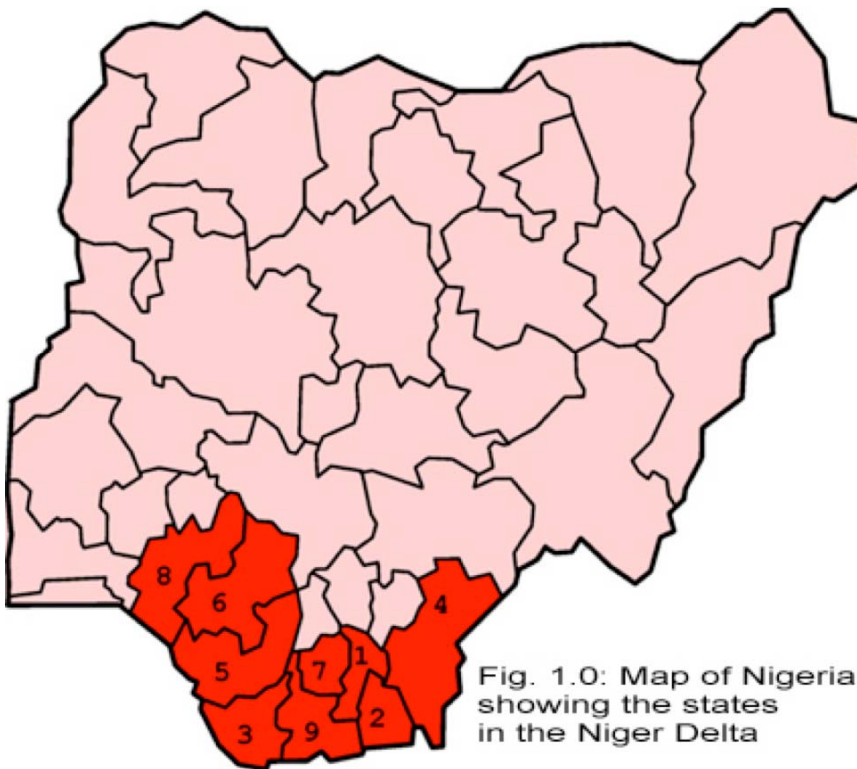


Fig. 1.0: Map of Nigeria showing the states in the Niger Delta

could utilise them. The Ogoni refugees were severely under-compensated in return for surrendering their land<sup>1</sup>. The Ogoni began fighting back in December of 1992 and the next few years saw acts of aggression from both sides. Later, in 1998, two thousand young men and women representing the Ijaw people marched through the state capital protesting peacefully, where they were met with open fire by the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1999/nigeria/>

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military.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the human rights violations and corruption problems surrounding the Niger Delta, there are also major environmental repercussions from oil spills in the region.

## **Timeline**

1957 — Economically viable petroleum is found in the Southeastern Basin of the Niger Delta, Ogoniland

1970 — Major oil spill in Ogoniland

1971 — Nigeria joins OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries)<sup>3</sup>

1971 — Nigeria's oil industry is nationalized

1979 — Nigeria has a constitutional addition that gives the federal government full ownership and rights to Nigerian land

1990 — Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) is formed<sup>4</sup>

1993 — Shell is temporarily forced to stop oil drilling in Ogoniland

May 21st, 1994 — 4 Ogoni chiefs are brutally killed by Nigerian policemen<sup>5</sup>

1994 — An estimate of 2000 civilians are killed by soldiers and 100,000 are internally displaced in Ogoniland during a 4 month period<sup>6</sup>

1995 — The execution of 9 activists gains worldwide attention, resulting in sanctions from the EU and a suspension of membership from the Commonwealth of Nations

1999 — Odi Massacre carried out in Ijaw town of Odi

2000 — The Niger Delta Development Commission is created

2004 — NDPVF (Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force) and NDV (Niger Delta Vigilante), two militant groups, are formed

2006 — Another militant group, MEND (Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta) is formed and specifically attacks Shell facilities

2009 — Nigerian government launches operations in the Delta region in hopes of finding militant rebels, thousands flee<sup>7</sup>

## **Historical Analysis**

Oil exploration concessions were first granted by the Nigerian government to Shell in 1938. Nineteen years later, in 1957, economically viable oil was found and the very next year Shell, along with other foreign oil corporations, began setting up onshore oil fields in Nigeria. Nigeria had the makings of an inspirational tale, in that it was a poor African nation with resources that looked to allow tremendous potential for

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/ijaw.htm>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.opec.org/opec\\_web/en/about\\_us/25.htm](http://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/about_us/25.htm)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.mosop.org/about\\_us.html](http://www.mosop.org/about_us.html)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.nigerianmuse.com/nigeriawatch/oputa/OputaVolumeTwo.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8068174.stm>

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wealth. What seemed to be blessing, however, would turn out to be a curse for the country. The next few decades proved uneventful and frustrating for the majority of Nigerian citizens.

After suffering a major oil spill in 1970, Nigeria made several major changes in the hopes of legitimising its business. The country joined OPEC (the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries) and nationalized its oil industry the following year. The country began focusing on the oil industry so much that other areas of its economy were neglected. The 1970s were the beginning of the transition to modern Nigeria, which is completely absorbed in and dependent on its oil industry. For example, in 1960 sustainable agricultural products such as palm oil and cacao beans made up nearly all of Nigeria's exports. As of 2011, 95% of the country's exports are petroleum.<sup>8</sup>

Wanting to obtain more wealth from the oil industry, the Nigerian government began to distribute more and more land to oil corporations. This led to the 1990 formation of MOSOP (Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People), led by author Ken Saro-Wiwa in order to help the Ogoni people in their fight for ethnic and environmental rights. What began as a peaceful movement eventually evolved into a MOSOP that threatened serious action to disrupt oil operations. The government responded by banning public gatherings and increasing the presence of the military.

The first acts of violence began on May 21st of 1994, when four Ogoni chiefs were brutally killed. A little over a month later, government forces had razed 30 villages, detained 600 people, and killed at least 40. Reportedly, these numbers rose to 2,000 civilian deaths and around 100,000 internally displaced refugees.<sup>9</sup>

The following year, Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other activists were brought before a highly biased tribunal and sentenced to death for the alleged murder of the four Ogoni chiefs. The execution of the "Ogoni Nine", as they would be called, focused the eyes of the world on the Niger Delta. Their trials were highly criticized by human rights organizations and governments around the world. The Commonwealth of Nations suspended Nigeria's membership in response, while the United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union all imposed sanctions on Nigeria (no sanctions on petroleum, however).

Nigeria once again faced civil dissent when the Ijaw Youth Council publicly asked for the oil companies to suspend their operations and leave Ijaw land. The Ijaw Youth Council pledged "to struggle peacefully for freedom, self-determination and ecological justice"<sup>10</sup> in their campaign named Operation Climate Change. On the morning of December 30th, 1998, two thousand young people processed through Yenagoa, the state capital of Bayelsa, singing and dancing as a part of their peaceful protest. Nigerian government soldiers began an assault, killing three youths and arresting 25 others. The conflict between the Ijaw and the Nigerian government culminated in the Odi massacre. In response to twelve members of the Nigerian police being murdered by a gang near Odi, an Ijaw town, the military invaded and razed the city, leaving only the bank, health centre, and church. It is estimated that between several hundred and a few thousand civilians were murdered.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,HRW,,NGA,,467fca7a14,0.html>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.onlinenigeria.com/finance/?blurb=669>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/comment/34801>

Fast forward to 2003, when increased access to arms and further unrest led to the creation of new militant groups, most notably the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) led by Mujahid Dokubo-Asari and the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV) led by Ateke Tom. These militant groups are almost entirely made up by dissatisfied young men from suburban areas. These two groups have mainly been responsible for oil 'bunkering', a process where pipelines are tapped and the oil is collected into barges and sold for profit. While the two groups have similar goals, they have been competing with one another and have often been engaged in violence with one another.<sup>12</sup> As of 2006, another militant group has grown to become one of the largest in the region: MEND (Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta), has emerged and initiated numerous kidnappings of foreigners in Nigeria.

## **Current Situation**

A report released in August of 2011 by the United Nations Environment Program astounded observers and governments from around the world. The report states it will take up to 30 years to clean up the oil-stained Ogoniland region within the Niger Delta. Even so, that would be no easy task and even the UN body has acknowledged it would be very difficult for any government to clean up an area that encompasses more than 600 square miles (such as Ogoniland).<sup>13</sup> While oil plants stopped production in Ogoniland in 1993, due to MOSOP protests, aging pipelines and flow stations that run through the villages have often been vandalized and damaged, thoroughly contaminating the lands and polluting the area. In one instance, investigators found a village where the drinking water contained benzene levels 900 times higher than the international safety limit. Investigators also found an area where a 40 year old oil spill had still not been cleaned up.<sup>14</sup>

While there has not been as much civil unrest under the presidency of Goodluck Jonathan, militant groups such as MEND and NDPVF are still vandalizing and "bunkering" oil in small guerilla-type attacks, which remain an ongoing problem. Furthermore, over the past several years, foreign oil workers have been kidnapped and held hostage for huge ransoms, both by militant groups and sometimes by dissatisfied locals.

In an effort to redistribute wealth, the government now gives 13 percent of the proceeds from oil sales to the producing states, but there is little accountability surrounding these funds. According to a recent Human Rights Watch report, much of the money simply disappears, wasted by inefficient or corrupt local officials.<sup>15</sup>

The Niger Delta presents no clear and overarching crisis, but instead plays host to a murky bunch of associated issues, such as environmental damage, hostile militant groups, and missing revenue, that must be solved quickly lest further instability and damage befall the region.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/backgrounder/africa/nigeria0205/index.htm>

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/un-reports-widespread-oil-damage-in-nigeria-delta/2011/08/04/gIQAiWnkVI\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/un-reports-widespread-oil-damage-in-nigeria-delta/2011/08/04/gIQAiWnkVI_story.html)

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/08/24/us-nigeria-spills-idUSTRE77N2E220110824>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2011/08/20/corruption-trial>

## **UN Involvement & Explanation of Important Treaties**

Nigeria, as a country, has been an active and supportive member of the United Nations for almost 50 years, beginning when UN was just a mere 99 states compared to the 193 members today.

While the United Nations has not been directly involved with the issues surrounding the oil conflicts in Nigeria, it has indirectly helped raise awareness for many of the problems in the country in its condemnation of Nigeria's human rights violations.

The United Nations Environmental Program, however, has taken a more direct approach, having undertaken several small field operations in the local area since the turn of the millennium. In UNEP's most recent report, the most detailed report on the Nigerian environment ever was presented. It is estimated that to clean up the area would take an initial funding of \$1 billion dollars for just the first five years, with much more needed for the roughly 30-year period required to fully restore the area.<sup>16</sup> UNEP spokesman Nick Nuttall has said that if governments and oil companies were prepared to put up the money, it could provide work for tens of thousands of Ogoni and leave the area pristine, while helping many other African countries that are on the point of commercially developing their oil reserves.

The United Nations Development Programme has also been active in the region since Nigeria's independence in the 1960s, with attempts to provide the country with technical assistance required for sustainable economic and social development. Progress, however, as with many other developing countries, has been slow and tedious.

While Nigeria has not had any major United Nation treaties in respect to its oil industry, Nigeria has worked with other African nations, such as Equatorial Guinea, on important geopolitical treaties such as the treaty with the Republic of Equatorial Guinea concerning their maritime boundary,<sup>17</sup> which has helped inter-country relations and at the same time avoided any potential conflict. Since its independence from the United Kingdom in 1960, Nigeria has strived to be a regional leader on the continent of Africa, focusing on with African unity and independence. While there have been bitter disputes at times with other African countries, Nigeria continues to have a friendly and close relationship with the rest of the continent.

## **Possible Solutions & Controversies**

While it is generally agreed the problems associated with the oil industry in Nigeria cannot be solved within a short time frame, there are many potential ideas that can help speed up the process. To start off, the environmental issue must be addressed. Although a billion dollars is an initial hefty start up price to start for oil remediation, the long term rewards include reviving the local economy, creating sustainable water sources and the ability to help create thousands of jobs for local Nigerians. In simpler terms, the current oil-contaminated environment must be fixed. Nigeria may possibly look towards the African Union for resources to help ease its burden.

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2011/aug/09/niger-delta-shell-oil-spills>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.un.org/Depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/PDFFILES/TREATIES/NGA-GNQ2000MB.PDF>

Another serious problem are militant groups such as MEND. These groups cause instability in the entire region and repel any non-oil based foreign investors in Nigeria. The government can either negotiate with these groups (which is highly unlikely, considering their high demands) or control them with the military until long-term solutions can be found. Long-term solutions may include correcting the root of the problem, which is ultimately an extremely low standard of living and lack of basic needs that lead MEND members to resort to sabotage and violence.

Long-term solutions should also include other countries, as many other African countries such as São Tomé, Ghana, Uganda, Sierra Leone and Ethiopia are all projected to produce oil within the next decade.<sup>18</sup> Severe vandalism also needs to be addressed to serve as an example for other African nations, as it too has played a huge role in the ineffectiveness of Nigeria's oil industry. Any action that Nigeria takes will be magnified, as it will set a precedent for other developing countries looking towards harnessing petroleum. In essence, the Niger Oil Delta will be the test case for the African oil industry.

No matter how smartly managed and clean the oil industry becomes, Nigeria may need to move back to a diversified economy instead of one that revolves around oil. Oil has brought undeniable benefits to the country, but sustainable economies stem from diversified industry.

A current development is the Petroleum Industry Bill, a bill that the Nigerian government has been working on for several years. Essentially, the bill would help update old laws such as the 1969 Petroleum Act to further promote internal growth, transparency, and accountability. A major part of the bill is to help establish an independent national oil company. It would attempt to establish an industry that respects international practices on health, safety, and the environment. While it looks good on paper, the bill discourages foreign involvement with its form of higher taxes and would also lead to higher gas prices across Africa and, perhaps, the world. The African Union may have issues with the Petroleum Industry Bill.

## **Bloc Positions**

### **Nigeria**

President Goodluck Jonathan and his cabinet are willing to take the necessary steps to fix the environmental problem in the Niger Delta. While they wish for the best for their country, they have shown that they are not afraid of using their military to quell any uprisings. Nigeria also wants to pass the Petroleum Industry Bill passed but are being held back by foreign oil companies currently invested in Nigeria.

### **South Africa**

Currently the largest economy on the continent of Africa in terms of GDP,<sup>19</sup> South Africa has a much more diversified economy than that of Nigeria. South Africa was once at terms with Nigeria during the 1995 execution of the Ogoni Nine but has since then patched things up. South Africa's oil company,

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2011/aug/09/niger-delta-shell-oil-spills>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2011/01/weodata/weorept.aspx?pr.x=64&pr.y=7&sy=2008>

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PetroSA, has also won an oil contract from the Nigerian government in 2009 and is against the Petroleum Industry Bill.

### **Angola**

Another oil producing nation, Angola has close ties with Nigeria. Angola's economy is one of the world's fastest growing with an 11.1% GDP growth in 2001-2010.<sup>20</sup> Despite a wealth of resources, Angola faces mismanagement and corruption; both of which have greatly slowed the economy's growth. Angola is equally against the Petroleum Industry Bill as South Africa is.

### **Rest of Africa**

Many other countries in Africa such as Guinea, Uganda, Tanzania, Mozambique, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Madagascar are potential oil producers and are monitoring the current situation in Nigeria to see how everything turns out.

## **Discussion Questions**

1. Should the victims of past human right violations in Nigeria be compensated?
2. Are foreign oil corporations that beneficial to a country's economy?
3. Where is all the money from oil revenues?
4. Why do militant groups such as MEND exist?
5. Is it possible to completely rid vandalism and bunkering of oil?
6. How reliable is the oil industry?
7. Is the African Union willing to help out Nigeria clean up its Delta?
8. Is the Petroleum Industry Bill beneficial or harmful?

## **Additional Resources**

<http://www.au.int/>

The African Union

<http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/countries/west-africa/nigeria/>

African Economic Outlook

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world/africa/>

BBC News Africa

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

CIA World Factbook

[http://www.opec.org/opec\\_web/en/about\\_us/167.htm](http://www.opec.org/opec_web/en/about_us/167.htm)

OPEC

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<sup>20</sup> [http://www.economist.com/blogs/dailychart/2011/01/daily\\_chart](http://www.economist.com/blogs/dailychart/2011/01/daily_chart)

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