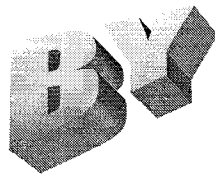


**PHASES IN THE MANIFESTATION  
AND MANAGEMENT OF THE  
NIGER DELTA CRISIS**



**RT. HONOURABLE  
CHIBUIKE ROTIMI AMAECHI**

**THE EXECUTIVE GOVERNOR OF RIVERS STATE**

## **THE NIGER DELTA: AN OVERVIEW**

The Niger Delta is the largest wetland in Africa and third in the world. It is a geographical area measuring about 70,000sq km and lies in the Southern-most part of Nigeria, stretching from the Nigeria-Cameroun boundary in the east to the Ondo-Ogun State boundary in the west. The area is bounded in the North by Enugu, Ebonyi, Anambra, Kogi and Ekiti States, with the Atlantic Coast forming the general boundary in the south. The whole area is traversed by a large number of rivers, streams, rivulets and creeks, and consists of a number of ecological zones, sandy coastal ridge barrier, brackish or saline mangroves freshwater, permanent and seasonal swamp forests and lowland rain forests.

The classical description of the Niger Delta is restricted to a few states in the South-South geo-political zone which posses varying degrees of deltaic features as described above, namely, Rivers, Bayelsa, Delta, and Akwa Ibom States. But today, the Niger Delta is broadly viewed to comprise “*about 16,000 communities in the nine oil producing states of Abia, Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross Rivers, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers, with more than 20 million people*”. The major occupation of the people of the area is farming and fishing, which the tropical climate, rain forest, the numerous rivers and creeks encourage. For generations, the rich flora and fauna of the area have been the primary source of livelihood for the people.

Briefly, on my primary constituency, Rivers State, the name Rivers, aptly defines a State with five major rivers, namely:- New Calabar, Orashi, Bonny, Sombreiro and St. Bartholomen. It has over three hundred creeks, rivulets and tributaries all emptying into the Atlantic Ocean. The State is bounded on the South by the Atlantic Ocean, on the North by Imo and Abia States, to the East by Akwa Ibom State and to the West by Bayelsa and Delta States. The State is home to the Oil and Gas industry, the mainstay of Nigeria’s economy. This industry has huge strategic infrastructure spread across the lands and especially the swamp (riverine) areas of the State.

## **NIGER DELTA CRISIS: WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT**

What is to today known as the Niger Delta crisis is a culmination and expression of pent up anger and frustration by a people from whose lands and Rivers the bulk of the nations revenue is exhumed in the form of oil and gas, which translates to billions of petro-dollars yearly, but with the people

of the area left in squalor, neglect, abject poverty and in a general state of underdevelopment.

Successive administrations have either paid lip Service to turning the situation around or done too little to register meaningful impact. It is this prevalent State of affairs that stimulated genuine demands for a redress, which later developed from peaceful to violent agitation, and most regrettably, its contamination with criminality which appears to have overwhelmed an unarguably justified agitation.

Yes, we say it is a justifiable agitation as C. IKEAZOR in his book entitled **'the truth and nothing but the truth'** described the plight of the people of the region in these words "Nigeria's treatment of the people of the oil producing areas is nothing short of ingratitude and disrespect wrapped in a package of contempt for a people whose resources have sustained Nigeria for over thirty years. Oil and nothing else has paid for all the soldiers and dictators toys, the guns, the tanks, the jets, limousines state houses etc. Oil has paid for all the excesses of Nigeria's elites, nouveau riche, and civilian and military ruling classes including the traditional rulers, their summer holiday trips, their mansions at home and abroad, their mistresses and imported foreign prostitutes, their Viagra pills, subsided and unnecessarily repetitive hall trips, their fancy night clubs and hotels. Oil has made Nigeria what it is today and yet oil politics and revenue allocation have impoverished, deprived and denied the very people from whose soil it comes"

Ikeazor's postulation is better appreciated when the prevailing condition in the region is physically encountered rather than imagined. Now, it must be emphasized that oil is an exhaustible resource, as exemplified by Oloibiri community which sign-posted Nigeria among the committee of oil producers, and the plethora of dried-up oil fields and wells dotting the regions landscape.

With little or nothing to show for the huge sacrifices associated with the exploration and exploitation of oil and gas in the region, characterized by environmental/ecological despoliation and a wide range of hazards, including health and other socio-economic consequences, as the industry has largely delimited the traditional lifestyle and occupation of the people, any call to redress such a situation could be nothing short of genuine.

However, the derailment of this noble and clarion call and its corruption with criminality and brigandage is the major point of departure and where a clear line has to be drawn. I have taken pains to make myself clear on this. I am not against the struggle to seek redress over the criminal neglect, marginalization, under-development etc that have been visited on the people of the region over the years. I am against the scourge of criminality, militancy or any other unlawful means, applied to prosecute this mission, as it would be counter productive and would certainly spell doom rather than any foreseeable gain. It is this monster of criminality that I have undertaken to confront head-on and fight to a stand-still.

## **SUMMARY OF PREDISPOSING FACTORS/ISSUES FUELING THE NIGER DELTA CRISIS**

### **SOCIO- ECONOMIC CHALLENGES**

Today, this is the most potent of all the challenges in the region. The prevalence of multi-national companies in the region has made little impact on majority of its citizenry. Consequently, there is a high level of infrastructural deficit, unemployment, poverty, illiteracy ignorance, diseases and alarming evidence of all the indices of underdevelopment. A closer look at some of the socio-economic indicator should signpost a clearer picture:-

#### ▪ **INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

Years of neglect, coupled with a treacherous terrain have conspired to bequeath the region with huge infrastructural deficit. For instance, the region ranks lowest in the area of Federal roads. Most communities in the region are yet to see electricity while others having electricity are yet to be connected to the National grid. Transportation to the hinterland is a major ordeal for the people of the region in view of obvious constrains of waterway transport. Difficult terrain of the region, characterized by swamps and marshy environment has also made the cost of construction much more expensive as against other friendly terrains.

#### ▪ **UNEMPLOYMENT**

Unemployment statistics of the region is alarmingly high. With the oil and gas industry wreaking much damage on the fauna and flora

of the region and by extension destroying the traditional industry of fishing and farming, most able bodied employable citizens are left unemployed. This is further compounded by an industry dominated by non-indigenes who fill every available space with their non-indigenous relatives.

## **POVERTY**

This is a direct consequence of unemployment, environmental/ecological despoliation as a result of the activities of the oil industry which have shrunk available space for farming and reduced yields from fishing. Other indices such as diseases, illiteracy, ignorance, are also exercebating factors.

## ▪ **ECOLOGICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES**

Arguably ecological problems, arising from exploitation of natural resources by oil companies have been a major problem in the Niger Delta. This is because most of the locals' means of livelihood, such as fishing, farming as well as sources of portable water are affected by pollution and other environmental effects of exploration activities. In addition to this, the locals have not been the direct beneficiaries of the wealth from such exploitation over the years; this has led to various forms of agitations. Ecological problems include oil spillage, water pollution and gas flaring. There are also indications that, the communities are not adequately compensated when their areas are polluted.

## ▪ **PSYCHOLOGICAL CHALLENGES**

The mind according to popular logic is the cradle of all thoughts and actions. Psychological threats are those assaults on the peoples' mind which are capable of influencing an individual or group of persons to hold attitudes or opinions, contrary to the pursuit of National or State goals and objectives. This negative attitude can be nurtured through the misrepresentation of government activities, subversion, rumour mongering and terrorism. The Mass Media plays a major role in this.

## **RESOURCE CONTROL/FISCAL FEDERALISM CONUNDRUM**

Another critical demand of the people of the region is the Resource Control agitation, Derivation Principle and the practice of fiscal Federalism. If we must speak the truth, we should admit that these are vital ingredients of Federalism as we profess to be a Federal state. However, the absence of these core values in our Federal policy against the backdrop of injustice and inequity in the appropriation of State resources have provoked sustained anger and agitation in such a proportion that is impacting negatively on the Niger Delta crisis.

## **PHASES IN THE MANIFESTATION OF THE CRISIS**

If we must tell ourselves the very truth, dissecting crisis of any nature in modern day Nigeria will take us back to pre-colonial "Nigeria" and the role played by the British in amalgamating the Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914, as well as the antecedents of British colonialism and the legacy it left behind for the fledging independent state.

According to Kathy HUGHES, "the instability and confusion of the region can only be understood by starting at the beginning of the story. This is not as it would seem, 1960 when Nigeria was granted independence from Britain. In fact many of the conflicts which rage today have their roots in the events which took place while Nigeria was under British Colonial rule."

HUGHES argues that managing the fallout of the contradictions inherent in clamping peoples of diverse ethnicities, cultures, languages etc into one nation goes far beyond the fiat of such amalgamation. It demands a conscious and deliberate approach towards forging 'NATIONHOOD', and it is in this very essential domain (attainment of nationhood) that Nigeria continues to remain a toddler.

The amalgamation of Nigeria threw up three giants that eventually constituted the foundation upon which Nigeria's tripodal political structure was erected and eventually entrenched. This came with all the deficits of ethnicity, nepotism, tribalism, unhealthy rivalry etc that eventually characterized Nigeria's body politics. In the slippery and treacherous atmosphere of this interplay, the minorities weighed their chances and realized how dangerously handicapped they were. It became obvious that

their chances of survival in this contraption were not as promising, and this gave vent to minorities rights agitation.

One of the earliest yeilds of this minorities' agitation was the setting up of the Sir Henry Willinks Commission in 1957. Exerpts of the Committee report, published in 1958 confirmed the fears of the minorities and submitted inter alia that the entire area be declared a special Federal territory, and a Special Board be constituted to facilitate its development as the area is 'poor, backward and neglected'.

The Willinks Commission could be classified among initiatives applied by past and present administrations in addressing this conundrum, and these responses will be evaluated in detail when the paper approaches the phases of management of the crisis. However, this segment will continue with the progression of this agitation from peaceful to violent and to a criminal enterprise.

The forebears of the Niger Delta have blazed the trail in resistance against oppressive conduct by constituted authority. Sir George Taubman-Goldies efforts to secure greater control of the palm oil resources provoked the legendry King KOKO of Nembe in 1895 to launch the Akassa war as an "Expression of the kings determination to protect the rights of his people against oppressive power that sought to marginalize and sidetrack them" Azaiki (2003:153).

King Jaja of Opobo, Nana of Itsekiri, Oba of Benin etc had at one time in point challenged, and where necessary, violently, the British colonial masters in one form of protest or the other against perceived oppression. Where this has led to armed resistance, weapons supplied by the colonial masters to facilitate capture of slaves for export have come in handy to prosecute such resistance.

Then came the Jasper Adaka Boro era culminating in the declaration of the Niger Delta Republic on 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 1966, and later, the 'Twelve day Revolution' which was short-lived as it was crushed by the Ojukwu led Eastern Region Government. Boro was later conscripted into the Nigerian Army and fought on the side of the Federal troops in the Nigerian Civil War until his eventual death at the Port Harcourt front.

Even though peaceful call for redress never relapsed at any given time, the next significant wave of infraction ignited by the agitation was the Movement for Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) era. This witnessed the outrage of the Ogoni people over issues bordering on marginalization and neglect by Shell Petroleum Development Company and the Federal Government. Internal squabbles leading to a major implosion within the Ogoni people led to the murder of the 'Ogoni four' which in turn resulted in the arrest, prosecution and eventual hanging of the "Ogoni nine" including Ken Saro WIWA. Ledum MITEE, who headed the Technical Committee on Niger Delta was a survivor of that trial.

The next remarkable uprising from the region was the '*Kaiama Declaration*' which followed the resolution of a meeting of the Ijaw Youths Conference (IYC) held in Kaiama, Bayelsa State on 11<sup>th</sup> December, 1998. The resolution inter alia ordered all oil producing companies to vacate the region, latest 30<sup>th</sup> December, 1998. In a bid to forcefully enforce the directive, Ijaw youths engaged the Nigerian Army in weeks of violent confrontation resulting in loss of several lives on both sides, and lives and properties innocent citizens.

After the dust of the Kaiama Declaration settled down, there was relative peace over a period of time during which there was no major coordinated offensive. During this period, especially in 2003/2004, fallouts of the 2003 general elections had thrown up a bitter rivalry clash in Rivers State between gangs and cult groups loyal to Dokubo-Asari of the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) / Niger Delta People's Salvation Front (NDPSF) and Ateke Tom of the Niger Delta Vigilante Group (NDVG). The fight involved the introduction of assorted prohibited fire-arms eventually resulting in militarization and arms saturation of the environment.

Another development which had earlier saturated the region with fire-arms had taken place earlier, during the fratricidal ethnic conflict between the Ijaws/Itshekiri's/Ilaje's/Urhobo's, for the soul of Warri and other contentious political, land and boundary disputes. This conflict also saw huge deployment of fire-arms.

However, the introduction of the Movement for Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) added a new dimension to the entire saga. In January 2006, MEND kidnapped the first set of foreign hostages and tied their release to the release of Dokubo-Asari and DSP Alamiyeseigha, both of whom were

arrested for varying offences. Eventually, the hostages were released under dubious circumstances believed to be associated with ransom payment. This trend complemented with attacks on oil company infrastructure continued throughout 2006, up till about the time of the inauguration of the present administration.

Asari and Alamiyeseigha were eventually released by the new administration. However, the criminal component that had infested the 'struggle' had gained roots. Hostage taking did not abate but rather was on the increase. Ransom payment had become a revenue generation mechanism for the militant, cult and criminal gangs. In fact, revenue accruals from this '*industry*' had surpassed illegal bunkering, which hitherto had been the foremost revenue earner.

### **DIMENSION OF THE CRISIS**

Some of the unwholesome manifestations of the crisis include the following:

- **ILLEGAL BUNKERING:** theft of petroleum products, refined and unrefined as well as condensate gas, is a preponderant pre-occupation for militants and other criminal gangs in the region. This is without regards for the dire consequences of such indulgence, e.g environmental pollution, rampant fire outbreaks, loss of revenue to oil companies/federal Government, loss of life and property; etc.
- **Cultism and Militancy:** The relationship between cultism and militancy is very close. As a matter of fact, most of the so called militants are loose Federations of cult groups. While masquerading under various clauses such as cash reparations for communities, a greater share of oil revenues, they commit all sorts of crimes. The resultant effects of these groups' activities are loss of innocent lives, destruction of properties and loss of value, especially amongst the youths, as it is fast becoming a way of life;
- **Sea Piracy and Hijacking of Vessels:** Sea piracy has become a major threat and imbues fear among travelers along the various waterways that cascade the region. Vessels are equally not spared, as most often the unescorted ones are hijacked, items therein vandalized and at times ran aground. The situation is further compounded by the terrain

and thousands of creeks, which makes effective policing not only difficult, but the creeks provide safe havens for the criminals;

- **Hostage taking and kidnapping:** Presently it has become an all comers' affair for all criminal minded elements. The absence of strong condemnation from political, religious and traditional leaders on the issue has further boosted the ego of these kidnappers. Today, it is taking a far worrisome dimension, as some cases, victims are kidnapped not only for pecuniary reasons, but for sex and other purposes;
- We also have threats of vandalism of government and non-government facilities;
- Unlawful and wanton seizure of companies' properties/disruption of oil companies operations; and
- Massive and debilitating theft of companies' equipment.

## EFFECTS OF THE CRISIS

### IMPLICATION FOR NATIONAL SECURITY

Gilbert da Costa, writing for Global Security Organization (26<sup>th</sup> July, 2008) quoted Dimeji Bankole, Speaker of Nigeria's House of Representatives as saying that *"spiraling violence in the oil rich Niger Delta is now a major national security threat. If care is not taken, it will begin to move out of the Niger Delta and consume the whole nation. This is no longer a Niger Delta problem or a Nigerian problem but a global problem"*.

The armed struggle and criminality component which have become firmly rooted in the Niger Delta crisis is indeed a *"nightmare"* as echoed by President Umoru Yar'adua at the last graduation ceremony of the Nigeria Defense Academy (NDA), when he lamented that the Niger Delta crisis remains his greatest nightmare. If the breakdown of law and order in some parts of the region constitute a major concern, the armed rebellion, fledgling insurgency spiced with elements of terrorism and other sundry acts of violence and socio-economic crimes should trigger an alarm.

The crisis have indeed tasked and stretched the Armed Forces and Security Intelligence Community in terms of men and materials, including the Federal and State Governments that invest scarce resources towards the resolution of the crisis which otherwise would have been deployed for the development of the area and other pressing national needs. However, viewed against the backdrop of the potency of the crisis to destabilize the country and possibly rock its corporate existence, such investment may be justified as well directed.

From loss of Human lives to destruction of communities, loss of hard revenue etc, the cumulative loss is mind boggling. *“Cumulative earning from crude oil alone has been put at about ₦84 trillion over the past 45yrs. Last year alone, Nigeria made more than ₦8.7 trillion from sale of crude oil”*. Of course, an aggregate of all other export earnings over the same period amounts to overall insignificance in comparison to this basket.

*“In 2008, costs per barrel of crude oil reached their highest ever, while Nigeria’s crude oil output hit their lowest in recent times. Prices averaged over \$100pbd in January – September, 2008. Average daily loss was put at \$65pbd or ₦7.67bpd”*.

The statistics is more worrisome as Nigeria in 2008 slipped behind Angola as Africa’s leading producer. 1.9m bpd (Nigeria) as against 1.95m bpd (Angola). Effects on the rest of the economy include, spike in country risk perception, loss of investment/potential investment, rise in unemployment resulting from shut-ins and job losses, increase in crime rate, etc.

Furthermore, cost of production is bound to rise because of *“armed contingents that must surround every facility, staff being flown from long distances – like Lagos – to and from platforms in the creeks, loss of Human lives --- And not the least, MASSIVE REDUCTIONS in outputs from shut-ins/cases of force majeure”*.

The cost is endless. Destruction of facilities, especially pipelines, flow stations, platforms etc and resultant ecological consequences as well as environmental and health hazard arising from oil spillage and the cost of repairs of such damaged facilities comes to unquantifiable imagination.

States and Federal Government are also running huge security bills in combating the security problems in the region thereby diverting funds meant

for much needed infrastructural development and other compelling necessities.

## **FACTORS SUSTAINING THIS CRIMINALITY**

There are some issues that have contributed in no small measures to the continuation and spread of some of the above discussed threats. These also constitute great challenges to addressing these threats and are considered very fundamental. They include:

- Outdated laws, which unduely favour the oil companies towards payment of compensation arising from pollution that is commensurate to the negative impact of the environment and economic realities on ground;
- Uncooperative attitude of the people, especially in reporting issues to security agencies;
- Unwholesome practices of some corporate organizations having strong relationship with some militant groups for fear of attack;
- Poor response by many organizations in genuinely undertaking Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR);
- Silence and in some cases connivance by some political and traditional leaders;
- Unemployment;
- Illiteracy;
- Godfatherism and patronage by influential citizenry;
- Payment of ransom by relatives of kidnap victims thereby making it lucrative for criminals to continue in the act as well as others to join the crime;
- Availability and easy access to arms;
- Activities of host communities who use youth groups to threaten multinational companies to yield to their demands;
- Manipulation of perception of the State of under development into an instrument of defiance and criminality by unscrupulous elements.
- Involvement of foreign and domestic collaborators who benefit from the problems; and
- Financial benefits from illegal oil bunkering and hostage taking.

## **PHASES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE NIGER DELTA CRISIS**

That the crisis still persist is not entirely due to complete inaction or lack of attempts at addressing the contentious issues. Past and present administrations, at Federal and State levels have made conscious attempts at addressing these problems which could be chronicled as follows:

- Setting up of the Sir Henry Willinks Commission in 1957 in response to the concern of ethnic minorities over their perceived slim chances of survival in the Nigerian enterprise, by the colonial administration;
- Niger Delta Development Board, (NDDDB) via supplementary Federal Government Gazette no. 56 vol. 46 of September 1959;
- Niger Delta Basin Development Authority (NDBDA), Decree 1979;
- Special fund for oil producing areas, by Revenue Act of 1981;
- Presidential Task Force for the Development of oil producing Areas of 1989;
- Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Committee OMPADEC of 1992
- Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) of 2000;
- Gen. Ogomudia Committee 2002;
- Niger Delta Peace and Conflict Resolution Committee of 2007;
- Technical Committee on Niger Delta of 2008; and
- Ministry of Niger Delta 2008.

Inestimable amount of resources have been sunk into these initiatives all in the effort to resolve the Niger Delta crisis, yet the inferno rages on.

## THE WAY FORWARD: THE APPROACH OF THE RIVERS STATE GOVERNMENT

To say that I inherited a State under siege will be stating the obvious. Armed bandits, criminal gangs, cult and militant groups of diverse persuasions had punctuated governance and socio-economic activities in the State. Consequently, a dusk to dawn curfew had been in place for about three months before I mounted the saddle.

My mission statement was an emphatic zero-tolerance to these diverse forms of criminality. Restoration of law and order was of utmost purity. Zero tolerance implied no formal or informal contact, dialogue, fraternity, patronage or indeed any form of relationship with criminal elements. Above all, a zero ransom payment policy for kidnap/hostage cases.

This was not to mean that no olive branch was offered to the deviants. A clear directive to the effect that all criminal elements, especially the so-called militants, who voluntarily surrounded and disarmed, would be rehabilitated was sounded across the State. This was with a caveat though. Those who have committed heinous crimes would be made to account for their deeds. My Government has kept faith with these guiding principles in driving the security rehabilitation of Rivers State.

Other initiatives applied by the Rivers State Government at addressing the problem of criminality in the State could be viewed from two broad perspectives viz:

- Developmental; and
- Security

Knowing that security is development and development is security, the Developmental approach involves a process of saturating the State with various developmental projects to meet the infrastructural and socio-economic aspirations of the citizenry. In this regards huge investments is being made on road rehabilitation/construction, building of schools, electrification (Independent Power Plant Construction). The health sector is not left out as overhaul of the health sector by building/equipping hospitals, manpower training etc is on-going.

An eminent son of the State, Chief A. K. HORSFALL is appointed to head a highpowered Government Committee to interface with repentant militants towards working out modalities for their rehabilitation and re-integration into society. Under this initiative, Government has made provision to transform the lives of these deviants and make them useful to themselves and society. Sadly enough, the attraction for criminality has eclipsed and overwhelmed the wisdom to take advantage of such golden opportunity. The Social Development institute has been commissioned in Eche.

My Government has also offered scholarship to several citizens of the State who are in various counties of the world, pursuing academic endeavours consistent with the manpower developmental needs of the State. The Rivers State Sustainable Agency, Micro-Finance Empowerment Schemes into which the Rivers State Government has sunk huge financial resources to enhance the socio-economic profile of the citizenry.

From the security perspective, Government believes that the raging inferno of criminality in the Niger Delta, is a major security problem and challenge. Accordingly, my Government is fully disposed to applying a security therapy to reversing the ugly trend. Therefore, the Rivers State Government has made huge investment in the area of supporting the security agencies to root out this cankerworm.

It should be noted that running and managing security outfits are in the exclusive list and therefore a responsibility of the Federal Government. However, it is amazing, how impoverished and terribly neglected and handicapped these institutions are in terms of operational functionality. The reality is that the security agencies are ill-equipped to cope with the challenges of the region.

Against this backdrop, no responsible government could sit idly by and ignore such stark reality. Consequently, Rivers State Government has invested hugely on the security forces, collectively under the auspices of the JTF and individually in their respective capacities. Such investment could be qualified in terms of infrastructure, logistical and financial support, and these include provision of vehicles, Armoured Personnel Carrier, Protective Vests, Patrol boats and other welfare needs.

Extinguishing predisposing actors to criminality is key in addressing the malaise. One of such factors is the surfeit of prohibited fire arms in the

region. This mainly constitute the working tools of the criminal elements with which they terrorize society. The problem of criminality will remain recurrent as these huge stock of fire-arms are not mopped up. The mopping up of arms cannot be achieved through exchange of arms for cash as this has failed woefully in the past. A broad, qualified and attractive outline of rehabilitation package that will present a viable alternative should be emplaced as a departure from the arms for cash deal, and this the Rivers State Government already has on the table.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The following recommendations if applied dutifully will have profound far-reaching impact on the situation

- i. Government should take concrete steps towards redefining our nationhood to give all Nigerians a sense of belonging and national identity as one people, and to inculcate adequate patriotic zeal and ideals in all Nigerians;
- ii. Renewed sincere and more purposeful approach should be applied towards addressing the root causes of the crisis as well as eliminating the causes of persistence of the crisis. A situation whereby the combined budgetary proposal for NDDC & the Niger Delta Ministry as contained in the 2009 appropriation, is not equal to the budget of NDDC before the ministry came into being, does not inspire conviction among the people of the region as to government's commitment towards development of the area;
- iii. Laws stipulating stiffer punishment for criminal gangs such as militants, kidnappers, cultists etc, masquerading as freedom fighters. Here, the Rivers Stat Government has blazed the trial by recommending the death penalty for kidnappers;
- iv. Packaging a grand security strategy for the Niger Delta with a view to enthroning security dominance of the area by conventional forces rather than agitators and criminal gangs;
- v. Diversification of the economy through exploitation of solid mineral and agricultural potentials;

- vi. Government should initiate attractive programmes of demobilization, rehabilitation and re-integration of militants and criminal elements. Such qualitative programmes should offer and provide alternatives to their present pre-occupation;
- vii. Experimentation with “True Federalism” with a view to entrenching the component of fiscal federalism and improved visibility of Resource Control, as this will ginger states to maximize exploitation of their resources;
- viii. Review of some of the contentious laws that seem to inhibit the participation of host communities in the enterprise of the oil and gas industry. Such laws may include: - Land use decree, Petroleum Act, etc;
- ix. Political will by Federal Government to match rhetoric’s of her avowed declaration to develop the region with action and commitment;
- x. States, Local Government, Development Agencies and Partners, Oil Companies, host Communities should be more sincere and transparent in meeting their obligations towards the people and development of the region;

## **CONCLUSION**

Like a sore on the conscience of the nation, the Niger Delta crisis presents potentialities capable of abbreviating the peace, security and stability of the nation. Governments at all levels as well as stakeholders of all persuasions must not be deterred by the illusory solution syndrome of the crisis, occasioned by previous trials and failures, but should stay focused on fashioning out sincere and purposeful modalities to resolve the impasse, permanently.