



THE INITIATIVES

NATIONAL ROUNDTABLE FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE

Plot 2542, Hassan usman Katsina Street, Asokoro, FCT-Abuja, Nigeria

☎ 08139369777, 08033144749 ✉ info@theinitiativesng.com 🌐 www.theinitiativesng.com

Communiqué issued at the end of the Initiatives' Seventh National Roundtable for Good Governance, May 25, 2009. Topic: 'Niger Delta Crisis and the Challenges of Leadership'.



PREAMBLE:

The Seventh National Roundtable for Proactive Laws and Good Governance organized by The Initiative was held on May 25, 2009, at the Executive Hall of the International Conference Centre, Abuja; with the theme 'Niger Delta Crisis and the Challenges of Leadership'. The forum was chaired by Senator Mohammed Sanusi Daggash, former Minister of National Planning.

The session also had in attendance, members of National and State Houses of Assembly, members of the Diplomatic Corps, Federal and State government functionaries, stakeholders in the Niger Delta Issues, Governors the Niger Delta region, Niger Delta leaders, including President, Ijaw National Congress, President, Confederation of Niger Delta Youth Leaders Council, President, South South Zonal Youth Front, President, Women Initiative in Niger Delta, security agencies, the academia, representatives of Political Parties, civil society groups and organisations, religious leaders, members of the Press, State Representatives and members of the general public.

Also present at the event were: Rt. Hon. Dimeji Bankole, CFR, Honourable Speaker, House of Representatives, Senator Mohammed Sanusi Daggash, Former Minister of National Planning, His Excellency, Barr. Godswill Akpabio, Executive Governor, Akwa Ibom State, His Excellency, Chief Rotimi Amaechi, Executive Governor, Rivers State represented by

GOVERNING BOARD.

Hon. Justice Mohammed Uwais GCON - **Chairman**

His Excellency Sen. Pius Anyim - **Vice Chairman**

Chief Wole Olanipekun SAN - **Advisor**

Engr. Tele Ikuru, the Deputy Governor, Deputy Governor, Akwa Ibom State, the Speaker of Akwa Ibom House of Assembly, the Inspector General of Police, Represented by DIG Udom Ekpoudom, Prof Ahmed Dan Fulani, DG, National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies, etc.

The Niger Delta Crisis and the Challenges of Leadership being the theme of the seventh Edition of the National Roundtable for Good Governance, captures the present mood of the Nation and apt in finding a lasting solution to the lingering national albatross that has continued to attract both national and international attention.

The enormity of the Niger Delta crisis with its attendant restiveness has called for national retrospection of the role of the various players including the family, community, state and the national leaders. It should be noted that the attitude of successive governments bordering on insincerity of purpose and utter neglect of the region remain the bane of all development efforts in the region.

The situation is worsened by seeming collapse of strategic leadership at various levels of the Niger Delta society. It is this failure to provide the needed direction that has given rise youth restiveness. The result has been a total breakdown of norms and values of the society, capital flight, poverty and under-development.

Over the years, there seem to have been lack of genuine interest on the part of the government to the plight of the region, in spite of enormous oil resources that comes from the region. Rather what exists is a situation whereby a handful of perfidious cabals squander State resources placed in their care with utmost disdain and contempt for the people and without providing any form of intervention on the environment or the people on whose land oil and gas resources are exploited.

It is with the view of stating the imperative of strategic leadership as a panacea to peace and development of the Niger Delta that formed the core of the issues of the 7th Edition of the National Roundtable. This is aimed at undertaking a holistic review as well as to bring to the fore, identified areas and strategies that will promote sustainable peace and development of Niger Delta.

The session received presentations from His Excellency, Barr. Godswill Akpabio, Executive Governor, Akwa Ibom State, His Excellency, Chief Rotimi Amaechi, Executive Governor, Rivers State, Chief Mike Okiro, CFR, Inspector General of Police, and Prof. Danfulani Ahmed (DSC FICTr) Director General, National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru.

Observations:

The following observations were made;

1. That the National Roundtable came at the most auspicious time as the nation yearns for a lasting solution to the Niger Delta dilemma; as it offers opportunity for the executive, legislators and civil society to come together to frankly discuss issues that affect the development of the region and to offer proactive solutions.
2. That inability of the government to tackle the massive underdevelopment and crass display of insensitivity to the plight of the people is posing a threat to our nascent democracy
3. That the problem of the Niger Delta is multi-dimensional that require a multi dimensional approach that should incorporate economic, social and political solutions. The use of force to dislodge the militancy though desirable in the face of rise in criminality should not be the only approach towards solving the problem, but should involve the use of diplomacy and dialogue to bring all parties to the conflict to promote amicable settlement.
4. That illiteracy coupled with lack of job opportunities are major militating factors that stimulate crisis in the Niger Delta region
5. That environmental degradation caused by long years of prospecting and exploration activities which resulted in spillages and environmental pollution, deny the people their means of earning a living has contributed to frustrations and agitations that has culminated to violence and youth restiveness.
6. That the long years of insensitivity to the plight of the people of Niger Delta have led to unrest. Sacrificing human security needs on the altar of national security has led to neglect and increased youth restiveness.
7. That the inability of government to match its words with action, and inadequate funding NDDC to carry out its streamlined development projects in the area, and which would have positively affected the lives of the people has led to loss of confidence and distrust.
8. Politicians in order to achieve their inordinate ambitions make use of these youths only to abandon them and in such situation they resort to any means available to them to survive.
9. That the dislocation experienced in the field of education in the last 15 years led to massive youths drop out in the area coupled with the massive disruptive influence of exploration activities and environmental degradation, neglect became available tools in the hands of criminal elements in the Niger Delta

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on the above observations, the following recommendations were made:

1. There is need for collaborative effort between governments at various levels, the people and the multi-national oil corporations in the Niger Delta, so that amicable solution would be found in resolving the lingering problem in the region.
2. The Federal Government in addition to emphasis in national security should also focus its attention on human security and needs, to discourage the feeling of despondency, neglect, marginalisation and insensitivity to the plight of the people in the region.
3. There is need to tackle poverty, deprivation and the low human development of the area. This calls for massive investment in education and social infrastructure.
4. There is need for the various governments in the area to embark on people oriented development projects. This could be done through provision of free and compulsory education, free medical care for women, children and the elderly. Also relevant is establishment of skill acquisition centres, provision of credit schemes to empower the people and to create youth engagement projects in order to provide means of income and to eliminate youth restiveness and militancy.
5. There is need for the Federal Government to address the demands of people over long years of injustice in revenue allocation. This calls for genuine dialogue between the government and the people on the most acceptable revenue formula to propel development of the area and to give the people a sense of belonging.
6. There is need for leaders in the area to create enabling environment that guarantees peace and stability as no genuine investor will invest in atmosphere of insecurity.
7. There is need for adequate funding of the newly created Ministry of Niger Delta and the NDDC to enable the agencies carry out the Niger Delta Development Master plan.
8. There is need for effective communication between leaders and the people. Leaders should be able to carry their people along and provide vital information on the plans of the government.

9. There is need for a re-focus on educational development in the area, on which lies the future of Niger Deltas human development needs.

10. Finally, participants called on the National Assembly to address areas that bother on human security in the proposed constitutional amendment.