

# **THE IJAW CHARTER**

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### **1.0 PREAMBLE**

We, the people of the Ijaw ethnic nationality of Nigeria;

Being aware of the fears expressed by our forebears in the pre-independence negotiations as confirmed by the Willink Commission Report, 1958 (Sections 26 and 27) that led to a truly federal Nigerian State as encapsulated in the 1960 and 1963 Constitutions of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, in which federating regions enjoyed fiscal autonomy but now observed more in breach to the detriment of the Ijaw Nation;

Having made tremendous sacrifices and contributions to the sustenance of the political and economic survival and stability of the Nigerian State since independence, and being the source of over 50 percent of total oil and gas production that accounts for about 80 percent of federally collectable revenue, despite the arbitrary systemic split of the Ijaw Nation into regions, states and local government areas skewed against our interest;

Being conscious of the unfortunate economic, political and social deprivations, the unjustifiable denial of access to wealth creation through the ownership and management of our God endowed natural resources in line with the tenets of fiscal federalism, and the continued suppression of dissent through state sponsored acts of violence (including the bombings and killings of defenceless Ijaw people of Odi, Okerenkoko, Ayakoromo, Kurutie, Ogbudugbudu, Oporoza, Ajapa and numerous other communities);

Having suffered unmitigated health and psycho-social hazards and the substantial destruction and pollution of our natural environment as a result of decades of oil and gas exploration and exploitation, including associated gas flaring, in the Ijaw Nation by the Nigerian State;

Noting also the systemic denial of the Ijaw people of opportunities for political and socio-economic development, and the use of controversial and questionable indices and laws (including particularly the Petroleum Act of 1969, Land Use Act of 1978 and successive arbitrary Constitutions) for the distribution of economic and infrastructural benefits to the disadvantage of the Ijaw Nation;

And realizing the need for a paradigm shift, given the observed failure of the Nigerian State to redress the decades of exploitation, and the integral role of core leadership values of honesty, integrity, transparency and good governance in enthroning a selfless, people-centred and progressive Ijaw Nation;

Do hereby resolve and affirm our commitment to develop the Ijaw Nation, based on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to Self-Determination adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on the 13<sup>th</sup> September, 2007, the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights and similar other international legal instruments to enact this Charter for ourselves.

## **2.0 VISION STATEMENT**

The Ijaw Vision is to attain and maintain an autonomous, contiguous territory in love, unity and prosperity; and living in peace and harmony with its neighbours.

## **3.0 THE DECLARATION (THE IJAW AGENDA)**

*Determined to actualize the Ijaw Vision and committed to live in peace with our neighbours, promptly reverse the gross inequity, balkanization, socio-political and environmental devastation we have continuously suffered in Nigeria, and in fulfilment of our collective destiny as free, indigenous, united, well-endowed and harmonious people under God, we reaffirm without any reservation the totality of our rights and resolve to pursue and achieve the following objectives:*

- 3.1 *To exercise our inherent and inalienable rights to self-determination, preservation of our cultural identity and continued existence in our homeland as guaranteed by law, territorially defined on the eastern flank by Eastern Obolo and Ibeno and on the western flank by the Toru-Ebe clans of Apoi, Arogbo, Egbema Furupagha, Gbaran, Okomu and Olodiama in the present Niger Delta Region, as well as to organize ourselves as an autonomous and contiguous geopolitical entity.*
- 3.2 *To insist on and ensure the sincere practice of federalism as a system of governance, whereby the ownership, control and management of natural resources vest inalienably in the communities through federating units of the polity and also entails the appropriate devolution of powers to the federating units.*
- 3.3 *To ensure the application and entrenchment of the best principles and practice of good, accountable, transparent and participatory governance (including traditional governance) at national, subnational and community levels in order to engender peace, security, social inclusion and justice, sustainable economic growth and development.*
- 3.4 *To secure from Nigeria and other responsible actors (both local and international) the maximum and urgent reparation for and adequate remediation of the gross environmental and ecological devastation of Ijaw territory, principally through the continued reckless exploitation and exploration of oil and gas on the one hand, including several decades of continual gas flaring, and on the other hand the criminal neglect of the Ijaw people.*
- 3.5 *To pursue the educational and technological advancement of Ijaw People with all purposefulness.*

#### 4.0 **AMENDMENT CLAUSE**

#### 5.0 **RATIFICATION**