

**Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) Statement: UPDATE ON PRELIMINARY DIALOGUE WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT BY PROXY**

30 July 2016

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) is the only militant group from the Niger Delta region who are presently engaged in a dialogue with the Federal Government of Nigeria – through oil companies and security agencies -with a view to resolving the current Niger Delta crisis.

Thus far, the deliberations have been fruitful. Various concessions and guarantees have already been secured; some of which include, but are not limited to: Release of Henry Okah, Charles Okah and Obi Nwabueze; Review of the life sentence handed to Mr. Edmund Ebiware; based on a proposal put forward by the Aaron Team representative for Abia and Imo states Senator Adolphus Wabara, conditional release of IPOB Leader, Mr. Nnamdi Kanu and others if they renounced their agitation for a “Biafra Republic”; that Mr. Government Ekpemupolo shall not be arrested, harassed and/or intimidated whenever he makes himself available as a delegate of the MEND Aaron Team 2; that, international arbitrator and conflict negotiator, American Dr. Judith Asuni shall be accepted as the representative of the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) on the MEND Aaron Team; that the criminal charges against Urhobo freedom fighter, Mr. Kelvin Prosper Oniarah shall be reviewed; that, the life sentence which was handed to 7 soldiers in 2008 who actively supported the Niger Delta struggle be reviewed under the Presidential Amnesty Programme. The affected persons are:

1. Suleiman Alabi Akubo, Major.

2. Mathias Peter, SGT.

3. Alexander Davou, L.Cpl.

4. Moses Nwaigwe, L.Cpl.

5. Nnandi Anene, L.Cpl.

6. Taatihi Emmanuel, L.Cpl.

7. Caleb Bawa, PTE.

However, one of the most immediate and urgent fall-outs of the ongoing dialogue is the imperative for the Federal Government and MEND to jointly and separately take proactive steps to rescue and secure the region in the event that the recalcitrant Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) continue on their senseless and politically-motivated path of attacks on the country's oil assets.

To this end, both parties agreed that the Special Forces of the Nigerian Army should commence the purely routine but strategic military exercise code-named “Operation Crocodile Tears”; while MEND would commence a meet-the Government-Actors-and-People tour of the Niger Delta region code-named “Operation Moses”.

While “Operation Crocodile Tears” is aimed at ensuring the combat readiness of the Nigerian Army in Amphibious and Internal Security Operations in the Niger Delta as well as check criminal activities like kidnapping, pipeline vandalism, piracy and other forms of criminal activities spearheaded by the NDA in the region; MEND’s “Operation Moses” is essentially to inform, educate and generally sensitize the citizenry in the Niger Delta, particularly the Government, the youth, oil companies, elders and militant community on the need to ceasefire and support the President Muhammadu Buhari Administration in its determined bid to proffer sustainable solutions to the current Niger Delta crisis.

Consequently, MEND urges all states, local governments, oil & gas companies and law-abiding citizens in the Niger Delta region to go about their lawful and legitimate concerns without any iota of fear as we have received FIRM ASSURANCES from the Federal Government that “Operation Crocodile Tears” is an innocuous exercise in the national interest.

Meanwhile, MEND’s “Operation Moses” shall be anchored by the AARON TEAM 2 Dialogue, Peace & Development Initiative jointly led by Mr. Odein Ajumogobia, SAN and HRH King Alfred Papapreye Diente-Spiff, the Amanyanabo of Twon-Brass in Bayelsa State.

“Operation Moses” shall commence with a visit by the distinguished members of the AARON TEAM 2 to President Muhammadu Buhari at the State House, Abuja between August 22, 2016 and August 26, 2016.

Thereafter, the Team shall hold sessions with top executives of major indigenous and international oil & gas companies operating in Nigeria, including the state oil company, Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) on August 29 and 30,

2016 in Abuja. The focus of those sessions shall include, to wit: Local content development; Petroleum Industry Bill; Corporate Social Responsibility/Host community relations, etc.

On September 5 and 6, 2016 in Abuja the MEND Aaron Team shall hold sessions with the top echelon of security agencies in Nigeria as well as the top management of the intervention agencies in the Niger Delta, namely: Ministry of Niger Delta; Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and the Presidential Amnesty Office. The Minister of Justice/Attorney General of the Federation is expected to personally attend these sessions. The focus of the sessions shall include: Extension of presidential amnesty to certain categories of political prisoners in Nigeria; Fundamental Human Rights; NDDC Act in focus; Presidential Amnesty Proclamation 2009 in focus; collapse of federal infrastructure in the Niger Delta in focus; Calabar-Lagos rail line in focus; East/West Road in focus, etc.

After these critical sessions, "Operation Moses" shall move to tour the 9 states in the Niger Delta region, commencing with Rivers state between September 12, 2016 and September 14, 2016. Between September 15, 2016 and September 18, 2016 the Aaron Team shall be in Bayelsa state. Between September 19, 2016 and September 21, 2016 the Team shall be in Delta state. From Thursday September 22, 2016 to Sunday September 25, 2016 the Aaron Team shall be in Akwa Ibom state. Between September 26, 2016 and September 29, 2016 the Team shall be in Abia and Imo states. And finally, between October 3, 2016 and October 7, 2016 the Aaron Team shall be in Edo and Ondo states.

The central clearinghouse for all activities connected with "Operation Moses" shall be the MEND Aaron Team 2 secretariat. Accordingly, the Secretary of the Team, Timipa Jenkins Okponipere, Esq., shall duly communicate with all concerned persons and institutions.

Ultimately, peace and development in the Niger Delta region is the final destination of the ongoing dialogue between MEND and the Federal Government.

Long live the Niger Delta...Long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria!

Jomo Gbomo

**Source:** Oyibos Online, MEND Statement: Update on Preliminary Dialogue with the Federal Government by Proxy, 30 July 2016, <http://www.oyibosonline.com/mend-statement-update-on-preliminary-dialogue-with-the-federal-government-by-proxy/> [accessed 20 October 2017]