

Mr. Nnimmo Bassey, Oilwatch Africa and Friends of the Earth Nigeria (KAIROS partner)

Address to the Klimaforum alternative summit in Copenhagen, Denmark

December 7, 2009

Good evening, brother and sisters. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.
Good evening, in-laws and outlaws! [Laughter]

If climate change were small change, we'd be exchanging tips tonight. The delegates meeting at Bella Centre think climate change is small change and so they are busy exchanging tips under the table, behind closed doors, making deals that will not solve the climate problem.

I believe that the Klimaforum is the place where we have real people talking about the real problem, building real movements and getting ready to share the solutions. To get on the streets and to knock on doors when necessary, and make it happen that our policy makers will not get away with playing politics with climate change. [Cheers]

Somebody said climate change is not the change we need, and I believe that is the truth. I come from a part of the world, the centre of the world, Africa is the center of the world... [Applause and cheers] But we also stay in the center of the world where all the problems keep falling upon that continent. Africa has not contributed much to the store of carbon in the atmosphere but the most impacts will be inflicted upon that continent.

This is why we meet together as social movements, as environmentalists, and insist on climate justice now!

At Friends of the Earth International, which I'm sure you know about, 77 autonomous groups in 77 countries working at a grassroots level, working with the people who are really impacted by climate change and by all the impacts of global capitalism. We are driven by three key words, and I would like you to repeat them after me. The first word is "mobilize."
Number two is "resist." And to "transform." Resist, mobilize and transform. These three key words capture what we stand for, how we work and what we're looking for.

As you heard from Harry who just finished speaking [Harry Saragih from the Via Campesina peasant movement], there have been serious land issues around the world. You've heard about land grabs. You've heard about ocean grabs. Now we're talking about the sky grabs. And we are saying that all this grabbing is enough. This grabbing has to stop. Polluters must be held to account. Unfortunately polluters are in the global North and the global South. But the issues of climate change and climate justice demand that those who have taken up the global commons should pay for the mitigation, should pay for building resilience in the global South, and should pay for transfer of technology from the corrupting and polluting fossil fuel-driven technology to one that is low carbon and that is green.

And, as you may know, if I start to talk about crude oil, my blood begins to boil. Because crude oil has made the world believe that we should not look for a solution to global warming. People say that crude oil is the easy and cheap form energy, but it's not the truth. Crude oil may be cheap but it's only because people are not paying the price of crude oil.

If you see what is going on in the oil fields – the pollution, the degradation, the human rights abuses, the murders and the killings – I would like you to tell me how much one drop of oil should cost. [Applause]

We believe that the world has drilled itself into a tight corner, and more drilling will not solve the problem. Somebody said that the Stone Age did not end because of lack of stones. And so the crude oil age does not have to wait until crude oil is exhausted before it ends.

It is time for us to insist that our policy makers must agree that 40% cut in emissions at home, at source, must not include anything like offsetting. For offsetting is really quite upsetting! [Applause] You cannot run a polluting industry somewhere in the world, and then offset it somewhere else in the world. It just

doesn't jive. This is the kind of fiction that must be exposed, and policy makers must stop listening to industry and listen to people and hear what we are saying. [Applause and cheers]

I believe this is why we are in Klimaforum: to say the truth, insist on the truth and dig into the ears of our policy makers. They just have to hear the truth!

I issue tonight a red card to REDD [which stands for reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation], because REDD is bringing misery. We all agreed that deforestation must be stopped. But you cannot buy a forest somewhere in Africa, or somewhere in Latin America, or somewhere in Asia, drive away community people and manage it in a way that you can get carbon credits. It doesn't just make sense. We have to stop pollution at source, fight climate change at source, change the way we behave, change the way we consume things, and begin to understand that we have just one Planet Earth. [Applause]

You know what? I believe it was in the month of September or October, that the United States bombed the moon [in search of water ice or vapour]. You can bomb the moon all you want, but the moon will never become Planet Earth.

As I was saying, crude oil, dirty energy, is not the way of tomorrow. Policy makers make me think that they're just so darned short sighted – men of the North all of them. They're thinking about quick, short solutions. Maybe their lives are exhausted? They don't care about the lives of their children and their grandchildren and those who are coming after us? We are here to say that climate change is not just a problem confronting us today. It's a problem that is going to be worse tomorrow if nothing is done today. And so we are saying... I will not be tired of saying this... and I'm going to ask you to help me say it:

Leave the oil in the soil
Leave the coal in the hole
Leave the tar sand in the land

These sources of energy are just the road to destruction. And we have to stop now, to pause, and agree that these two weeks with all the discussions we have, with all the actions, with all the meetings, we are going to build a concrete solution and force our decision makers to understand that making a political deal at Bella Centre – or in government houses, in palaces somewhere – is just not the way to go. We need a real climate deal. And we need it now, not tomorrow. [Applause and more cheering]

I really enjoyed that ice music [part of the previous act]. It was fantastic. We could see by music a clear illustration of the melting of the polar ice caps and all that. The only thing we did not see is the spread of the desert. Maybe we should have a sand music next. [Laughter]

Brother and sisters, I want to take a pause and thank you so much. I thank all the organizers of this event. This is the real event in Copenhagen!
[Applause and cheering] And so please say it with me one more time:

Leave the oil in the soil
Leave the coal in the hole
Leave the tar sand in the land

I thank you for your attention.
[Applause and cheering]