

**COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY THE IJAW NATIONAL CONGRESS (INC) AT THE
END OF ITS TOWN HALL MEETING (EASTERN ZONE) HELD AT KINGOLIZA
HALLS, OFF DR PETER ODILI ROAD, PORT HARCOURT, RIVERS STATE, ON
THURSDAY, AUGUST 11, 2022.**

1. PREAMBLE

The Apex Pan-Ijaw socio-cultural organization, Ijaw National Congress (INC), held a town hall meeting (eastern zone) themed, "Ijaw Unity and Sensitization" on Thursday, August 11, 2022, in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, to deliberate on the need to educate, sensitize and conscientize Ijaw people towards security consciousness, sustainable self-governance, self-development and self-defence, collectively and individually, of Ijaw territory.

The one-day meeting, which was chaired by the National President of INC, Professor Benjamin Okaba, had in attendance members of the National Executive Council of INC, Eastern Zone and Clans Executive Committee members, Traditional Rulers, Chiefs and Clan heads in the Zone, notably, HRM (Brig. Gen) King Bright Fiboinumama (Rtd), Amanyano of Abuloma; HRM King I.N.C. Herbert, Agbanijeka XVIII, Amanyano of Ancient Bille Kingdom; and HRH Chief N.L.A. Iraron Ede, Obolo II, and erudite Ijaw scholars such as Alabo Emeritus Professor Dagogo Michael Jim Fubara, Professor E. S. Bartimaeus, Professor A. W. Obianime - former INC President and some of the governorship candidates from Ijaw extraction in Rivers State.

At the meeting, the chairman of INC, Eastern Zone, HRH Chief N. L. A. Iraron, delivered a welcome address in which he harped on the need for Ijaw people to discuss together in love, not hatred, on issues of common concern to enable Ijaw nation consolidate on initial successes already attained.

The INC National President and chairman of the occasion, Professor Benjamin Okaba, presented the agenda-setting address for the meeting and emphasized that the times we are in, call for vigilance, security consciousness, sustainable self-reliance, self-governance, self-development and self-defence in the interest of Ijaw nation.

Also, two seminal papers were presented at the meeting. While Dame (Dr) Rose Obuoforibo spoke on "The Imperatives and Strategies for Ijaw Unity", HRM (Brig. Gen) King Bright Fiboinumama, JP, Etum IV, spoke on "Intelligence and Security of the Niger Delta of Nigeria: The Ijaw Nation in Perspective". The thrusts of the incisive papers formed the crux of deliberation and interaction on the essence of the meeting.

2. OBSERVATIONS

After critical and exhaustive deliberations, the meeting made the following observations:

(a) That Nigeria is bedeviled by the challenges of intractable insecurity, institutional decay, injustice, bad governance and leadership failure at all levels of government.

(b) That citizens live and do business in fear of unpredictable violent attacks and mindless armed invasions that have become daily occurrences across the length and breadth of the country, including Ijaw territory.

(c) That the forensic audit report on the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has not been made public by the Federal Government of Nigeria almost one year after it was formally submitted to the Presidency in September 2021, and that a substantive board has not been constituted and inaugurated for the commission despite the overwhelming public outcry against the illegality of interim administrators.

(d) That the INC still insists that the 3% provision for host communities, definition of host communities as "any area in Nigeria and beyond", which may include Niger Republic and others, and the allocation of a whopping 30% provision for the exploration of the frontier basins in the Petroleum Industry Act (PIA), 2021, remain totally unacceptable to the Ijaw nation.

(e) That the re-introduced National Water Resources Bill on the floor of the House of Representatives is an obnoxious piece of legislation and a brazen attempt by the Federal Government to whimsically annex the resources, territory and basic source of livelihood and identity of Ijaw people.

(f) That the Ijaw nation frowns at the over politicisation, sectionalization and commercialisation of the New NNPC management structure, particularly as it relates to majority of its top and sensitive positions been held by persons from a section of this country without respect for the Federal Character principles.

(g) That some eminent Ijaw sons and daughters have emerged as the standard bearers of their various political parties in Rivers State, in particular, for the 2023 governorship election, is a pointer to a good omen ahead. Stating that, the victory of one of them at the poll come 2023 would turn around the political, social and economic fortunes of Rivers people.

3. RESOLUTIONS

The meeting, therefore, undertook the following resolutions:

(a) That the people of Ijaw nation should be strongly united from the family, lineage to community, clan and kingdom levels; ensure extra-vigilance, security consciousness and deploy all legitimate means of self-defence and protection of their respective domains.

(b) That the INC maintains its position that the restructuring of Nigeria viz-a-viz devolution of power, resource control, state police and the application of other principles of federalism remain the recipe to the fraudulent foundation of the country that is skewed against minority rights, justice and equity.

(c) That the Federal Government of Nigeria should, without further delay, make public the forensic audit report on the NDDC and also appoint a substantive board for the interventionist agency to tackle the developmental challenges of the region.

(d) That the Ijaw nation demands the immediate withdrawal of the wicked National Water Resources Bill as its intent and purposes, we strongly believe, are meant to further consolidate the Federal Government's unitary grip on the resources and territory of Ijaw nation and perpetually subjugate Ijaw people.

(e) That the Ijaw people, particularly in Rivers State, should rally round the eminent Ijaw sons and daughters that are the governorship candidates of their various political parties to ensure electoral victory in the spirit of unity, mutual tolerance and collaboration with other ethnic nationalities in the state.

(f) That the hospitality of the Ijaw people should not be misconstrued for weakness.

Long Live the Federal Republic of Nigeria
Long Live Ijaw Nation

SIGNED for Ijaw Nation by:

1. Professor Benjamin Okaba, National President, INC
2. Mr Atamuno Atamuno, Vice President 1, INC
3. HRH Chief N. L. A. Iraron, Ede Obolo II, Chairman, Eastern Zone, INC
4. Engr. Ezonebi Oyakemeagbegha, National Publicity Secretary, INC
5. Professor A. W. Obianime, former INC President
6. HRM I. N. C. Herbert, Agbanijeka XVIII, Amanyabo of Ancient Bille Kingdom