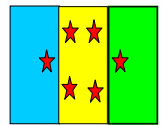


# **MOVEMENT FOR THE SURVIVAL OF THE Ogoni PEOPLE (MOSOP)**



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## **Press Release**

### **MOSOP WELCOMES THE RELEASE OF THE NDPVF LEADER**

The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) has welcomed the reported release from detention of the leader of the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Alhaji Mujaheed Asari-Dokubo. The approach in our view would go a long way to create confidence and reassure the people of the Niger Delta that the era of arm-twisting may well be over. Whilst we commend this bold step, we as well call on the Federal Government to consider the cases of other leaders of community agitations who are still being incarcerated.

MOSOP would however want to see this as a gesture in the process towards the attainment of an end and not an end in itself. It should signal a radical shift from past approaches that were high on rhetoric and posturing and low on substance. The gesture should be followed through by a well structured dialogue process of all stakeholders that are credible, not public relations driven and bereft of grandstanding.

The release of the NDPVF leader should occasion the opportunity to move on to discussion of the fundamental issues affecting the Niger Delta. The environment, a fair share of resources, local autonomy, and economic development are fundamental to our cause and go beyond what is in current masterplans and promises.

We would welcome resuming a discussion of resource control, which was last debated without conclusion at the constitutional reform conference. It is only by facing these fundamental issues squarely that we will make progress on bringing stability to the Niger Delta.

There is a clear desire – whether amongst the grassroots or militants alike-to see a much greater share of the resources drawn from the region dedicated to its development. This is not just a matter of greater cash to states but a major increase in investment that is truly locally driven and controlled.

There is no question that Nigeria can do better than 13% or 18% as offered for this region and it is time the Federal Government recognised that it cannot dodge this issue any longer.

We are not advocating greater control and resources without responsibility. There is no place in our agenda for those who would want to steal the revenues from this region whether they are from Abuja or from our region itself.

It is for this reason that our call for resource control should not be misinterpreted as a demand for yet more resources to state and local governments. They must prove themselves worthy and democratically accountable to the local people if they wish to be part of a new agenda.

We are calling for an immediate exploration of creative responses to the resource control challenge. For example, there is no reason why we cannot have local trusts with international standards of transparency dedicated to education, health and the environment of current and future generations.

We are calling for structures and a share of resources which recognise the aspirations of communities and peoples in the Niger Delta but which are fundamentally sound and will promote economic and social growth which will benefit the whole nation of Nigeria.

In the past we have seen complaints from parts of the country that such a fair share of resources cannot be afforded by Nigeria. This is simply no longer true. The increases in the price of oil mean that Nigeria can afford to do the right thing without causing pain elsewhere. If invested equitably and sensibly additional funds in the Niger Delta can also help drive forward economic growth across the country.

The Ogoni people are as conscious as any that oil is a finite resource for our people and the nation. Our agenda is to see resources used strategically as not one drop can be replaced. We continue to align ourselves with those calling for an immediate end to the unbelievably wasteful and damaging process of gas flaring.

Finally there is no question that we have reached a very hazardous stage in the struggle in the Niger Delta. More and more funds are being invested in arms by both security forces and militants. We do not agree with a future in which extraordinary sums of money are dumped into 'security' when greater security can be derived by answering the concerns of local communities.

We firmly believe that a responsible answer to the question of resource control and proper enforcement of our environmental and financial crimes laws can bring about revolutionary progress in the Niger Delta which will benefit the whole nation.

We would like to enjoin our fellow Niger Deltans to see Alhaji Dokubo's release as triumph of the voice of reason, which should encourage a change of approach in our match towards the attainment of justice for our people. As the task ahead is enormous, we call on the people to unite and work together with one voice.

Sign:

**Bari-ara Kpalap**  
***Information Officer***

