

Oil Exploration in the Niger Delta and the Right to a Healthy Environment

Authors : Olufunke Ayilara Aje-Famuyide

Abstract : The centrality of the Petroleum Industry in the world energy is undoubted. The world economy almost runs and depends on petroleum. Petroleum industry is a multi-trillion industry; it turns otherwise poor and underdeveloped countries into wealthy nations and thrusts them at the center of international diplomacy. Although these developing nations lack the necessary technology to explore and exploit petroleum resources they are not without help as developed nations, represented by their multinational corporations are ready and willing to provide both the technical and managerial expertise necessary for the development of this natural resource. However, the exploration of these petroleum resources comes with, sometimes, grave, concomitant consequences. These consequences are especially pronounced with respect to the environment. From the British Petroleum Oil rig explosion and the resultant oil spillage and pollution in New Mexico, United States to the Mobil Oil spillage along Nigerian coast, the story and consequence is virtually the same. Nigeria's Niger Delta Region produces Nigeria's petroleum which accounts for more than ninety-five percent of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings. Between 1999 and 2007, Nigeria earned more than \$400 billion from petroleum exports. Nevertheless, petroleum exploration and exploitation has devastated the Niger Delta environment. From oil spillage which pollutes the rivers, farms and wetlands to gas flaring by the multi-national corporations; the consequences is similar-a region that has been devastated by petroleum exploitation. This paper thus seeks to examine the consequences and impact of petroleum pollution in the Niger Delta of Nigeria with particular reference on the right of the people of Niger Delta to a healthy environment. The paper further seeks to examine the relevant international, regional instrument and Nigeria's municipal laws that are meant to protect the result of the people of the Niger Delta and their enforcement by the Nigerian State. It is quite worrisome that the Niger Delta Region and its people have suffered and are still suffering grave violations of their right to a healthy environment as a result of petroleum exploitation in their region. The Nigerian effort at best is half-hearted in its protection of the people's right.

Keywords : environment, exploration, petroleum, pollution

Conference Title : ICLS 2015 : International Conference on Law and Society

Conference Location : Montreal, Canada

Conference Dates : May 11-12, 2015