

NIGER DELTA CIVIL SOCIETY COALITION(NDCSC) C/O 2B Railway Close, D/Line. Port Harcourt. Rivers State. Nigeria  
Tel/fax: 234-84-231 716  
PRESS STATEMENT - PORT HARCOURT, SEPTEMBER 5, 2008-09-05

#### CIVIL SOCIETY CALLS FOR NEW INITIATIVE TO NIGER DELTA CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The Niger Delta Civil Society Coalition is calling on the Rivers State Government and others in the region to take a fresh look at ongoing conflict and crises and their approach thus far in their respective states.

“Our view is that the persistent reliance on “military security only” or ad hoc responses to militia and criminal violence has palpably failed. We are facing a situation where the real rate of violence, kidnapping, and destabilisation of our communities has not reduced in the 18 months since the new state governments came into place.”

“We are also aware that youths in the region involved in conflict- particularly in Rivers State- are expressing genuine frustration that they are tired of constant battles. Our youths are all too aware that a significant part of the violence we see in our states is sponsored- often with cynical disregard for those involved.”

“In the circumstances we are calling on the Niger Delta state governments to support a new strategic direction that would create a conducive environment for civil society and other credible third party engagement initiative. We believe that if well supported, such strategic engagement and long term process could create the necessary space for those at the grassroots interested in disengaging from the present conflicts and violence.

“In these circumstances there would be ripe opportunities for at least partial demobilisation and collective efforts to reduce the most outrageous of criminal behaviour. However because of the deep-seated distrust of State and Federal Government intentions- based on their record of arresting, raiding and even attacking actors with whom they are ‘in dialogue’ - there is need for the most careful engagement.”

“Specifically we are not calling for a repetition of past “cash incentive” inducements or other dubious proposals but a commitment to steps that will unarguably be seen as credible and adequately supported- both in terms of its management and the resources required over several years.”

“The social and economic costs of the present course are well known and devastating for cities such as Port Harcourt and all of the rural areas that are tied to the economic wellbeing of the major centres. The direct human cost of fighting that continues in areas such as Abonnema as we speak is even higher”

“In conclusion, we respect the need for state governments to challenge criminal behaviour and show a willingness to enforce the rule of law. However we argue that

the situation now demands a most disciplined approach to security that is matched with an integrity based commitment to local engagement and conflict reduction."

Signed  
Anyakwee Nsirimovu  
Chair, NDCSC

Ledum Mitee  
Vice Chair