

IKO ESAI TRADITIONAL RULERS COUNCIL

Iko Esai Village
Akamkpa L.G. A.
Cross River State.

7th March, 2016.

His Excellency,
Governor of Cross River State,
Governor Office,
Calabar.

Your Excellency Sir,

RE: NOTICE OF REVOCATION OF RIGHT OF OCCUPANCY FOR PUBLIC PURPOSE LAND USE ACT 1978: OUR OPPOSITION

We the undersigned Chiefs, Elders, Women and Youth Leaders for ourselves and on behalf of the people of Iko Esai Community situated in the tropical Forest in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State of Nigeria were very happy hearing you announce your signature projects during your swearing-in on the 29th May 2015. We envisaged that your administration will give Cross River State and Nigeria at large a new look.

Your choice of opening a super High way in Cross River State to pass through Iko Esai Community Forest gladdened our hearts bearing in mind the promise made by the president, His Excellency Muhamadu Buhari on the Occasion of ground Breaking Ceremony, that communities along the route shall be linked to the super high way. This statement filled our hearts with joy, as we thought that the road was going to alleviate us from age-long poverty caused by bad road, low prices of our farm produce, high cost of transportation etc.

From the publication in weekend Chronicle of January, 22nd 2016 dated 13th January, 2016 by Elder (Dr.) John Inyang, Commissioner for Lands and Urban Development on the above subject matter, the public Notice of Revocation stated that, All rights of Occupancy existing or deemed to exist on all that piece of land or parcel of land lying and situated along the super High way from Esighi, Bakassi

Local Government Area to Bekwarra Local Government Area of Cross River State of Nigeria covering a distance of 260km approximately and having an offset of two hundred meters (200m) on either side of the Centre line of the road and further 10km after the span of the Super Highway, excluding government Forest Reserve and public institutions are hereby revoked for overriding public purpose absolutely.

In the light of the Notice of the Revocation including the extension of the line profile, we have found out that it is going to affect Iko Esai Community Forest greatly.

Sir, your good intention is detrimental to the people of Iko Esai because of the following reasons:-

- (a) We do not want to be tenants in the Forest land which we inherited from our ancestors. We believe in conservation and have labored to conserve and manage our Community Forest for its rich biodiversity and ecosystem services not only for our sustainable development but for the benefit of entire world. We have a land use plan which we strictly adhere to, and which can be produced on demand.
- (b) With the approval of the Cross River State Forestry Commission there is a Canadian based NGO (Cecopan) in our Community forest, breeding monkeys since 1990. This is done in a protected area of over 20,000 hectares of virgin land for Local and International Research, a situation that is fast turning Iko Esai in Esai Clan into another Tourist Center outside the Calabar and Obudu Tourist Centers in Cross River State.

The Super Highway measuring 400 meters wide (200m each side of the road from the Centre line), will destroy our ancestral and Natural heritage for which Iko Esai is known for.

- (c) The revocation of extra 10km on either side of the Super Highway from where the 200m ends totaling 20km width is also very callous, meaning that the whole of Esai Clan Community Forest totaling over

22000 hectares including all our farms settlements have been seized leaving us landless. This is against our Fundamental Human right as encoded in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the International Labour Organization (ILO) Article 169.

For whatever reason, the destruction or forfeiture of this God given heritage which our Fore Fathers encouraged us to preserve will not augur well for the Iko Esai people in particular and Cross River State in General. Iko Esai people will not want to remain wanderers and captives in their God given home, as exemplified by the people of Bakasi in Cross River South Region, where their permanent and ancestral home was forcefully taken away and given to another Country (Cameroon) which left them permanently homeless.

- (d) The Iko Esai Community Forest stores several million tons of carbon contributing substantially to climate change mitigation at the Local, National and Global level. The destruction of the forest due to the planned revocation and the resultant forest destruction will release a huge quantum of carbon into the atmosphere and will aggravate climate change with its attendant negative effect on humanity. This is against the Governor's Climate & Forest Task Force (GCF).

As the representative of Cross River State which is the only African member in the Governor's Climate and Forest Task Force (GCF), we expect that your role should be to strengthen our conservation efforts and those of other forest communities in the State to achieve the foregoing and not contrary.

This revocation is also against the focus and programs of the United Nations Framework Convention on climate Change (UNFCCC) whose Conference you attended in December, 2015 in Paris, France, and even UN-REDD + program for which Cross River State is the Pilot State to set example for the rest of Nigeria.

- (e) Our Forest is our wealth and the beacon of our people's hope and aspirations. It provides us food, meat and fish for our protein, herbs for our wellbeing, and other means of livelihood. It sustains our culture and spirituality, a fall back in time of need and recreation, and provides habitats for the animals, and insects with which we share common affinity. Thus, taking our forest and the benefits there from, is like taking a fish out of water onto land to die.
- (f) The goodwill, funding and support of the Federal and Cross River State Governments, International Development Agencies, foundations, donors, corporate entities and Individuals for the conservation and sustainable management of our forest for the benefit of humanity, cannot be obliterated overnight. The Super Highway should have strengthened such commitments and efforts and should not aim to destroy our forest, considering resources spent over the years to keep it intact for the wellbeing of all in Cross River State including your Excellency. We are happy that you are an environmentalist and thus you understand what we are talking about. We strongly believe that the decision to revoke our rights to our forest and to exile us will have dire consequence on Cross River State's reputation in terms of credibility with National and International NGOs and International Development Agencies Worldwide.

In the light of the above, we consider the revocation an act of wickedness against us and a land grab in the disguise of a Super Highway. We are left with no option but to withdraw our support for the Super Highway. We do not want the Super Highway to pass through Iko Esai Community Forest. Our Ancestral Deities in the forest are crying against this injustice of unparalleled magnitude in our history and their cries will never stop until this decision is reversed.

Thank you and best regards Sir.

Yours faithfully,

Aita Ophot Nelson E. A Etan

Aita Ophot Obio A. Owai

3. Hon. Oyama A. Okorie

4. Eld. Paul U. Arorim

5. Chief. Elijah O. A. Arorim

6. Eld. Grace O. A. Owai



Clan Head Esai

Village and Traditional Ruler
Iko Esai


Community Secretary

 for 2/3/2016

Youth President



Adviser Chiefs Council

 R.T.P. for

Women Leader

For themselves and the entire people of Easi Clan.
GOD BLESS CROSS RIVER STATE