



Okokori Traditional Rulers Council

Okokori Village, Obubra L.G.A, Cross River State

13th February, 2016

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

Your Excellency Sir,

RE: NOTICE OF REVOCATION OF RIGHTS OF OCCUPANCY FOR PUBLIC PURPOSE LAND USE ACT 1978: OUR COLLECTIVE POSITION

Okokori community in Ochon Council Ward is in Obubra Local Government Area in Cross River State of Nigeria. Our community is situated in the tropical forest and is sandwich to the South by the Ekuri community forest, to the East and West by Ukpon Forest Reserve and to the North by the lands of Edondon community. Our main occupation are forest gathering and farming and in particular, the forest is our wealth that continuously sustains our sustainable development.

We the undersigned leaders have been mandated by Okokori community to write this letter on their behalf and to express our concerns over the revocation of our lands for the Super Highway.

We saw in the publication of the Weekend Chronicle of January 22, 2016 (pages 9 and 16), a Public Notice on the above subject matter, The Public Notice of Revocation states that "all rights of occupancy existing or deemed to exist on all that piece of land or parcel of land lying and situate along the Super Highway 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 Reserves and public institutions are hereby revoked for overriding public purpose absolutely".

In our community meetings, we have taken pains to read and digest the Public Notice (even though no service of revocation was served on us) and arrived at these conclusions:

1. The 20.4km width of the revoked lands includes our farms, community forest and our settlement.
2. Our customary use of our lands for centuries where our ancestors have been buried is about to be desecrated.
3. The rich biodiversity of our community forest contiguous with the Ekuri community forest and the Cross River National Park contributes to the forests in Cross River State being named one of the "25 biological hotspots" in the world will be lost forever and this legacy is about to be ruined.
4. The acclaimed recognition of Cross River State as harboring 50% of the remaining forests in Nigeria will crash awfully.
5. The REDD+ program in Cross River State is already a failure as all the forests in Ekuri/Iko pilot site will be lost because of the Super Highway.
6. Our eviction from our inherited lands is looming and we will become another Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) not because of war but a Super Highway. Even IDPs in a war are better than us as they will certainly return home when the war is over, but our is in perpetuity.
7. Food insecurity, malnutrition, diseases and high mortality will affect us abysmally as we will have no farmlands to cultivate our crops to feed ourselves.
8. Poverty will reign among us as our only sources of livelihoods being the forests and farms are no longer our inheritance as they have been taken away from us.
9. Our culture and spirituality will be highly affected and our language will soon be added to the list of "endangered languages" in the world.
10. Sustainable Development Goals 1: No poverty; 2: Zero hunger; 3: Good and wellbeing; 4: Quality education; 5: Gender equality; 6: Clean water; 7: Affordable and clean energy and 8: Decent work and economic growth is already a total failure for us

because of the revocation of our settlement, farmlands and community forest.

In consideration of the foregoing, we wish to state our position as follow:

1. We do not support your plan to evict us from our ancestral lands we have occupied since 1848 as we have no another Okokori community apart from this. We are not settlers in government's land but on communal land that we have exercised customary rights for years.
2. We also reject the revocation of our community forest so that this forest will continue to provide ecosystems services for our wellbeing and for the benefit of humanity in general. We want our conserved forests, a repository of carbon, to contribute to fighting climate change crisis affecting the entire world, rather than destroy it and exacerbate climate change and its depressing effects on humanity.
3. Furthermore, we are strongly opposed to the revocation of our farmlands for a Super Highway in consideration of the fact that farming and forest gathering are the mainstay of our local economy and we expected that your government could have strengthen us in this direction rather than destroy the base of our daily sustenance and subject us to abject poverty.
4. The revocation of all our lands including settlement, farmlands and community forest is a calculated attempt to extinguish us as a people forgetting to know that we did not vote for you to take away our inheritance and rights to our ancestral domains.
5. Since the revocation of all our lands for a Super Highway have damning consequences on us and on the environment, we are compelled not to welcome this project as the ulterior motive of your government is to grab our lands and make us worthless, ignoring the fact we voted overwhelmingly for you to better our lots but not to punish us unjustifiably.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully.


Chief James A. Oyi
(Village Head - Okokori)


Chief Sylvanus E. Ekuri
(Village Head - Sepchang)


Chief David Imoh
(Village Head - Okoi)


Madam Emelia J. Okey
(Woman leader)


Madam Philomina Iyamba
(Member)


Mr. Fidelis U. Oyamo
(Youth leader)


Mr. Denis O. Akamo
(Adviser - Youth Council)


Chief Joseph Okey
(Village Head - Ititi)


Chief Cornelius O. Owor
(Village Head - Oket)


Chief Kerien Owor
(Village Head - Irien)


Madam Veronica Enwa
(Deputy Woman Leader)


Mrs. Virginia B. Iferi
(Member)


Mr. Andrew E. Ogaji
(Deputy Youth leader)


Mr. Brendan O. Iferi
(Community Secretary)

Cc.

The President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
Minister for the Environment

UNEP; OneSky Canada; UNDP; CBD; FAO; RARE; World Bank; CI;
Heinrich Boell Foundation; RAN; WWF; Earthisland Institute; WCS;
UNCHR; NCF; IUCN; ERA (FoEN); Media; NGOCE; Zoological
Society of London (ZSL); CRNP; Birdlife International; CIDA; DFID;
GCF; USAID; NORFUND; SIDA; CCDI; Equator Initiative; Rights and
Resource Initiative (RRI); UNESCO and Ford Foundation