

Memorandum to the 17th session of African Ministerial Conference of the Environment

Date: Thursday, 14th November 2019

Venue: Olive Convention Centre, Durban, KwaZulu Natal, South Africa

Ms Barbara Creecy, South African Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, incoming President of AMCEN

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This week marks 24 years since the murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his eight colleagues - Baribor Bera, Saturday Dobe, Nordu Eawo, Daniel Gbokoo, Barinem Kiobel, John Kpuinen, Paul Levura and Felix Nuate - by the State of Nigeria for campaigning against the devastation of the Niger Delta by oil companies, in particular, Shell.

They were not the first and will not be the last to suffer because of the link between corporate greed and corrupt politicians.

We remember the very many who have lost their lives and who suffer, in particular:

- "Bazooka" Radebe, an anti-mining activist who was murdered on 22nd March 2016 - just two hours south from where AMCEN gathers today - for working with the Amadiba Crisis Committee against a mining project from going ahead in Xolobeni;
- Berta Isabel Cáceres Flores, a Honduran environmental activist and indigenous leader, who was murdered on 2nd March 2016 because of her leadership in a grassroots campaign that successfully pressured the world's largest dam builder to pull out of the Agua Zarca Dam" at the Río Gualcarque;
- Members of the Abahlali baseMjondolo - shack dwellers association – who have been murdered in their quest for decent and environmentally just settlements;

- Khaya Mncube who was killed in 2018 and three more members of his family, Lungani Biyela, Bheki Ntuli, and Angel Ncube, a two-year-old child, who were killed in May this year just north of the AMCEN meeting at eMbembeni near Richards Bay where local people have been the target of a campaign of terror to force them to move off land said to be earmarked for oil infrastructure;
- Ex-workers of Thor Chemicals who have lost their lives and those permanently injured because of corporate greed;

and

- The very many people in Lamu, Kenya; KwaZulu Natal and Xolobeni, Eastern Cape, South Africa; Cabo Delgado, Mozambique whose livelihoods are and will be destroyed in the name of economic development under the guise of the Blue Economy and other such plans to make way for oil, gas, coal and other climate intense infrastructure.
- We recognise the fact that:
 - There are many more examples that can be cited about the destruction of the African and world ecosystems on which the majority rely for their livelihoods;
 - There are many more examples that can be cited about community members and activists who have been murdered for which there has been no action taken against the perpetrators;
- The AMCEN has failed to secure environmental justice for the people of Africa;
- The AMCEN has failed to meet its objectives, and it has become nothing more than a failed voluntary talk shop that is subservient to the desires of the political and corporate elite.
- We gathered here today to make a simple demand on the Environmental Ministers of Africa:
 - Do not sell Africa to corporate interest and the elite;
 - Develop mechanisms across Africa that will protect those that protect the earth;
 - Be bold and lead from an environmental justice perspective and ensure that Africa develops resilience to secure the livelihoods of the millions as climate change devastates the continent.

We urge you to fulfill your mandated democratic duty and report back to us and broader civil society in Africa with meaningful actions at your next gathering, showing that you are truly protecting Africa and its people.

Do not fail us as you have done to date.