Charting A Path Towards A Sustainable Clean Air In Rivers State
The Clean Air Summit was proudly brought together by the following organizations:
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According to the Executive Director of the United Nation Environment Program, Mr. Erik Solheim, “pollution is a universal challenge that threatens wildlife, devastates ecosystems and kills millions of people.” Air pollution kills more than 6 million people every year, most of these deaths occurring in Africa and Asia. The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) says air pollution is fundamentally altering our climate with profound impact on the health and sustainability of our planet. The agency describes air pollution as “the biggest environmental health risk of our time.”

Whilst a disproportionate number of the mortality rate arising from air pollution occurs in Africa and Asia, there has been no concerted effort by individuals, groups, stakeholders and governments in these two acutely impacted continents to conduct comprehensive studies on the problem. Many of the statistics provided by international agencies are usually extrapolations from studies conducted in developed countries. Therefore, conducting and evaluating epidemiological studies in areas worst hit by air pollution in Africa should be a priority to our governments and international institutions. In many developing countries, air pollution is seen as a necessary evil by governments in their pursuit of development. Many developing countries are unwilling to invest resources in monitoring air pollution or put in place regulations that would reduce air pollution.

Despite the grave prognosis that has been described above, tackling air pollution can bring with it significant benefits for our economies, human health and the climate. The need to inspire individuals, local leaders and governments, communities, civil society groups and international institutions to action is now.

“Environmental issues are no longer the priority of those working in the oil and gas sector... now that we are dealing with air pollution, it concerns us all.”

Honorable Uche Onyeagucha, Chairman, Kiisi Trust Fund.
Air Pollution in Rivers State

Since 2016, residents of Port Harcourt, Eleme and other adjoining towns and villages in Rivers state have observed an increase in the daily blanketing of the atmosphere of an oily soot compound, causing serious source of concern to the 3 million people who reside in the state.

Health professionals around the state have reported an uptick in cases of acute and chronic respiratory diseases and skin lesions in infants and young children. They have also noticed a higher mortality rate in individuals with pre-existing ischemic heart problems or obstructive pulmonary diseases.

Residents of the state have not been quiet. They have been mobilizing, utilizing radio and social media platforms to inspire action by government and other relevant stakeholders. In response, the Rivers State Ministry of Environment set up an expert panel to investigate the composition of the soot and its source in early 2016. Unfortunately, since then there has been no report back on the findings of the expert panel to the public. This silence prompted further action by residents and concerned citizens to organize a one-day workshop at the University of Port Harcourt in April 2017 to further discuss the root cause of the black soot in Port Harcourt, including brainstorming on strategies and tactics to resolve the matter. Again, however, no concrete action or follow-up from this workshop was developed.

A social media advocacy campaign around the hashtag #stopthesoot has gained momentum since 2016, raising awareness of the black soot beyond Port Harcourt to a national and international level. However, like most advocacy campaigns in Nigeria, this grassroots advocacy social media campaign lacks core internal leadership and organization leaving it to be hampered by political forces/agendas and thereby weakening its key advocacy messages.

The major problems with the above interventions are that they are usually knee-jerk reactions to the concerns expressed by residents on the issue of air pollution. They are often episodic, uncoordinated and the goal, objectives and strategies for success within this area of advocacy are not very well thought through.

A summit such as this created support and ownership among the identified stakeholders and ensured the relevance of the activities they agreed to undertake and reduce areas of potential conflict of interest between government’s need for development, businesses’ need for profitability and the need for a healthy citizenry and environment. The summit also ensured a win–win template for all identified stakeholders in addressing air pollution in Rivers state and provided opportunities for international institutions with the necessary expertise and financial capacity to partner with governments at all levels to address air pollution in Rivers state.

The Summit partners included Centre for Environment, Human Rights and Development (CEHRD), Environmental Rights Action (ERA), Citizen Information and Development Initiative (CIDI), Suburbia 180 Foundation, with TrustAfrica as the official sponsor for the event.

Summit Objectives

1. To create and build a template for systematic, coordinated, result-oriented and science-based approach to dealing with the soot issue in Rivers state.

2. To explore, learn and adopt best practices and policies that would reduce air pollution by outlining the many ways in which cities can move in the direction of a more sustainable way of living.

3. Develop a sustainable blueprint for managing the soot issue in Rivers State.

   * Detailed planning, setting of goals and targets for what needs to be done.

   * Define roles of different stakeholders in ensuring good air quality in Rivers State.

4. Ensure the support and buy-in of critical stakeholders to addressing and resolving the issue of black soot in Rivers state.
HIGHLIGHTS FROM GOODWILL MESSAGES AT THE SUMMIT

1 Inemo Samiama, Centre for Peace Development and Child Welfare

I have been privileged in the last 15 years to be involved in environmental issues and advocacy campaigns focused on oil spills and gas flaring in the Niger Delta, and so I have been very much concerned about the problem of [black] soot in Port Harcourt. I have joined all those who felt concerned about it to go out into the streets and demonstrate and protest that something should be done about the problem of soot in the city. I’m going to continue to talk about clean air, but not just in Port Harcourt, but clean air in the Niger Delta and clean air in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, the oil and gas industries are the major contributing factor to one of the problems of clean air in the Niger Delta. [In the last 5 decades], the oil and gas industries and the Nigerian government have literally carried out their activities in such a way that they have polluted the environment and left the citizens to deal with pollution.

Those who deprive you of breathing clean air indirectly deprive you of the right to live. It is a fundamental right to breathe clean air just as it is to drink clean water.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TACKLING AIR POLLUTION

1. Citizens need to know the consequences of air pollution and its negative impact on our environment.

2. Civil society organizations should help by creating more awareness, enlightenment, and initiative across the region and Nigeria on the negative consequences of artisanal refining. NGOs should do more by collaborating to deal with this problem because it is a widespread problem and must be tackled collectively.

3. There should be more scientific research on the impact of air pollution; the effect of oil and gas operations and the unclean air we are breathing in the Niger Delta.

4. Legal action against those making the environment unsafe for the citizens to live in should be sought after.

5. Air monitoring instruments such as the Ejelkamp Space Handheld Digital Air Quality equipment should be installed in strategic points in Port Harcourt and Yenegoa by the government. The government should provide this instrument that could enable us to collect real-time data and provide reliable information that can be used for advocacy, back up our campaign and used as proof on the actual state of our environment.

6. Rev. Father Edward Obi- National Coalition on Gas Flaring and Oil Spills in the Niger Delta (NACGOND) represented by Dr. Benjamin Ubleble
The National Coalition on Gas Flaring and Oil Spills in the Niger Delta (NACGOND) is a coalition of 26 environmental NGOs, CSOs, and ethnic nationality organizations. Over the years, NACGOND has worked assiduously to lessen the lingering environmental degradation problems in the Niger Delta caused by oil theft, pipeline vandalism, and artisanal refining. It is important to note that oil and gas activities in Port Harcourt and its immediate environs, especially those from illegal bunkery, have been identified as some of the sources of soot in Port Harcourt. The soot issue has taken a dangerous dimension in Port Harcourt. The threat posed by the soot is the major reason we are gathered here today to discuss not just the causes of the soot, but the solutions to it. It is completely unacceptable that both the federal government and state government keep passing the ball on whose responsibility it is to put an end to the soot situation in the city. In this situation, government is failing in its constitutional responsibility to protect lives and property of its citizenry.

The question is, for how long will this continue? How many people will have to die before the government recognizes the need to come quickly to the rescue of its esteemed citizens? NACGOND insists that a safe and secure environment is an integral part of security and the immediate stoppage of the emission of soot in Port Harcourt, not minding the politics of the day. NACGOND is particularly worried about the warning from medical experts who have expressed concern over the lingering soot situation in the city, over alarming rate of respiratory-related ailment, worst still there is an incessant exposure of the public to substances with potential carcinogens and could pose health problems overtime.

The soot should not be another nightmare for the residents of Port Harcourt because people are already battling with other prolonged environmental issues and its health implications. NACGOND is happy to be part of the Clean Air Summit and will be willing to join any alliance and groups campaigning for the total end to the soot situation in Port Harcourt. More so, NACGOND is ready to mobilize support where necessary and provide great impact to the government and all stakeholders working to put an end to the soot situation in Port Harcourt. We must act before it is too late.
When the soot was first noticed in 2016, some of us thought it might be a natural occurrence. It was not until the Rivers State Government set up a committee to investigate the source of the soot, did we realize it was not a natural occurrence. According to the committee, the sources include:

• Tyre burning at slaughterhouses and for business
• Emission from vehicles and generators
• Gas flaring
• Illegal refining of petroleum products and the destruction of ceased petroleum products by the security agencies.

In the same vein, the Technical committee set up by the Port Harcourt Air Quality Monitoring Group, which is made up of Shell, Agip, Total, NNPC, and others came up with the same result. So it became clear that the issue of soot is not a natural occurrence but man-made.

As a Government, we started looking at the things we can do in this regard:

• Tyre burning at the slaughterhouse – A meeting was held with the Union and they signed an undertaken not to burn tyres anymore. About 4 months ago, a slaughterhouse at Eleme was closed down for disregarding this directive. Monitors have been appointed to check the activities going on in each slaughterhouse, with a 95% success rate. Meanwhile, the Port Harcourt Monitoring Working Group is proposing the construction of a machine that will use gas instead of firewood or tyre in roasting meat in the slaughterhouses. When this is put in place, it will completely stop air pollution in the slaughterhouses. These are short-term measures. The State Government is planning to build a modern abattoir, the land has been provided for and government welcomes investors for partnership.

• Tyre burning for commercial purposes – It has been noticed that some persons are in the business of burning tyres for the purpose of extracting steel wire for sale. In order to put a stop to this, the State Government has set up a task force in charge of clearing the streets of used tyres. The government is in the process of building a factory where all used tyres will be stored and transformed into other products.

• Emission from cars and generators – The Sector Commander of Road Safety made it clear that emission from a vehicle is an offense that attracts a N5,000 fine, but he has not been able to implement it due to lack of the equipment used in checking the emission level of the vehicles at checkpoints.

* At the 4th meeting of the Port Harcourt Air Quality Working Group, the equipment to check vehicular emission was introduced and plans are being made to procure the device for the Road Safety Commission. Once this equipment is provided, the Road Safety will commence the implementation of the law of vehicular emission in the State.

* A meeting was held with the National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) and an appeal was made to them to regularly service their vehicles.

• Company operational upset – Companies who flare gas occasionally have been identified and monitors are overseeing their activities and as a result, the frequency of occurrence has drastically reduced. However, the worrisome case is the issue of the Port Harcourt Refinery: while other companies occasionally flare bad gas, the Port Harcourt Refinery flares bad gas almost on a daily basis. The truth is that we cannot enjoy quality air in this part of the world until gas flaring is completely stopped. For effective monitoring of all forms of pollution, the Government of Rivers State has established a dedicated website for the general public to report any form of pollution in any part of the State – www.rvspollutioncontrol.com.

• Operations of illegal refineries/destruction of ceased petroleum products - The major source of the soot that engulfs some parts of the State since 2016 is as a result of the operations of illegal refining and the destruction of the ceased products. This is one area that the government has not achieved much because of societal conspiracy. The security agencies that are expected to protect our pipelines and waterways seems helpless. His Excellency, Barr. Ezenwo Nyesom Wike, the Executive Governor of Rivers State, has engaged the security chiefs on this matter.

• The Chief of National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) in May 2018 promised to set up a task force that will look into the alleged destruction of ceased petroleum products by security agencies. A meeting has been fixed for 28th June 2018 with the Commander of Nigeria Navy Ship Pathfinder in this regard. Also, the Port Harcourt Air Quality Management Group have decided to meet every month to find a solution to the the black soot air pollution.

The soot does not know any political party, race, religion, or gender. We all must come together to put an end to it.” Honourable Anucha
4 National Oil Spills Detection Responsive Agency (NOSDRA) - Dr. Kenneth represented the Zonal Head Port Harcourt

Since 2016 when this soot issue came up, residents of Port Harcourt have been battling with not only the environmental aspect of this issue, but also the health implications because from studies so far carried out, we actually have seen that those people that are already having some health issues are already getting closer to their graves as fast as possible. Soot is a product of an incomplete combustion of hydrocarbon and biomass. NOSDRA has taken several steps to initiate a number of engagements with the law enforcement agencies to help tackle this problem.

• One of the major sources of the soot is artisanal refinery activities and illegal bunkering. NOSDRA is collaborating with several organizations in an effort to ensure that some of the ceased petroleum products are actually handled in a manner that will not unnecessarily impact negatively on the environment.

• NOSDRA has been listed as an Agency that should collaborate with the Nigeria Navy in ensuring that the ceased petroleum products are handled in a way that they can finally make their way into the clickstream of either oil companies or back to the refinery in a manner that it will not be burnt the way we are currently experiencing it.

5 National Environmental Standard and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) – Mrs. Alapiki Ernest Fidelia

The pervasive air pollution in Port Harcourt has become a critical matter. It is a problem that requires collective efforts by all stakeholders and sector players. This problem has raised serious economic issues, as well as health and environmental concerns. There are cases of respiratory diseases, eye problems and other ailments associated with air pollution reported by hospitals and health practitioners.

The federal government is very concerned about the black soot air pollution in Port Harcourt and it is aware of its responsibility to protect the environment and human health. Several meetings and awareness creating activities have been carried out by NESREA and most recently, a one-day roundtable on pollution in Port Harcourt was held on the 26th of April 2018. This meeting was chaired by the Honourable Minister of State for Environment, Mallam Ibrahim Usman Jubril. The one-day roundtable meeting was organized to further galvanize actions to address this great menace in Port Harcourt. Some of the objectives of the meeting were to provide the platform for public discussion of air pollution in Port Harcourt, to further identify key sector players and their specific roles and responsibilities in addressing the problems, and to proffer concrete recommendations on the short, medium and longterm measures to halt air pollution. Invitation to that meeting was extended to relevant ministries, departments, and agencies at the federal and state levels. CSOs, the Armed Forces at the federal and state levels and other security agencies, as well as community representatives were also present at that meeting.
I hope that this Clean Air Summit will serve as a milestone in environmental consciousness and awareness of the challenges of air pollution in Port Harcourt. Air is a colourless and odourless mixture of gases, tiny fast-moving particles in motion. It is made up of nitrogen, oxygen, carbon dioxide, water vapour and other gases in varying small proportions. Mankind, in his quests for better life and sustenance, tampered with the natural air equilibrium, thereby making air unclean for himself. Black soot is one of such agent for this air disequilibrium. The State government has set up two committees following the Rivers State Government’s Technical Committee on the Black Soot report to address the challenge of air pollution in the State: Waste Tyre Recovery Committee and the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Environment, Agriculture, and Health to monitor abattoirs across the state.

The negative interplay of the Exclusive and Concurrent List and the provision of Section 20 of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as amended became the hub in the wind of resolving the black soot incident in Rivers State. The Exclusive List appears in the second Schedule of legislative powers Act (1) in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; every item on this list falls under the purview of the Federal Government to be handled and to implement. These include but are not limited to mines and minerals including oil-fields, oil mining, geological survey, and natural gas. The state government therefore has little or no power in their control over the regulations of items on this list.

The powers given to the State are clear and are, as stated in the Constitution, that “the state shall protect and improve the environment and safeguard the water, air and land, forest and wildlife of Nigeria the state capital” whereas issues of oil and gas mining are excluded from the duties of the State government. This is the crux of the matter and where the problem started. How can a state protect and improve its environment and safeguard its water and air when the state lacks the powers of control over most of the machinery that pollute the air, the water, and the land? No wonder NNPC can bluntly say that the state has no control over them where their environmental aspect infringes on the right of the state to quality air, water, and land. The military, police and other security apparatus saddled with the responsibility of securing life and property, maintaining law and order suddenly became lawless and even destructive in their actions.

Between January – May 2018, an average of 35 barges with several thousands of barrels of crude oil were destroyed and set ablaze by these operatives along the coastal ways. The resultant effect is air pollution which this black soot is a part of. This, of course, only thrives because the state cannot exercise any regulatory power over the activities of these security operatives who take orders only from the “Oga at the Top.”

Black soot has both economic and health implications. The negative economic implication is also part of the politics of the black soot. Available record from IOCs showed that over 30% of their personnel now live in Abuja and Lagos and only come to Rivers State every 2 weeks: this trend has negative implications in the local economy of Rivers State. The state is also branded both in print and electronic media as an environmentally unsafe place to live with Air Quality Index of over 100 AQI (Air Quality Index). This is unjustifiable in a state that sustains the country economically.

The causes of the black soot are Hydra-headed and therefore a Hydra-headed or complicated approach must be adopted for us to get it right. The Federal Government must rise to the occasion of resolving the issue of the Black Soot with the State Government [acting as a supporting partner].

Several billions of Naira were released for clean water and sanitation in the North in early 2018, including the purchase of arms and ammunition for combatting
the Boko Haram problem in the North, whereas the #stopthesoot campaign has been going on for the past two years with little financial support from the Federal Government.

The State government recommends the following:

1. The Federal government should commence the modification of NNPC facilities, and also monitor IOC's to make sure their facilities still have the integrity value that they are supposed to have.

2. Federal Government should set up a monitoring team that will moderate the activities of the Joint Task Force (JTF) in our coastal waterways.

3. Federal Government, in collaboration with the State, carry out a comprehensive Air Quality Study with a view to reducing the Air Quality Index below 100 in Rivers State.

4. Federal Government should remove every string of politics around the Modular Refinery.

5. NGOs without an environmental bias should be involved in the environmental governance of the State.
Key Insights from presentation

Since 2016, we have been on the receiving end of daily showers of soot, showers of carbonized aerosols whose granulometric dimensions range from submicron diameters to over 10 microns in diameter. At this level, the particles are so small you cannot even see them, but they exist in the air. These particles are suspended within the lower troposphere inhibiting cloud formation and capable of causing long-term environmental and health hazards to residents in Port Harcourt. Coastal communities close to where artisanal refineries are located suffer the most.

The air is a sink in which both gaseous and particulate matter from anthropogenic and other natural sources are disposed of. Air becomes polluted when it carries gaseous and particulate matter at levels at which they become objectionable, capable of causing discomfort or harm to man or his amenities.

Causes of the black soot in Rivers State

• There are about 217 artisanal refineries within coastal communities south of Port Harcourt.

* The combustion of petroleum hydrocarbon has been identified as the main causes of the black soot. When a hydrocarbon is combusted or burnt the primary product that comes out of it is carbon dioxide and water. In addition, dense black smoke primarily composed of elemental carbon (soot) is produced. Other gaseous pollutants resulting from the combustion are carbon mono oxide, oxides of nitrogen, sulphur, dioxins, furans, heavy metals, volatile organic compounds and even ozone (ground-level ozone), particulate matter and other toxins at levels that most times exceed national and international limits. Low level emitting sources include the hundreds of artisanal refineries situate in communities in the state and their destruction by security forces, vehicular emissions.

* The combustion of poly nuclei aromatic hydrocarbon also produces more toxins at higher molecular weight organic compounds. These are the things that permeate our entire existence and we are exposed to it by breathing it on a daily basis.

• Burning of tyres in abattoirs.
• Gas flaring. On record, Nigeria contributes a very significant amount of air pollution from flare stacks even higher than countries that produce much more petroleum than we do.

The Impact of the soot on the environment and human health

Air pollution has both acute and chronic effects on human health, affecting several different systems and organs. The health hazards include:

• Minor upper respiratory irritation to chronic respiratory and heart disease.
• Lung cancer, acute respiratory infections in children and chronic bronchitis in adults.
• Aggravating pre-existing heart and lung disease, or asthmatic attacks.
• Short and long-term exposures have been linked with serious illness, premature mortality and reduced life expectancy.

Another potential effect of combustion petroleum hydrocarbon is the reduction in atmospheric visibility; we now have constant hazy, smoggy atmosphere – you don’t see far, impacting not just ground transportation but air travel.
Proposed Solutions and Recommendations:

• Air Quality Management Authority (AQMA): The reality of the times we live in imposes it on citizens and governments to establish the AQMA, whose primary responsibility should include the development of the ways and means of real-time monitoring and documenting the air quality index at various parts of the metropolis.

• Creation of regional emissions inventory: constantly monitors the sources, volumes, and duration of all emissions within the state/region as a primary step in Air Quality Management.

• The health sector should be more proactive in investigating and documenting cases of respiratory ailments and respiratory-related mortalities, findings should be presented to government and made available to the public domain.

• The government should institute and enforce the “Clean Air Act” which safeguards air quality and targets the abatement of air pollution from all sources. There should be deliberate policies at reducing emissions from the flare stacks, artisanal refineries, tyre burning, asphalt plants, abattoirs, vehicular emission and all combustion sources.

• More in-depth, multi-disciplinary, and longer duration study should be commissioned to characterize contaminant cocktail within the troposphere, their concentrations at different times of the day, month and year, their locations and advection/dispersion pattern through the different seasons.

* The constant monitoring of this phenomena will aid in the dissemination of information in the public domain (radio, television and the print media) on the true nature of the composition of the air pollutants, their times of occurrence and mitigations against that occurrence.

• Public awareness campaigns and advocacy such as this Summit that will propagate factual, sensible empirical scientific data and not the present conjecture that permeates the entire public domain. This will trigger continuous discussions amongst CSOs, the Academia, Government, and other interest groups.
1. What do you think are the lessons we can learn from the last two years from the soot issue, and what we might do to scale up [any advocacy efforts]?

- The sources of the black soot are known, including possible health implications. However, what we have not done so well in the past two years is serious mobilization and sensitization of people at the grassroots. Advocacy efforts need to reach those in every nook and cranny of the State to mobilize local people.

- The lesson learned is that there is an incessant scarcity of petroleum product in the Niger Delta and Nigeria, at large. There should be an effort to see that petroleum product scarcity does not occur, even as we speak now there is no genuine kerosene sold here in Port Harcourt. Those who import kerosene prefer to sell to the aviation industry, therefore, there is a demand for the sources that produce this black soot, and they use this crude method to produce it which eventually leads to environmental or air pollution.

- Talking about the black soot without backup data from hospitals on respiratory diseases, and other periodic analysis of health cases in Rivers State is inappropriate. Health centers should take proper documentation of cases and periodic analysis of health-related diseases resulting from the soot.

- Massive unemployment in the State and in the region should be given proper attention by the Federal and State Government as unemployment is one of the root causes why people get involved in the activities of illegal refinery.

2. We hear this constant need for data and more analysis to be done concerning the sources of the black soot. However, many studies have been done and their reports shared in various platforms and mediums. This makes me question – what sort of data exactly are people looking for? Is it more regular updated data?

- We know that general record keeping in Nigeria is an issue. As a scientist, we know that we need to get in the habit of sharing data regularly, not only when we have an issue as is in the current situation. As scientists, we should be able to pull from data and research we have done over the years to be able to understand what is happening now. A more systematic way of data collection should be employed, but we need to be more pragmatic about it.

* Data that is well interpreted gives you the true picture of what you are looking at, whether you are a listener or a reader. Without data, everything becomes a mere story.

* Information is being hoarded in Nigeria due to corruption and common attitude. It is easier to get data on Nigeria atmosphere from overseas sources for free. In Nigeria, if you approach the agencies who ought to have these same data, you must pay for them. But even after payment, there is no guarantee you will get the correct data.

* Satellite-based sources of data collection are freely available. Upper air data is impossible to get in Nigeria, we rely on Cameroun and
Benin Republic. There should be a law in Nigeria which will allow scientists access to freely generated data and allow for litigation in the case of refusal.

3 Is there a specific strategy we ought to be focusing on when it comes to advocacy campaigns and other mobilization efforts? What should be the basic message on black soot?

Kidnapping was misconstrued in the Niger Delta, likewise the black soot. Our advocacy efforts should not remain local – we should take our efforts and messages to Abuja and Lagos and make it known that the black soot issue is an issue that affects all Nigerians. Having a more holistic approach to dealing with the black soot can bring more allies.

- The upcoming election period is an opportunity to get different parties to capitalize on the black soot matter, and advocacy on the black soot issue should be able to sensitize the general electorate with political parties behind them.
- Getting those involved in artisanal refinery in campaigning on the black soot issue should be a priority.

4 Various messages on the black soot issue have been pushed out since 2017. What do you think is the most impactful and the least impactful in connecting with target audiences?

- The messages talking about black soot killing people have been the most impactful. The message of “death” was carried by national newspapers with op-eds. Those messages reached the elite and those in power, forcing some action.
- Having a consistent message is key. We should have strategic partnerships with media so that they would become invested in carrying our message to an even broader audience. A well planned media campaign ought to be our next priority.

5 We have various potential sources of the black soot that have been mentioned in the presentations so far, and the main point on data was that obviously something changed substantially in the air in 2016. Does it make sense to continue to use the one-on-one approach with select industries by the State Government to prove that they are not part of the problem and to shift the burden of collecting data onto them?

- There is the capacity to identify the sources of any air pollutant amongst academics in the various Universities in Port Harcourt. It is possible to eliminate certain sources causing the black soot. For example, illegal refining of petroleum product has existed for more than 20 years, but it was primarily done far away from the city because they were afraid of security agents and the local community people not allowing them to use their land. This has all changed now obviously.
- The incessant scarcity of petroleum product is a factor because in the law of demand and supply, when there is a demand for something, people will take the risk to meet that demand because there is profiting to be made. As it is right now the only thing that is genuinely available is Premium Motor Spirit (PMS). Diesel is scarce; 90% of diesel that is bought in Port Harcourt are from illegal refinery. Secondly, there is no outlet in Port Harcourt that sells kerosene that is genuine, yet three-fourths of the population rely on kerosene for cooking. Finally, there is connivance between those that are engaged in artisanal refinery and the Government. When the present Government came into being, there was massive destruction of pipelines to stop product export; when that activity took place, the economy went into recession because our export of crude oil dropped below 1 million barrel per day, down from 2 million, and we noticed that immediately the security agencies that were sent to stop those who were engaged in illegal refinery and bunker slowed down and looked the other way that the export of crude oil picked up again.
- There is a strange alliance between the federal government, IOCs and some powerful Niger Delta “big boys”, and we, the local people, are caught in the middle. However, this is not a unique problem to Nigeria; other oil producing countries also suffer from this, but they have devised a way of dealing with it effectively. We should be learning from these other countries that have been able to turn the corner in ensuring clean air for their citizens.
SYNDICATE GROUP SESSIONS: A ROADMAP FORWARD FOR TACKLING AIR POLLUTION IN RIVERS STATE

After the panel discussion, the participants were split into three syndicate groups. Each group had a specific task to address towards a road map to tackle the black soot pollution in Rivers state. The syndicate groups responsibilities were to:

1. Identify stakeholders and their roles in managing the soot in Rivers state
2. Develop a sustainable blueprint for managing the soot in Rivers state
3. Identify innovative tools and platforms for stakeholders’ engagement on soot management

Group 1: Identifying stakeholders and their roles in managing the soot in Port Harcourt

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<th>Stakeholder</th>
<th>Recommended action points</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>The executive arm of government</td>
<td>* Taking appropriate steps to identify groups that are directly involved in causing this harm.</td>
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<td>* To mitigate the damage/bottlenecks that they are causing in the system</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>The legislative arm of government</td>
<td>Passage of the Clean Air Act both the Federal and State level</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Civil Society Organizations</td>
<td>* Draft the Clean Air legislation</td>
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<td>* Identify strategic legislators in the Federal and State Houses to present the bill for passage and act as champions for the Clean Air Act.</td>
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<td>* Stage credible advocacy campaigns on the causes of the soot and ways forward for stopping air pollution in Rivers state</td>
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<td>* Formal presentation of the Clean Air Act bill to the AG of the Federal and State governments.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>* All the stakeholders should be present; this should be a heavy media event.</td>
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<td>* Kiisi Trust Fund/TrustAfrica should be the convening NGO for the Clean Air Act plan of action.</td>
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<td>* Release of the Rivers State Government technical findings and report on the causes of the black soot in Rivers State.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Nigerian Medical Association</td>
<td>Have direct responsibility to release data on health hazards and implications of air pollution in Rivers State.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Nigerian Armed Forces</td>
<td>Direct involvement in all advocacy related activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Academia</td>
<td>Advocate for proper funding for research-based work to be done.</td>
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Group 2: Developing a sustainable blueprint for managing the soot in Port Harcourt

Key action steps to be taken:

- Ensuring there is strong political will by target elected officials who will act as champions for all advocacy related activities.
- Work directly with security agencies in reconstructing their architecture and actions to be more environmentally friendly in their actions/sanctions in illegal oil bunkering and artisanal refinery.
- Seek financial support for the advocacy campaign from stakeholders and other interested parties.
  * Advocate for proper environmental protection budgeting in the Ministry of Environment.
- Whistle-blower protection for those who report those who deliberately act to pollute the air in Rivers state.
- Work with the Rivers State government to conduct an annual environmental audit.

- Work with all appropriate Federal and State environmental bodies to ensure proper enforcement, compliance, and supervision of existing laws on the environment.
- Passage of the Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB).

Group 3: Innovative tools and platforms for stakeholders’ engagement on soot management

- Development of an effective data collection system that will be regularly updated and shared with stakeholders.
- Promotion and use of air monitoring equipment in strategic locations across Port Harcourt.
- Effective visual representation of the state of air quality in Rivers State.
- Adoption of best practices in handling black soot in Rivers State.
- Regular Clean Air town-hall forums for engaging citizens of Port Harcourt.
CLOSING REMARKS

Honourable Uche Onyeagucha, Chairman, Kiisi Trust Fund

Everyone here today ought to consider themselves part of the Coalition for Clean Air in Rivers State. We need all voices to come together to ensure that we achieve the lofty objectives we have set before ourselves.

Nigeria has always an issue with air pollution, particularly in Port Harcourt. It’s time to act. For those that have been part of the environmental struggles from the beginning, this is not the time to give up.

We should all be cognisant of the many challenges some of our allies in this fight may be facing on their own fronts. For instance, the Nigeria Medical Association cannot indefinitely state that the cause of cancer incidents in Port Harcourt is because of the black soot. There are too many causes of cancer and they must not be rushed into declaring a definite cause. However, having their support and their voice in this fight is critical because it carries a lot of weight.

It is important to get every political party to sign on to supporting and promoting a Clean Air Act in Rivers State. We cannot, however, get tangled up in the internal political fighting that goes on as this would distract us from our main objectives.

Even though this fight is a long-term one, we must work to ensure we have some quick visible wins along the way to sustain momentum and uplift spirits.

The partners that convened the Clean Air Summit remain committed to supporting all stakeholders in developing the action points discussed at the Summit and in constituting an effective advocacy campaign towards the adoption of a Clean Air Act in both the Federal and State legislative houses. We understand that effective, long-term, evidence-based planning is key to achieving our objectives and in ensuring inclusiveness of all interested stakeholders.