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Posted to the web 4 February 2008

Bukola Olatunji
Lagos

Nigeria's second biggest non-oil export, after Cocoa, the Fishing Industry is under threat as the operators recalled their fishing trawlers, weekend, following the loss of five men in two-day attack by pirates along Nigerian coastal lines. This brought the number of seamen killed in January alone to seven.

First National Vice President of the Nigerian Trawler Owners' Association, Mrs. Margaret Onyema-Orakwusi said, after an emergency meeting of the association, weekend, that pirates' attacks had been on for a while, "but it is getting worse by the second. They come fully armed with AK47 rifles and steal our equipment worth millions of naira. In some cases, they move the trawlers into the creeks and steal our catch, which also runs into millions. We have seen our packaging materials in neighbouring countries."

"The last straw that will destroy the industry is the new dimension where pirates now seize vessels and demand ransom. We do not have the money and protection that the oil companies have, so we have decided to withdraw our trawlers because we fear for our lives."

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Executive Secretary of the Association, Dr.

Michael Bissong said the attacks used to be limited to the Niger Delta area of the coastal, but now occur all along the Nigerian coastline from Calabar, Cross River State, to Lekki in

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Lagos State.

No fewer than 170 Trawlers, owned by private individuals generate about \$60 million in export revenue for the country annually. It exports about 30 varieties of seafood

including fish, prawns, shrimps (rated the best in the world), lobsters and crabs.

Onyema-Orakwusi said the development is a threat to the industry, which employs, about 50, 000 people, directly and indirectly.

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