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Way out of N-Delta problems, by Stakeholders

By Yemi Adeoye

LAGOS—STAKEHOLDERS from the Niger Delta and some prominent Nigerians yesterday said the development of the Niger Delta was the only solution to the problems in the area. They said communities in the

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PDP splinter group authentic —LAR

By Rotimi Ajayi & Chris Ochayi

ABUJA — PIONEER Chairman of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), Chief Solomon Lar,

met, yesterday, in Abuja with the PDP splinter group and described it as the "authentic PDP."

However, also yesterday, the Ahmadu Ali-led PDP

vowed not to accept any government not democratically elected at the expiration of the tenure of President Olusegun Obasanjo.

Chief Lar, receiving the PDP

splinter group also called Interim Management Committee during a solidarity visit on his return from medical treatment overseas said PDP had

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How Funso Williams was stabbed to death

Obasanjo orders probe

● *Tinubu offers N10m reward for clue*

● *Protest on Lagos Island*

● *His legs were tied with cloth stuffed into his mouth*

By Emma Nnadozie, Paul Odili, Albert Akpor, Olasunkanmi Akoni, Evelyn Usman & Idowu Olaide

LAGOS—WITH his legs and hands tied, a piece of cloth stuffed into his mouth, and several knife wounds to the body inflicted by suspected assassins, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) governorship aspirant in Lagos, Engineer Funso Williams, lay dead, yesterday, at his Ikoyi residence.

Gone with him was the hope of thousands of his supporters who, in the last two years or so had la

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By Paul Odili & Olasunkonmi Akoni

LAGOS — PRESIDENT Olusegun Obasanjo yesterday ordered the Inspector-General of Police, Mr Sunday Ehindero, to ensure that a pathologist examines the body of Chief Funso Williams before moving it to the mortuary.

And in a bid to extract useful information, Governor Bola Tinubu of Lagos State announced a cash reward of N10 million for information on the identities of the perpetrators of the murder of the PDP governorship aspirant.

Meanwhile, the police in Lagos yesterday dispersed supporters of the late Williams as they attempted to commence a protest rally over his

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● *Late Funso Williams. INSET: His No 184A, Corporation Drive, Dolphin Estate, Ikoyi residence where he was killed. Photo by Biodun Ogunleye.*



MR & MRS

YOUR DAUGHTER'S BOY-FRIEND BROUGHT HER FLOWERS AND YOU CHASED HIM OUT. FLOWERS ARE SYMBOL OF LOVE.



SYMBOL OF LOVE MY FOOT. DURING MY OWN TIME, I SPENT ALL MY POCKET MONEY ON YOU BEFORE I COULD EVEN HOLD YOUR HANDS.

THE FUNSHO WILLIAMS' KILLING

....And the Captain died

By Bolade Omonijo, Deputy Political Editor

Williams' ride through Nigerian political terrain

TO some, Mr. Funso Williams, an engineer was a perennial loser who ought to have bowed out of the political scene after the 2003 experience. To others, his mien was totally unsuitable for the rough, very rough, Nigerian political terrain.

But, to his supporters who simply referred to him as Captain, he was the best thing that happened to Nigerian politics. All those who knew him saw him as a gentleman, one who was incapable of hurting a fly. One who was shy to face the horde of media men constantly on his trail and one who dreamt of a better day for Lagos.

But, yesterday, the man died. The journey that started on May 9, 1948 was abruptly terminated when the destination was not even within sight. Engineer Funso Williams who graduated from the University of Lagos in 1971 as a Civil Engineer and bagged a Masters degree from Newerk College of Engineering in 1974 found the Civil Service as best suitable for his professional practice. He rose to the post of Permanent Secretary before Brigadier Olanunsoye Oyinola appointed him Commissioner for Works.

That appointment which took him out of the civil service must have opened his eyes to possibilities in the political field. No sooner was the bid on partisan politics lifted than a rather quiet Funso Williams decided to run the governorship race. He chose to ride in the United Nigeria Congress Party, UNCP vehicle.

Between 1997 and 1998, he traversed the entire length and breadth of Lagos, seeking understanding, explaining issues, asking for support. It was a time when the progressives who formed the traditional political establishment of the South West chose to keep a distance from the Abacha brand of pol-



Stream of mourners at the residence of the late Engineer Funso Williams at his Dolphin Estate, Ikoyi residence, yesterday. Photo: Biodun Ogunleye.

itics. Only new comers and conservatives joined the Abacha train with the UNCP adjudged the preferred party on which platform the Head of State would have eventually sought electoral endorsement.

At the death of General Sani Abacha in June 1998, the calculations and permutations changed. Williams who was the front-runner on the UNCP platform and was within the reach of the governorship had to re-evaluate the situation. He knew that his best bet was to identify with the progressives and thus wormed his way into the Alliance for Democracy fold with his Network Alliance as one of the major building blocks.

Despite his formidable group, Funso Williams had Bola Tinubu who had served as a Senator in the still-born Third Republic and a NADECO activist to contend with. Tinubu was seen as a hero of the struggle for enthronement of democracy while Williams was branded a systems man who simply

flowed with the tide even when authoritarianism ruled the land. But, it was not an easy fight. Williams managed to secure the support of Alhaji Ganiyu Dawodu and the *Afenifere* fold which seemed to tilt things in his favour.

But Tinubu, being a doughty fighter sought alliance with the younger generation. He refused to be intimidated and was quick to present himself as one to be trusted.

The AD primaries ended in a stalemate. Dawodu claimed Williams won, the party executive announced Tinubu as party candidate. At last, Dawodu conceded to the party executive and worked out a broad-based government headed by Tinubu. First, a running mate who ran against the party ticket but neither belonged to the Bola Ahmed Tinubu Campaign Organisation, BATCO nor Network Alliance was imposed. Mrs. Kofoworola Bucknor-Akerele saw herself as suitable for the governorship herself, having been elected to the Senate

with the governor and played a prominent role in NADECO politics.

Two years after the 1999 governorship election, Funso Williams reappraised his political stance, ditched the AD where he knew he stood no chance against the incumbent and headed for the opposition Peoples Democratic Party. After a strong battle against the likes of Chief Olorunfunmi Bashorun, the pioneer PDP chairman in Lagos, Prince Adeniji Adele and Mrs. Oluremi Adiukwu-Bakare, Funso Williams, with the solid backing of his party's National Vice Chairman, South West, Chief Olabode George won the ticket but eventually lost to Governor Bola Tinubu.

Not done yet and not one to give up easily, Funso Williams was quick to indicate interest in running for the seat again. He had oiled his campaign machinery. He nominated his close associate, Senator Adeyeye Ogunlewe as minister and had expected that would help in realising his ambition.

But he miscalculated, Ogunlewe wanted the seat and seized the opportunity to build an independent platform. The two men thus became arch and sworn enemies. Before he fell to the assassins' bullets, Funso Williams had emerged the man to beat.

First, he got Ogunlewe ignominiously removed from office, also, his man, Dr. Funso Adetiba who managed his 2003 campaign had emerged the PDP Lagos state secretary and was still bold to identify with Williams. Adetiba was appointed state chairman of Williams Campaign Organisation, WILLCO.

Thirdly, Funso Williams played a key role in the emergence of Chief Rasheed Williams as party state chairman and the appointment of Dr. Femi Anibaba as Ogunlewe's successor at the Ministry of Works.

If primaries were to depend on party structure, Williams had it all sown up waiting to be delivered to him. But, then, the unexpected happened. Yesterday, he was felled by assassins' bullets.

Who did it? Had it any connection with the coming PDP primaries? Was it done outside the party structure? No one knows.

Nigerians react

By Jide Ajani, Political Editor, Emmanuel Aziken, Abuja, Kolade Larewaju, Abeokuta, Sam Eyoboka & Dapo Akinrefon

Sonibare, DPA mourn

Chieftain of *Afenifere*, Chief Supo Shonibare, who also frowned at the suspected assassination of Funso Williams lamented that it was a "terrible incident".

Shonibare, who hinted that himself and the late Funso Williams were in the Alliance for Democracy, AD, before defecting said "Funso Williams exhibited good character and he was expected to be the one who would change the political landscape of Nigeria, especially Lagos state."

The *Afenifere* stalwart further disclosed that the late Williams worked for the peace and unity of AD and *Afenifere* as well as the success of Governor Bola Tinubu during the 1999 gubernatorial elections.

He said "Williams once aspired to become Senator but later declined to aspire for something good, he was one of the few people who worked for the peace and unity in AD and also *Afenifere*, in fact, he worked tirelessly for the success of Governor Tinubu in the 1999 elections. He epitomises what is good in the society and it is sad that his life was cut short."

"*Afenifere* sends condolences to the family and relations of late Funso, it is sad that we have lost a man of good repute and political background to the clutches of death", he said.

Catholic Church too

Director of Social Communications at the Catholic Archdiocese of Lagos, Monsignor Gabriel Osu, yesterday, described the death of Funso Williams as a rude shock and one assassination too many.

Reacting to the news of Williams' brutal murder on his bed, Osu, who is also the parish priest of St. Paul Catholic Church, Ebute Metta, where the families of Williams worshipped, prayed for the repose of his soul, adding that the murder portends grave danger to the nation as we approach another election year.

He said: "unless the authorities fish out the murderers of Engr. Williams, this dangerous trend may continue," he said, "there are many antecedents and this is not good for our polity nor for the nation's economy. It portends fear and a state of insecurity in the land."

While expressing sympathy to the widow and immediate family, the monsignor said "whoever is responsible for the heinous crime must not forget that whatever he/she is paid for the act, may not be able to assuage God's judgment that is ahead."

ACD condemns brutal killing

The Advanced Congress of Democrats said it condemns in very strong terms, the brutal murder of Engineer Funso Williams, a prominent leader and gubernatorial aspirant of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Lagos State.

The party said although "the Advanced Congress of democrats, we are in contest and not in conflict with other political parties, and we believe that no level of disagreement, whether intra or inter-party should degenerate to the level of assassination."

While commiserating with the family and political associates of late Engr. Funso Williams, the Advanced Congress of Democrats called on the Federal Government to ensure that the assassination of Williams does not join the list of unresolved politically motivated murders in the land.

...AD too

The Alliance for Democracy, AD, while condemning the death of Chief Williams, a four-time Lagos gubernatorial aspirant, said "his (Williams) death has thrown Lagos State which had hitherto known political peace into political mourning and had altered the peaceful political atmosphere of the state."

Obanikoro tasks Police

"I was saddened by the sudden news that Chief Funso Williams was killed in his bedroom.

"I heard the news as I was just preparing to join the Peoples Democratic Party, PDP, campaign trail. This act is totally unwarranted and totally condemnable. The question to ask is who could have committed this dastardly act? Already accusing fingers are being pointed at gubernatorial aspirants on the platform of the party.

"This, to me, is a source of concern. I therefore, call on the Inspector General of police to institute a high-powered panel to track the killers."

Afikuyomi too

"I write on behalf of the leaders and people of the Lagos West Senatorial District to express our condolences to the families of the deceased, whose life was perhaps an epitome of decency and restraint in the art of political engagements.

"I respectfully demand that the Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Sunday Ehindero, will honour the soul of the murdered politician by speedily tracking down his killers and bring them to justice rather than populate the data base of unresolved political assassinations with yet the murder of Engineer Funsho Williams.

Political killings... the list grows longer

By Okey Ndiribe

THE wind of violence tar- geted at top politicians which has been blowing across the country for the past five years finally hit Lagos yesterday snuffing life out of Engr. Funso Williams, a chieftain of the ruling PDP.

Before yesterday's violent eruption in the nation's former Federal Capital Territory, there had been the dastardly killings of Pa Alfred Rewane in 1994, Alhaja Suliat Adedeji and Alhaja Kudirat Abiola in 1996.

On December 23, 2001, what remains the biggest of all politically motivated killings occurred when a serving Minister of Justice and Attorney-General of the Federation, Chief Bola Ige, was shot dead under mysterious circumstances. Ige was killed inside his bedroom at Ibadan. The police had declared one Olugbenga Adedapo, (a.k.a. Fryo) wanted over the controversial murder. The trial of those accused of killing Ige took many twists and turns until the Government of Oyo

state withdrew the case from the court in 2004.

In 2003, the killing of Marshal Harry, the National Vice-Chairman of the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP) for the South-South zone on March 5 had left many Nigerians dazed and wondering who would be the next victim.

Harry's death had triggered protests in Port-Harcourt, the Rivers State capital. The Rivers State Commissioner of Police at the time Mr Sylvester Araba had assured people of the state then that the Inspector-General of Police, at that time, Mr Tafa Balogun had already set up a high-powered investigating team to unravel those who were behind the high profile killing. Harry was a former National Vice-Chairman of PDP before he defected to ANPP as a result of his rift with other top notchers of the ruling party.

There was deep shock across the land when another notable politician, Chief Aminosoari Kala Dikibo was cut down in cold blood in February 6, 2004. Not even the arrest of four sus-

pected armed robbers at the scene of the incident, which according to President Olusegun Obasanjo, indicated that the PDP chieftain might have been killed by the hoodlums, could erase the belief in some quarters that Dikibo was killed by assassins as a retaliation for an earlier killing of another big-time politician.

Police sources had revealed at the time he was felled that the late politician was killed by a single bullet that penetrated the centre of the front windshield of his jeep. The shooting had taken place along a lonely stretch of road at Ogwash-Ukwu, Delta State while Dikibo was on his way to attend a meeting of the South-South zone of the party of which he was a National Vice-Chairman.

At about the same time Harry was killed, one Uche Ogbona fondly called OGB, Imo state based politician who was said to be nursing a senatorial ambition, was also killed. Like Harry, OGB, had also crossed over from PDP to ANPP.

NEWS

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How Funso Williams was stabbed to death

boured and prayed that he might emerge governor next year.

As news of his death spread, friends, supporters, associates, and sympathisers in their hundreds besieged his 184A Corporation Drive twin-duplex residence to ascertain the story.

He was found dead at about 9a.m. by his personal driver popularly called Ajiroba who had gone into his bedroom to wake him up for the day's meetings/appointments.

By then, scores of supporters and associates had gathered at the gate for the continuation of Engineer Williams' ward-to-ward campaigns ahead of the PDP primaries. They were scheduled to campaign in Eti-Osa and Lagos Island local government areas.

But what Ajiroba saw was shocking. He raised an alarm that attracted everyone including the six security men at the house, four of them policemen. His Personal Assistant (PA) called Frank was also there. The police were immediately alerted and the security men and the PA were taken in for questioning.

Governorship aspirant quizzed

A report last night said a prominent governorship aspirant of the party was also being quizzed by the police.

Mr. Williams was all alone inside the house when he was killed. His wife had travelled abroad to see their children.

Vanguard gathered that the three-time gubernatorial aspirant retired to bed around 2 a.m. yesterday after series of meetings with his supporters. He had earlier on Wednesday met with the Police authorities at the Zone 11 Command in Onikan, Lagos together with other PDP stalwarts including the state Chairman of the party, Chief. Rasheed Williams.

It was gathered that during the meeting which was convened by the Police authorities to warn PDP political aspirants on the need to maintain peace in the state, Engineer Williams and other aspirants were made to sign an undertaking to maintain law and order while going about their campaigns.

One of the supporters told Vanguard that when they arrived his residence, the guards opened the gate for them and they sat down waiting for him. He said one of his drivers arrived later around 9a.m. and went straight upstairs to inform Engineer Williams that they were around only to raise an alarm few a seconds later.

According to him, "we all went upstairs only to see his lifeless body lying in a pool of his blood with his hands and legs tied and his mouth gagged. He was lying face down."

The death of Engr. Williams who recently threw a party to mark his mother's 80th birthday sent shock waves all over the state.

The Inspector-General of Police, Mr. Sunday Ehindero, personally visited the house at about 4p.m. yesterday and was ushered into the room where Williams was killed. The IG was accompanied by the Assistant Inspector-General of Police, Zone 11, Mr. Adeoye, and the State Police boss, Mr. Emmanuel Adebayo, who were already on ground assessing the situation. The Police boss who declined to speak to reporters left a few minutes later amidst shouts by sympathisers who called for the arrest and prosecution of all those involved in the death of Engr. Williams.

Prominent politicians and leaders of the People's Democratic

Party (PDP) in the state including, Chief Olabode George; Minister of Works, Chief Femi Anibaba; Security Adviser to Governor Bola Tinubu, Major Tunde Pinnox (rtd) and many others were also at his residence to sympathise with members of his family and his teeming supporters.

Chief George, Chairman of the party in the South-West later addressed the crowd and called

on them to maintain peace, stressing that "perpetrators of the senseless and dastardly act must be brought to book."

Forensic experts from the Force Criminal Investigations Department (FCID), Alagbon arrived the scene at about 3.30p.m. and proceeded to the bedroom where his body was for examination. As at 6p.m., the body of the politician was yet to be taken to the mortuary but

sources said it would be taken to Creek Mortuary in Apapa, Lagos.

There were several theories yesterday on how the assassins gained entry into the apartment without the security men knowing.

One theory suggested that the killers entered through the vacant second duplex in the building.

They had apparently entered his room through a wall opening meant for air conditioner.

Obasanjo orders probe

Continues from Page 1

death.

Obasanjo orders IGP

President Obasanjo who spoke through Ogun State governor, Chief Gbenga Daniels, said this was one murder the police must track down the perpetrators.

According to Obasanjo, "this is one murder the police must fish out the perpetrators. It is a sad day for democracy. Williams death is a devastating one and an act of cowardice. Williams is an accomplished and refined politician and an ardent believer in democracy."

Chief Daniels explained that the reason for keeping Williams' body at home until late in the night was for the pathologists to arrive and do their work.

Meanwhile, Senator Wahab Dosumu has also been paying tribute to the late Williams. "I have never seen him argue with anybody. You people in the press say he is dull, quiet, that shows his person. All he wanted to be was governor of Lagos State, nothing more."

"His politics was politics without bitterness. He had no bitterness whatsoever. I just only hope that he did not die in vain. The pity is that things like these have happened in this country, and there has been no clue."

"I was with him on Monday and there was no sign whatsoever that he was afraid of anything. The security has not briefed anyone yet, but I have seen the body and he was lying face down and his hands were tied. I would not know whether he was stabbed or had gun shot wounds."

Lagos govt offers N10m reward

Governor Tinubu of Lagos State who addressed newsmen on the issue at his Alausa office directed the Police to ensure the suspension of all forms of political rallies for the next two weeks as a sign of respect for the late politician.

He charged the Police to rise up to the challenge by unravelling the perpetrators of the latest murder case as it would be one of the major planks on which the country would successfully conduct a free general elections in 2007.

He lamented that the country had witnessed many unresolved murder cases in the past and this might explain why the perpetrators had been emboldened to continue to carry out the dastardly acts.

The governor said he was

encouraged by the proactive action already taken by the Police High Command on the issue and hoped that it would establish a definite lead on the case.

Besides, he appealed to all political parties in the state to shelve all forms of political gathering or rally over the next two weeks in memory of Chief Williams. The governor said Lagos had not witnessed any political killing under the present political dispensation and warned that the ugly trend needed to be arrested if politicians still intended to go before the electorate to seek votes.

Condemning the despicable act, Gov. Tinubu promised to liaise with the police authorities to confront the monster with all the resources it could muster. He vowed that while full Police investigations report on the issue was being awaited, government would not allow the state to be turned into a battleground by politicians and trouble

makers.

In his words: "Our Lagos has always been peaceful at all times. We cherish our peace and we would not do anything to compromise the peaceful atmosphere in the state."

Protest on Lagos Island

The news of his murder triggered a wave of protests in some parts of Lagos. His supporters gathered in different parts cursing his killers. But the police dispersed them.

In Ikorodu, where Williams had campaigned at the weekend, shops and offices were hurriedly closed following disturbances caused ostensibly by supporters of the murdered politician, residents said.

"We quickly shut down our business centre when street fighting started" to avoid falling victim to looters, a computer operator in Ikorodu, Helen Adenigba said

PDP splinter group authentic —LAR

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problems because the rule of the game was not being followed.

On the the IMC delegation were Chief Shuaib Oyedokun, Deputy National Chairman (South); Prince Orji Nwafor-Orizu (National Secretary); Mrs. Chika Ebeneme (Women Leader); and Mr Bode Ojomu (Deputy National Publicity Secretary).

"There is only one authentic PDP. When we say something is authentic, that organisation is real. That organisation works according to the rule of law. That organisation respects court orders. When courts give rulings, that organisation will respect the judgement; will also respect human rights and human dignity. If you follow all these you are authentic. Anything short of that you are not authentic," Chief Lar said, and described those present at the meeting as foundation members of the party.

"When you see people like these, you know they are authentic. We want the party to follow the rule of the game. You see, if you don't follow the rule of the game, then you are asking for problems. That's why the PDP is in problems because they don't follow the rule of the game."

"Let me give you a good example. A governor was being tried by a committee and later that committee referred the matter to the Board of

Trustees (BOT). And the BOT exonerated the governor."

"But when we went back to the National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting, the governor was still suspended by only one person. And that was very unfair. That is really not fair. And that is the type of thing that will give the party instability."

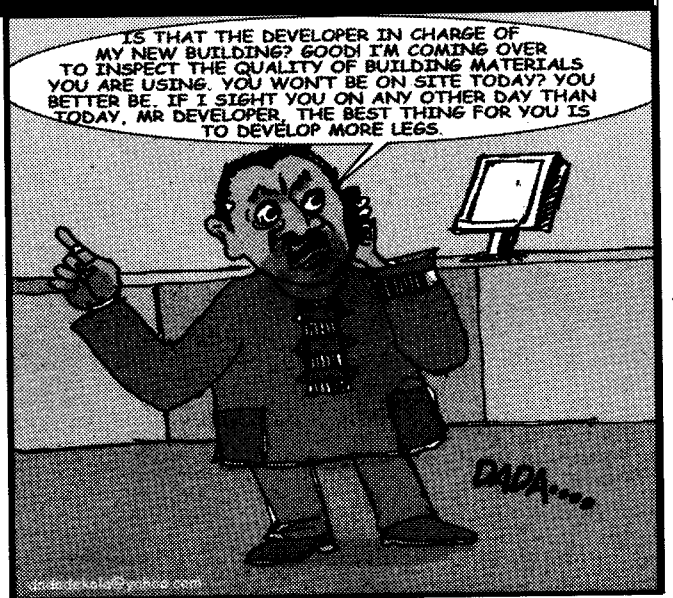
"I have just been told that in that state," even yesterday, on the floor of the House of Assembly, all the members have declared for a different party. They believed their governor is being unfairly treated. You see, we must follow something that is correct. Please let us do that. And for you, I am glad you have been following that which is right."

Deputy National Chairman (South), Chief Shuaib Oyedokun, while presenting the party position to Chief Lar, said the document was prepared over two months ago and that it was done collectively by the party's chairmen in the 36 states of the federation.

PDP rises against interim govt

Meanwhile, the PDP has vowed not to accept any government not democratically elected in May 29, 2007. Reacting to requests that an Interim National Government might be appointed in 2007, the party urged all agencies

POCKET CARTOON



Way out of N-Delta problems, by Stakeholders

Continues from Page 1

Niger Delta did not benefit in anyway from the much talked about 13 per cent oil derivation fund. They spoke at the maiden edition of the NTA public lecture series in Lagos.

Chief Edwin Clark who was the first speaker said the situation in the Niger Delta had gone beyond just sitting down and presenting papers and positions that did get implemented, and as such the Ijaw leadership did not honour most conferences on the Niger Delta issue.

"We have for some time now started seeing such events as mere jamboree as nothing comes out of them in the long run. If the recent committee set up by President Olusegun Obasanjo

had made valuable recommendations, they would have been implemented by the government to solve most of their problems. The hostage-taking has again brought to focus the need for urgent attention to the problems of youth restiveness, pipeline vandalism and insecurity in the area," he said.

Former Commonwealth Secretary General, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, who chaired the occasion in his contribution said the Niger Delta region was the indisputable flashpoint in our national polity, even as he urged Nigerians to vote only for dedicated politicians in the 2007 elections.

"The problems of the Niger Delta are too important for any government to ignore and should not be allowed to degenerate into a national crisis. We should address the development needs of the area, mobilise the people and make them more useful to the area," he said.

Also speaking, the Reverend Father Matthew Kukah said the Niger Delta issue was more of a Nigerian problem as every state in Nigeria has its own Niger Delta in metaphorical terms.

"How do you move forward when you are standing on a precipice? All you have to do is move backwards, and that is the situation of the Nigerian state today. For the multinational corporations which are now referred to as transnational, they have carried on for too long without much concern for the host communities which are now saying they've had enough. And for those who govern the country, I think its high time they started thinking of distribution of resources to the downtrodden," Kukah said.

The President of the Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Community, Dr. Bello Oboko in his speech said government had been the main contributor to the problems in Warri as both the Ijaw and the Itsekiri knew very well that neither of them was the source of the problem.

According to him, the problem started when Ijaw people of Warri South-West were totally disenfranchised in 1999. "They were neither allowed to vote or be voted for as INEC did not conduct any registration in the entire area and as such were not part of the Nigerian business. They did not vote for anyone either at the local, state or federal level hence the government of the day is an imposition on the people of Warri South-West. If you like, build all the roads and all the bridges in the region, these fundamental problems still remain as the crux of the matter," he said.

In the meantime, the party has described yesterday killing of Chief Funso Williams as shocking. Reacting to the killing, its National Publicity Secretary, Mr John Odey said: "All I can say for now is that it is shocking. We will wait for full report from Lagos before we comment any further."