

Climate Crimes: People's Climate March Should Call for a Reduction of Expenditure on Military Hardware and War

By [Global Research News](#)

Global Research, September 19, 2014
[Kontext](#)

Theme: [Environment](#), [US NATO War](#)
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There is going to be a climate summit at the UN headquarters in New York on the 23st of September. In the US Barack Obama has again abandoned any attempts to go for a legally binding international climate deal at the climate summit next year. Nnimmo Bassey says that "governments cannot be depended upon to fight global warming (...) because governments are generally at the beg and call of big corporations". "The spark of hope lies in the people. In the people who are not negotiating". The "People's Climate March" should demand that "the money for climate debts should be paid to the global South and call for a reduction of expenditure on military hardware and war. If it makes such demands then that may be useful". People should also march to the "climate crime scenes", for example to the oil fields in Nigeria and "saying Shell, Exxon Mobile, Chevron, you are climate crimes, enough, you have to put a stop to it. We don't have to go far away".

Guest:

Nnimmo Bassey, Nigerian climate activist, currently chair of the board of Environmental Rights Action. He works for the Oilwatch network. From 2008 to 2012 he was chair of Friends of the Earth International. He's the author of "To Cook a Continent". In 2010 he received the Right Livelihood Award, better known as the Alternative Nobel Peace Prize.

Source: www.kontext-tv.de

Transcript:

David Goessmann: Our next guest is Nnimmo Bassey. He's currently chair of the board of Environmental Rights Action in Nigeria and works for the Oilwatch network. From 2008 to 2012 he was chair of Friends of the Earth International. He's the author of "To Cook a Continent". In 2010 he received the Right Livelihood Award, better known as the Alternative Nobel Peace Prize. Welcome again to Kontext TV, Nnimmo Bassey.

Nnimmo Bassey: Thank you.

David Goessmann: There is going to be a climate summit at the UN headquarters in New York on the 23st of September. German Chancellor Angela Merkel has already made clear that she will not attend. At the same time emissions are rising even in Germany, a country

often seen as a role model for effectively cutting emissions. Germany is also likely to miss its target for 2020 by a margin of almost 10 per cent. In the US Obama has again abandoned attempts to go for a legally binding international climate deal at the climate summit next year. Your comments on that? Where do we stand and where are we heading?

Nnimmo Bassey: Well again there's a direct link between degrowth and climate change. Because the level of consumption, the utilization and dependence on fossil fuels and dirty energy is certainly harming the climate and therefore harming the planet and the people. But it does appear to me that governments cannot be depended upon to fight global warming. They should be able to fight global warming but because governments are generally at the beg and call of big corporations, governments are not able to do things that people want. So they are doing things that corporations want. So if corporations keep on polluting to keep on amassing profit, governments acquiesce to this. This is very unfortunate. I think that any opportunity to meet is important. But if the meeting is going to produce no result like Copenhagen did, like Cancun did, like South Africa, like Warsaw, Doha, if that would be the outcome of the meeting, to talk and do nothing or to talk and go backwards on commitments or make no commitments, that of course is a whole lot of waste of time. I think the solution, the spark of hope lies in the people. In the people who are not negotiating but who have representatives in courts who negotiate on their behalf. We have to hold our governments accountable and responsible for the harm that we are suffering as people and other species are suffering on planet earth. We have to hold our governments accountable. And they just have to be forced to take into account the fact that as they themselves say, business as usual is not an option. They can't just pretend that nothing is happening and keep on permitting the kind of destruction that is going on. It's really very unfortunate that after it's been very clear that the climate is getting to a tipping point, that we are going to have runaway global warming, the governments are not serious about taking real action. It's very shocking that when the world was thinking that Germany has gone renewable, gone green then emissions should be rising again. This is why energy efficiency never really at the end of the day cuts down emissions because people get more efficient and then they use more. They consume more [... (53:24)...] That's why again degrowth is important. The concept of degrowth especially for Europe is critical. And that would not be only to use statistics, to say well we're degrowing, just like GDP is a mythical? set of statistics to fool people to think that their economies are growing. If governments resort to using statistics to prove they are degrowing without actually slowing down and cutting on consumption then that would not help us at all. We need real action.

David Goessmann: There will also be a People's Climate March in New York City before the summit, which could mark the largest rally for climate action ever. Talk about the climate movement and what they are aiming for. And: Are you going to attend the march?

Nnimmo Bassey: To me, the most exciting possibility from the call for a global march would be marches in different cities and villages in the world. Not marching just in New York City. It's OK to march in New York. But the real action must be where the people are. They have to identify the climate crime scenes and locations that we need to protest against. For example in Nigeria we should be marching to the oil fields and saying Shell, Exxon Mobile, Chevron, you are climate crimes, enough, you have to put a stop to it. We don't have to go far away. If you go to New York and march there and you come back home then you would have marched of course. Perhaps the heads of state who are gathered in New York may hear the outcome of the march if they are tired of hearing themselves. Because they are going basically to hear themselves. Would they hear what is going on the streets. So I think

symbolically that is good and if they push concepts and demands as captured in 2010 at the people's summit on global warming that was held in Cochabamba in Bolivia, and look at the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth for example, the money for climate debts to be paid to the global South, and also for a reduction of expenditure on military hardware and war. If it makes such demands then that may be useful. And I think they should make those demands, those kinds of demands. Because those should be the key demands in the climate justice movement. Too much resources are being spent on destructive activities. Extraction itself is destructive and then the resources from extraction are being used to wage wars and violence around the world. And of course everybody finds it convenient to ignore the climate debts. But these are historical debts that cannot be ignored. It has to be paid.

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