



## **Global Toxic Waste Trade Flourishing UN Special Rapporteur Calls for Urgent International Action**

*Bali, Indonesia; 26 June 2008.* “I am here...with an appeal to you not to forget the human rights dimensions of the [toxic] waste trade,” called Prof. Okechukwu Ibeanu the current United Nations Special Rapporteur on the adverse effects of the illicit movement and dumping of toxic and dangerous products and waste, in measured and somber tone before international delegates attending the 9<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties meeting of the Basel Convention on toxic wastes in Bali, Indonesia.

In his ringing speech, Professor Ibeanu explained that the movement of hazardous wastes and products across the globe, particularly from developed to developing countries continues to flourish, and often takes place without appropriate safeguards. He questioned developed nations exporting toxic wastes, on whether they could even consider it fair trade, when they export these dangers knowing that the recipient developing countries often do not have the technical knowledge or expensive technologies to deal with the wastes.

The UN Special Rapporteur also drew attention to developing countries taking in toxic wastes, “Is it worth the short term monetary gain? Is it worth people falling sick, unable to work, causing land to become barren, destroying the environment and precious water sources...?”

Prof. Ibeanu is one of the many experts in Bali, Indonesia participating in the weeklong conference of the Basel Convention, which started last June 23. The conference, with the theme of “Waste Management for Human Health and Livelihood”, is discussing pressing global issues on toxic wastes such as the entry into force of the Basel Ban Amendment,<sup>[1]</sup> electronic wastes or e-wastes, and shipbreaking, and the linkage of the waste issue with the Millennium Development Goals.

Civil society groups are also participating in the conference. The Basel Action Network (BAN), an international NGO promoting environmental justice, hosted two side-events during the meeting to put focus on the plight of foreign e-wastes that are dumped in developing countries in Asia and the proliferation of trade agreements that peddle toxic wastes, known as Japanese Economic Partnership Agreements.

Reacting to the issue of the Japan Economic Partnership Agreements (JEPAs), Prof. Ibeanu stated, "JEPAs constitute a paradox of trade. On the one hand, they are meant to engender development and progress through trade, but on the other hand they legitimize the transfer of toxic and dangerous products and wastes in the name of trade. Certainly, JEPAs place ASEAN countries between trade and tragedy. Indeed, JEPAs express a new form of Japanese economic aggression which will eventually destabilize the region. Japan must consider the morality of making its poorer neighbours cheap dumping grounds for toxic and dangerous products and wastes in the guise of trade."

Atty. Richard Gutierrez, Executive Director of the Basel Action Network, Asia-Pacific office, who presented the JEPA issue in one of the BAN side-events at the conference noted, "The issue of JEPA and the other Japanese EPAs is not simply a Philippine or ASEAN issue, it is now clearly a global concern. We encourage Prof. Ibeanu to visit the Philippines and other ASEAN countries and shine a spotlight over Japan's actions in Asia."

In ending his speech Prof. Ibeanu urged the international community, "Let us not forget that we have to look after our environment for future generations to come. It is not ours to destroy. We have seen the effects of what toxic wastes can do to our lives and our environment. It is time to stop talking, and start acting."

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