Dear Mr. President Sir, all protocols duly observed.

As an environmentalist, I will not be afraid to point out the positive acts of Mr. President in the area of environmental protection and preservation within these years of your presidency of the country.

The above assertion is premised on some of the practical steps taken by the present administration from the very few months in office:

In September, 2016 President Muhammadu Buhari before addressing the opening of the meeting on Taking Climate Action for Sustainable Development in New York, co-hosted by Nigeria and the United Nations Environment Programme, UNEP, as one of the Side Events of the 71st Session of the United Nations General Assembly, UNGA71, signed the Paris Agreement, where he committed Nigeria to reducing “Green House Gas Emissions unconditionally by 20 per cent and conditionally by 45 per cent” in line with Nigeria’s Nationally Determined Contributions.” And in November, 2016 while addressing the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP-22) in Marrakech, Morocco, reiterated the pledge that Nigeria would reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 20 percent by the year 2030.

In 2017, the federal government adopted the “Economic Recovery & Growth Plan 2017-2020” which among others stated the position of government on how to raise resources from the otherwise wasted associated gas through flaring by petroleum industry players. This will further reduce the hazardous impacts of gas flaring and increase the revenue base for the nation.

In 2018, the government enacted the “Flare Gas (Prevention of Waste and Pollution) Policy 2018” The policy is clear that gas flaring is prohibited.

In 2021, Mr. President signed into law the “Nigerian Climate Change Act 2021” which provides the strategic focus of Nigeria in combating climate change.

The implication of the above developments is the show of seriousness of the present administration in the reduction of green house gas emissions and combating climate change which is one of the key drivers of environmental degradation and havoc in Nigeria.

The above especially the “Flare Gas (Prevention of Waste and Pollution) Policy 2018” which clearly states that gas flaring is prohibited and the “Nigerian Climate Change Act 2021”
which provides the strategic focus of Nigeria in combating climate change are in line with the judgment in the case of Jonah Gbemre V. Shell & Others – a case we supported and are still supporting at the Appeal Court.

Some of the positive steps showing assurances on your commitment to addressing the issues of environmental degradation, pollution and climate change are obvious to those working in these sectors.

The clean up of Ogoniland though very slow at least is a departure from the past where nothing was done at all some years even after the release of the UNEP Report on the environmental situation of Ogoniland with recommendations spanning both short, middle and long term remedial and restoration actions. Policies, Laws governing the issues of petroleum extraction, climate change etc such as the revised National Determined Contributions pursuant to the Paris Agreement which includes waste related issues, the Petroleum Industry Act 2021, the Climate Change Act 2021 etc are among the positive signs.

Despite the issues arising from these laws, to have mustered the courage to have them passed in the first place for me is a plus for your concern for the Nigerian environment!

Mr. President Sir, having enumerated the above, may I also inform you Sir, that as the Lawyer to the Artisan Fishermen Association of Nigeria Victims of the Shell Bonga Oil Spill of December 20th, 2011, your administration have given the helpless victims the most listening ear hence this open letter to you Sir.

We have navigated all steps to see that the issue is settled on a round table between all the necessary stakeholders to engender a win win situation. With my position now as the 2022 Goldman Environmental Prize Winner for Africa, I am more than ever inclined towards finding collective solutions to our national and African regional environmental and citizens livelihoods challenges.

Mr. President Sir, I use this medium to appeal to you to use your good offices and as a caring father to bring all the parties together including all the petroleum extractive companies – Shell, Exxon Mobil, Nigerian Agip Oil Company, Total Energy and the victims of their operations, relevant government agencies and authorities to discuss workable solutions to the environmental despoliations arising from their operational methodologies in the country. Amicable solutions can be found for every situation if only the parties are willing to do so.

Mr. President Sir, a situation as we currently have where the Multinational Oil Companies are now running away from their responsibilities of restoring the Nigerian environment to the way it was before their extraction adventures and restituting citizens whose livelihoods patterns have been either distorted or dislodged by the dislocation of their societal fabrics in the name of divestment should also be addressed and discouraged until the needful is done. They should no longer enjoy any incentives for investing deep offshore while they are running away from their legacy pollution footprints onshore!

Mr. President Sir, I will also reiterate here that as I pledged during my acceptance speech at the award ceremony, I will always stand by the victims of environmental challenges to give them necessary legal support to recover their environment, their livelihoods and their
humanity. In doing this, I am willing to align with anyone that shares the same principles and be against anyone that is against same!

I thank you Mr. President for the opportunity to communicate with you and I believe that as a listening father you have always been to the downtrodden masses of Nigerians especially the Artisan Fishermen Association of Nigeria members victims of Shell Bonga Oil Spill, you will bring succor to them before your administration winds up. I believe you can still bring smiles once again to their faces especially to reduce the pains of many of their families who have lost their breadwinners in course of the struggle for recovery of their livelihoods.

I also know you have the capacity and authority to compel erring companies to clean up and restore our environment, compensate their victims. Mandate relevant Ministries, Departments and Agencies of Government working with select Civil Society Organizations, Community leaders, divesting Multi-National Oil Companies and investing Domestic Oil Companies to work out an Environmental Remediation Bond amount to be deposited by both the divesting and investing entities before divesting or investing!

Thank you Mr. President Sir.

Truly yours

Barr. Chima Williams

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Member, Executive Committee, Friends of the Earth International

&

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