

Groups Slam Nigeria's Submission of Gas Flare Reductions for Carbon Credits

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On the eve of Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo's visit to Washington, DC, groups from Nigeria, the US and the UK today announced their opposition to the recent decision by the government of Nigeria of its intent to count the discontinuation of illegal gas flaring as a "carbon credit" under the newly minted Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol.

Nigeria flares more gas than any country in the world. The Federal High Court of Nigeria recently ruled that this gas flaring constitutes a "gross violation" of the rights to life and dignity of the local community because it exposes nearby villagers to the toxic gases, including dioxins and other hazardous particulates, released in the flaring of gas, and must be halted immediately. However, oil companies have thus far refused to abide by this court order.

The Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) allows countries to trade emissions credits between North and South in order to achieve overall reductions in greenhouse gas emissions as required by countries signatory to the Kyoto Protocol. The intent of the CDM is to provide finance for clean energy projects, such as solar, wind, energy efficiency and other clean renewable projects that would not otherwise obtain outside sources of finance.

"In our view, the acceptance of an associated gas flaring project in Nigeria as a CDM project cannot be justified. If CDM credits were to be granted in respect of activities that are violations of human rights, this would also bring the CDM process into disrepute," said Peter Roderick, the co-Director of the Climate Justice Program in the UK.

"Gas flaring is a criminal activity that culprits should not profit from," said Asume Osuoka of Environmental Rights Action in Nigeria. "Oil companies in Nigeria can end gas flaring profitably without CDM credits. Those that need compensation are the community victims and not corporate culprits, as the Nigerian authorities are suggesting."

"This proposal by Nigeria should be rejected as a fraud by the CDM methodology board," said Daphne Wysham, a fellow with the Institute for Policy Studies. "To tell companies they will be paid for doing something they should have done decades ago by law is to encourage corporate abuse everywhere."

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