



**Universität
Zürich^{UZH}**

**Right
Livelihood**
CENTRE ZÜRICH

Sustainability Now!

**Inequalities as an Obstacle to Achieve
Sustainable Development**

«Environmental (In)justice in the Business
Sector»

Veranstaltungsbericht

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As part of the course Sustainability Now! Inequalities as an Obstacle to Achieve Sustainable Development, we participated as student moderators in a panel discussion about Environmental (In)justice in the Business Sector on the 2nd of May 2024. The lecture series is organised by Right Livelihood Centre UZH and Sustainability Team UZH. The main speaker of the evening was Nnimmo Bassey. He is a Nigerian environmental justice activist, human right activist, architect, essayist, and poet. He was a co-recipient of the 2010 Right Livelihood Award. In 2012 he received the Rafto Human Rights Award, and in 2014 he was awarded Nigeria's national honour as a Member of the Federal Republic (MFR) in recognition of his environmental activism. In 1993, he co-founded a Nigerian non governmental organization known as Environmental Rights Action (Friends of the Earth Nigeria) to advocate and educate regarding environmental human rights issues in Nigeria. Today, Dr. Bassey leads Health of Mother Earth Foundation, an ecological think tank. His commitment to the cause takes place on several fronts, both as an activist but also as a poet and writer. Many of his collections bear witness to these environmental atrocities. Discussing with Dr. Bassey on the panel were Dr. Tamaki Ohmura and Dr. Ion Karagounis. Dr. Ohmura is a highly respected researcher at the University of Zurich, interested in interdisciplinary research and social science research methods. Since last year, she has given lectures about Biodiversity, the Environment and Human Society. Dr. Karagounis serves as the head of new economic models and future affairs at WWF Switzerland. Since last year, he has been working on relying more on a systemic approach to change the economy as it is not only companies that have to change and readjust their economic lines. He is also involved in publishing newspaper articles and presentations for the association. The aim of the evening was to talk, make people think and arouse their interest in the problems witnessed by Dr. Bassey. Indeed, there are many environmental, agricultural, social and economic crises caused by uncontrolled oil extraction, carried out in the Niger River Delta areas. The goal we set ourselves for the evening, thanks to the interactions, and diverse expertise of our guests, was to deepen our understanding of ways to increase the voices and possibilities of the local populations to end this violence. In this, we tried to emphasise the important roles of international associations and a collaborative climate between the various actors to promote sustainable and inclusive development. In the panel questions, we aimed to identify the role of the different actors and understand their responsibilities and how they can propose new collaborations and policies to be able to give voice and power to change the

future and ensure respect for human and environmental rights that have long been violated in these areas. What each one of us should have learnt from this evening is how unfortunately not in all parts of the world does one have the privilege of being able to live in a safe and healthy environment. Therefore, the take-home message we want to emphasise is how important it is for all of us to be aware of the problems that surround us and afflict others, and to contribute to raising awareness among those who show disinterest in these events in the aim to safeguard their own economic profits. In the words of Dr. Bassey, we must work together to 'wake up the men who pretend to sleep' and confront them with the consequences of their actions.