Shell settles Wiwa case with humanitarian gesture

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Shell today agreed to settle a court case in New York related to allegations in connection with the Nigerian military government's execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and others in 1995, making a humanitarian gesture to set up a trust fund to benefit the Ogoni people.

At the same time, the plaintiffs have dismissed all claims made in the litigation against Shell Petroleum NV, Shell Transport and Trading Company Limited and the Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited (SPDC).

The settlement and other payments together total $15.5 million, which will provide funding for the trust and a compassionate payment to the plaintiffs and the estates they represent in recognition of the tragic turn of events in Ogoni land, even though Shell had no part in the violence that took place. In addition, they cover plaintiffs' costs and fees.

The trust fund will support initiatives in education, skills development, agriculture, small enterprise development and adult literacy. It will be governed by trustees who will be independent of the plaintiffs and defendants and responsible for delivering the projects.

Malcolm Brinded, Shell's Executive Director Exploration & Production, said: "We believe this settlement will assist the process of reconciliation and peace in Ogoni land, which is our primary concern.

"Shell has always maintained the allegations were false. While we were prepared to go to court to clear our name, we believe the right way forward is to focus on the future for Ogoni people, which is important for peace and stability in the region.

"This gesture also acknowledges that, even though Shell had no part in the violence that took place, the plaintiffs and others have suffered."

The trust is in addition to the contribution to community development that Shell-run companies make in the Niger Delta (including Ogoni land), which in 2008 totalled more that $240 million (Shell share $82 million).

The executions in 1995 of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his eight fellow Ogonis were tragic events and both Shell and SPDC attempted to persuade the government of the day to grant clemency.

Malcolm Brinded said: "We hope that this settlement will help the plaintiffs and the people of Ogoni to move forward."

More information

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