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Gulf of Guinea Resources, Economy and Development: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

Abstract

The ongoing pollution and piracy in the Gulf of Guinea Region is on the rise as such that livelihoods, environments and the economy of the region are been threatened resulting in the decline in marine and other aquatic lives as well as the general decline in the economy/incomes of nations which sustained over 500 Million people in the region. This article aimed at ensuring awareness at the international level, attract experts working in the related areas as well as investors to help promote the region in one hand and improve on the global economy in the other.

Keywords: Africa, Atlantic, Nigeria, Petroleum, Pirates

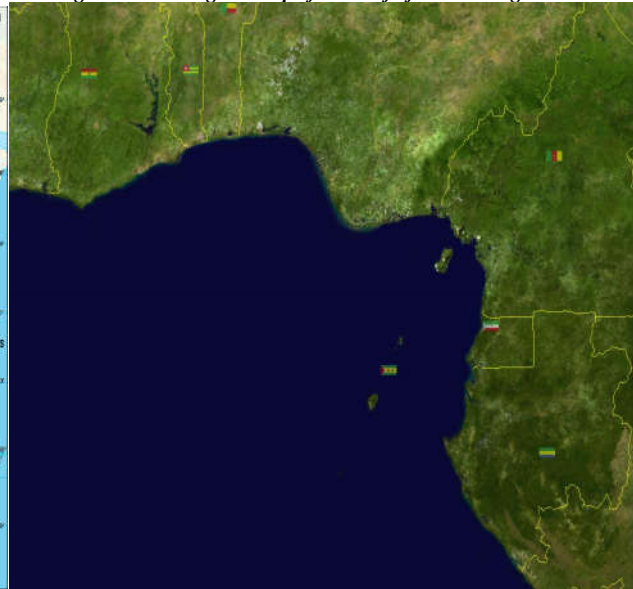
Introduction:

The Gulf of Guinea region is in Africa and is located within the West and Central African coast lines and the surrounding territorial waters of the Atlantic Ocean.

Figure 1: Showing the Map of the Africa



Figure 2: Showing the Map of the Gulf of Guinea Region.



The International Hydrographic Organization defines the southwest extent of the Gulf of Guinea as "A line running Southeastward from Cape Three Points in Western region Ghana ($4.744^{\circ}\text{N } 2.089^{\circ}\text{W}$) to Cape Lopez in Gabon ($0^{\circ}38'\text{S } 8^{\circ}42'\text{E}$)". But the present day Gulf of Guinea has more of political dimension rather than geographical one and this lead to the extension of borders of the Gulf of Guinea region all the way from Ghana in Western Africa to Angola in the central Africa , inclusive of the Gulf islands such as Annobón also known as Pagalu, Bobowasi Island, Bioko, Corisco, Elobays, Elobey Grande and Elobey Chico and São Tomé and Príncipe and some few others not mentioned here.

Figure 3: Showing the Map of the Gulf of Guinea Region Islands: Figure 4: Showing the political Map of the Gulf of Guinea Region:



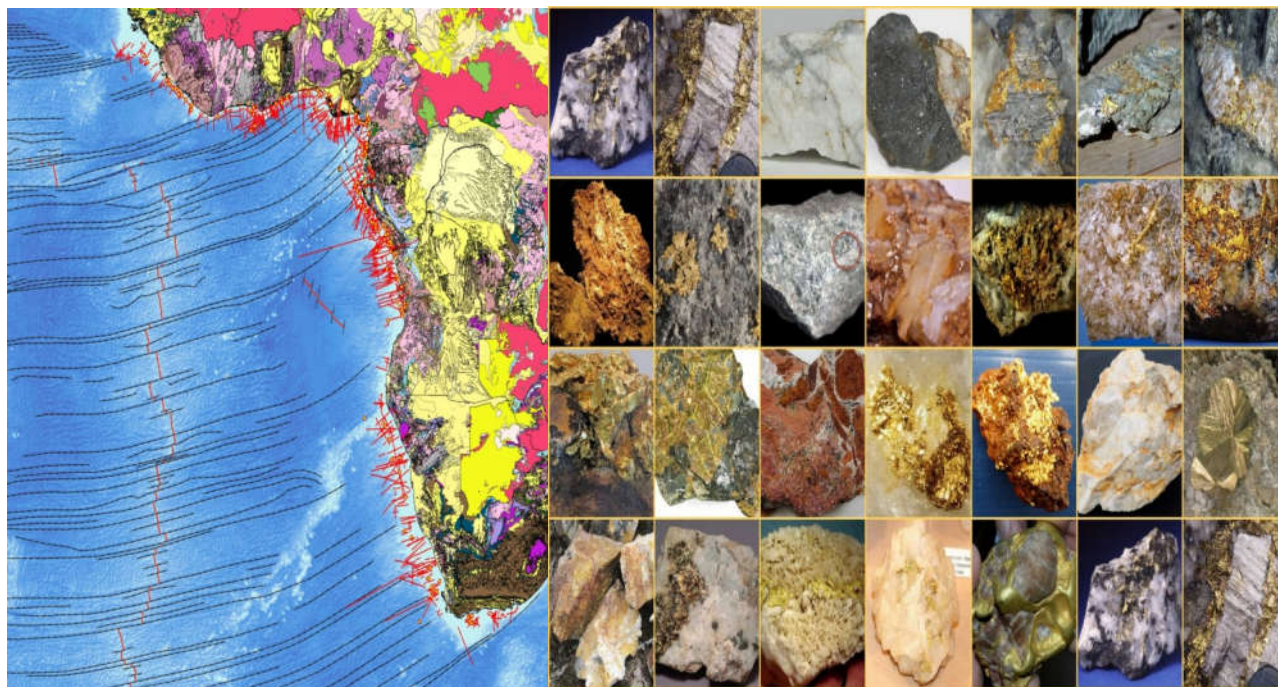
The name Guinea might sound new to many people in the Western World, but the truth is ;the name Guinea has been in use both in the Maghrib (North Africa/Morocco region) and in Europe long before Prince Henry's time. For example, on a map dated about 1320 AD by the Genoese cartographer Giovanni di Carignano, who got his information about Africa from a fellow-countryman in Sijilmas [ancient trading city in North Africa], we find Gunuia, and in the Catalan atlas of 1375 AD as Ginyia.

The name "Guinea" was also applied to south coast of West Africa, north of the Gulf of Guinea, which became known as "Upper Guinea", and the west coast of Southern Africa, to the east, which became known as "Lower Guinea. The name "Guinea" is still attached to the names of three countries in Africa: Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and Equatorial Guinea, as well as Papua New Guinea in Melanesia (The Asian continent).

The region is one of the World's richest and under exploited place. It holds about 35 % of the World's total petroleum reserve and blessed with many minerals and other natural resources such as diamonds, tin, bitumen, uranium, copper, manganese, gold, phosphates, granite, gas, marble, quartz, lead, zinc, wolfram, fluorite, sulfur, feldspar, silver, kaolin, mica, asphalt, gypsum, oil and talc as well as a very rich rain forests accounting for 20% of the world's total rainforest and much of the oxygen-generating sources of the globe and it also keeps providing shelter and protection to a large portion of the World's biodiversity including the pygmies, animals, microorganisms etc.

Some of these minerals found in this region are as shown/indicated below:

Figure 5: A digital geological map showing the Gulf of Guinea: Figure 6: A photo showing some of the mineral resources found in Gulf of Guinea.



The member countries of the region are Ghana, Togo, Benin, Nigeria, Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Congo, São Tomé and Príncipe, Congo DRC and Angola including Cabinda.

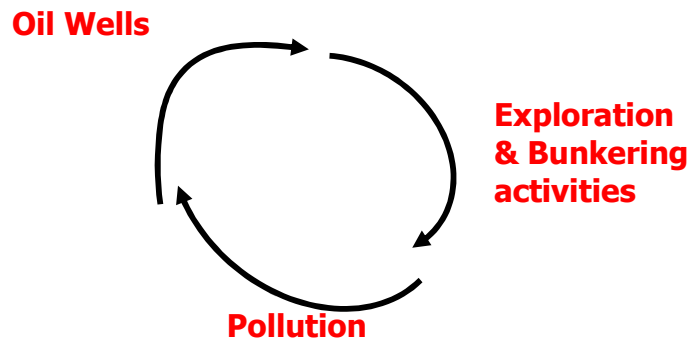
Maritime related pollutions and social crimes are on the increase in this region due to the overwhelmingly weak institutions and governance in the past and for socio-economic reasons in the present. All the major economic activities in the region such as petroleum exploration, port operations, mining and gas flaring together with other negative activities going on more frequently in the region such as piracy, kidnappings and poor waste management culture are all pointing to stagnation in development through decline in the economic income of the nations in the region, decline in Seafood and Aquatic lives as well as reduction in the volume of vessels patronizing the region for economic developments purposes. These reasons made this research very significant at this point in time that the global economy as a whole is facing challenges and making it difficult to ascertain its future considering the global economy recession of 2013, 2014 and some part of 2015 where nations like Greece, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Ireland and to some extent even France, the United State of America and the United Kingdom were affected this recession. So the option remains identifying and promoting viable regions such as the Gulf of Guinea, understand the challenges affecting its development in order to supplement the growth in the global economy for the benefit of mankind.

Pollution in the Gulf of Guinea: Nature and Causes

The petroleum exploration activities going on within this region in countries like the Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, Gabon, Nigeria, Angola and others are continuously causing oil spillages in the

process of drilling, bunkering and discharging of petroleum products in the Atlantic Ocean. In fact this petroleum exploration activities and the oil spillages assumes the form of a vicious circle as illustrated below:

Chart 1: Showing the vicious cycle of the petroleum exploration activities:



In view of the above the region keeps recording incessant incidents of Ocean Pollution through increasing oil spillages resulting in rapid decline in fish, plankton, shrimps, crabs, Cray fish and other sea lives along the Coasts of this Gulf facing the Atlantic Ocean.

Figure 7: Showing villagers fetching polluted water for domestic activities:



Figure 8: Showing a villager trying to clean his Canoe from oil spill at the Coast of the Gulf of Guinea:



Figure 9: Showingsatellite imagery of an oil spill in the Gulf of Guinea:

Figure 10: Showing an Oil spill in the Atlantic Ocean within the Gulf of Guinea:



- ii). Apart from the petroleum exploration activities described above some maritime activities in the region also adds to this pollution in this Gulf, for example the incessant degreasing (washing of chemicals stained on the Quay Aprons of Sea ports) activities going on on regular basis mostly after the discharging of chemicals and related cargo at the Sea ports across member countries of the region are continuously polluting the Atlantic Ocean coasts in the region thereby causing harms to both marine/aquatic as well as human lives to some extent.

Additionally the regular chemicals used in the washing of these Quay Aprons in these Ports sometimes combined with the original chemicals intended to be washed deposited on these Quay Aprons of the Ports such as potassium nitrates, potassium chlorides, phosphorus, Sulphur, fertilizers and other industrial chemicals were discovered to be forming different types of solutions possibly dangerous ones and which are consequently emptied in to the Atlantic Ocean without carrying out any form of regular environmental impact assessments as per operations on these newly formed solutions were thought to be responsible for killing or deforming of some of the marine lives in the region's Atlantic Ocean. However just like the Ocean pollution due to petroleum exploration activities the physical pollutions from these chemicals are sometimes visible even to the naked eyes in the waters of the Atlantic Ocean in the region. Popular Sea ports in this region includes Libreville, Luanda, Duala, Cabinda, Sumbe, Cotounou, Lagos, Doula Tamale, Port Harcourt, Malaboetc

- iv. Poor waste management culture in the region due to lack of technical knowhow of managing waste coupled with high level of poverty of earning less than One (1) USD Dollars per person per day in the region as well as lack of proper policies on waste management in some these countries has resulted in making the Atlantic ocean and its territorial waters the final destination or the end point to many of the locally generated wastes from the households located at the Coastal cities/towns of the regions Atlantic ocean portion. In fact this explains why plastic bags, containers, polyethylene products and other light industrial products are always found in most of the African supposedly beautiful coastal beaches of the region.

Figure 11: Showing a polluted Coast of a city in this region:Figure 12: Showing a polluted portion of the Gulf of Guinea:



1. Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea region: Nature and Causes

Pirates in the Gulf of Guinea are often associated to stealing of oil cargo and or kidnapping for ransoms. The culprits are often heavily armed criminal enterprises, In 2012, the International Maritime Bureau, Oceans Beyond Piracy and the Maritime Piracy Humanitarian Response Program reported that the number of vessels attacks in West African which forms 50 % of the total area of the Gulf of Guinea by pirates had reached a world high, with 966 seafarers attacked during the year.

Figure 13 A & B: Showing some pirate suspects arrested in the sea:



According to the Control Risks Group, pirate attacks in the Gulf of Guinea had by mid-November 2013 maintained a steady level of around 100 attempted hijackings in the year, a close second behind Asia. For some time, smaller ships shuttling employees and materials belonging to the oil companies with any involvement in oil exploration had been at risk in Nigeria. Over time, pirates became more aggressive and better armed. Furthermore the Niger Delta militants

like MEND (Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta) and some other groups operating in the Niger delta region who claimed to be fighting the Nigerian government and some oil companies operating in their area over the rights of their indigenes on the issues related to pollution, environmental degradation and sharing of profits arising from the sales of crude oil produced in lands by the multinational oil companies like Chevron, Mobil, Texaco and Shell petroleum among others were mostly been linked or associated with piracy as well as kidnappings in the region and in Niger delta area in particular by the experts working on the issues of development and security in the region.

Pirates attack in this region is mainly around the creeks, territorial waters, terminals, harbors and even Oil rigs rather than in the high seas or open Ocean like the one happening in Somalia and the Gulf of Eden.

The Gulf of Guinea accounted for 427 of the 1434 attacks in African waters between 2003 and 2011. The frequency of attacks in this region, while not as high as those of the Somali coast, is however on the rise. The pirates here are known to be violent, as they usually deploy sophisticated arms and weapons like AK-47s. The traditional modus operandi of pirates operating in the region had largely involved the use of speedboats to attack and dispossess shipping crew of cash, cargo and valuable, when the vessel is at anchor or in harbor, but mostly close to shore.

The Pirates in this region are increasingly modifying their tactics by hijacking fishing vessels, particularly within Nigerian territorial waters, and using same to attack other vessels operating off the coasts of neighboring countries like Benin, Togo and Cameroun. Recent attacks have extended further out at sea beyond Nigeria's national jurisdiction in the ocean by focusing largely on oil-laden vessels, to steal the petroleum product. As noted by Malaquais (2012), "the Gulf of Guinea piracy is the organized, sometimes highly sophisticated, illicit taking of oil. They steal the oil, make a couple of black market circles of the stuff, and then deposit it back into the global supply". This explains why the Nigerian president during a summit on anti-corruption in London on the 12th May, 2016 call on the international community to declare stolen oil as illicit commodity just considered to be a blood oil just like the case with the blood diamond.

This pirate activity is seriously affecting the economy of the countries in the region for example, trade of Benin's major port, the Port of Cotonou, was reported in 2012 to have dropped by 70 percent. The cost of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea due to stolen goods, security, and insurance has been estimated to be about USD \$4 billion in 2015.

Position of governments and relevant bodies in the region:

The various governments of the region have policies towards reducing pollution as many of these governments have established the ministries of environmental affairs with ministers heading these ministries, however since the works of these ministers is to monitor and report pollution and possibly carry out environmental assessments where the need be, but considering the size of the Gulf of Guinea region, inequality in the strength and technical knowhow as well as the capacities of the various countries/governments in the region there is a great need to get onboard the assistance of experts on this issue, the international communities and other relevant stakeholders to help contribute from their resources, experience and capacities to help checkmate this menace.

As the scale, frequency and piracy heats keeps growing over the years in the region, there is an increasing desire among member nations in the region states to promote and preserve good order at sea. This lead to the calls for partnership to fight piracy in the region through joint forces especially the constant call from the Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015 and 2016 to

bring onboard the governments of the region and other relevant stakeholders/organizations to work on this issue. However considering the growing statistics of the pirate attacks in the region more is still needed to be done. In fact regional organizations such as ECOWAS (Economic Communities of West African States), NEPAD (New Partnership for African Development) as well as the AU (African Union) and the United Nations needs to add to the efforts of the governments trying to work on this issue otherwise the rate at which this piracy keeps happening in the region will ever remain high and on the increase.

Suggestions/recommendations:

1. Fighting piracy through space technology application:
The use of modern satellite technology such as the **Automatic Identification System (AIS)** (an automatic tracking system used on ships and by vessel traffic services (VTS) for identifying and locating vessels by electronically exchanging data with other nearby ships, AIS base stations, and satellites) can help locate pirates before or even after Ship attacks or hijacks which gives room to arrest or confront this pirates at the right time and on the right target if so happens.

Figure 14: A marine traffic coordinator using AIS and radar to manage vessel traffic. *Figure 15: Map of Africa showing the three main Hotspots of Piracy:*



2. The United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) should use its capacity to influence relevant stakeholders and governments in the region to accept and consider the use of satellite technology for an effective surveillance and monitoring in order to avert possible pollution time.
1. United Nations specialized agencies such as United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime Prevention (UNODC), International Maritime Organization (IMO) and INTERPOL among others and also other organizations working in the area of Oceans beyond national jurisdiction should assist or help with their capacities, technical knowhow as well as facilities to checkmate the pirate activities in the region.

2. Companies and experts in recycling of waste as well as those in the green technology should use the opportunity of this existing and untapped world (Gulf of Guinea region) or market to create good business opportunities for themselves in one hand and help reduce the level of recyclable substances going in to the Atlantic ocean in this region in the other.
3. International investors in non-oil and gas sectors as well as the maritime industries should be encouraged to come and invest in this part of Africa.
4. Journalist and media champions on environment, petroleum, maritime and poverty issues should help in promoting the resources of this region in order to attract potential investors to invest in the region.
5. Seaports authorities operating in the region such as the Nigerian Ports Authority should create environmental impact assessment units in their various ports so that pollution level due to degreasing activities are monitored from time to time in order to reduce and understand better the impacts of resulting pollutions before they happen for proper maritime policy issues.
6. Presently satellite data are very expensive for application in the developing countries so organizations such as the UNOOSA, NASA (National Space Agency), JAXA (Japanese Space Agency) and ESA (European Space Agency) among others working in the Space industry should help in making such data affordable at affordable costs for the Gulf of Guinea countries fighting the issues of pollution and piracy in the region.
7. The international community and the African Diaspora should complement the efforts on the issue of maritime security and pollution in the region through addressing policy and governance issues as well as promoting the region to supplement the World's economy growth.

Thank you for listening.

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