



December 18, 2023

## PRESS STATEMENT

### **Ennore Oil Spill is Man Made An Example of Negligence, Inaction and Irresponsibility**

The National Platform for Small Scale Fish Workers (NPSSF) is shocked at the lack of foresight and preparedness of the concerned authorities as well as at their attempts to downplay the impacts of the Ennore oil spill disaster. Lack of political will, bureaucratic inaction and criminal cynicism to protect natural resources and livelihood of thousands of fisher people is much too evident and revolting.

NPSSF vehemently condemns the fact that it took eight days for the State Government to act and that too after being pulled up by the Eastern Bench of National Green Tribunal on the 12th December, 2023.

Even as oil from the Chennai Petroleum Corporation Limited (CPCL) refinery flooded houses and entered the Buckingham Canal and the Kosasthalaiyar river, which empties into the Bay of Bengal, at Ennore, destroying the livelihood of fisher people of about 10 fishing villages and spreading on more than 20 square kilometres on the sea in a week, the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board underplayed the extent of the ecological disaster.

It is observed that the initial work to deal with the spill was not only delayed but also was haphazard. Without an approved standard operating procedure in place and for reasons that are unclear, the Tamil Nadu State Disaster Management Authority and district authorities, who, as per the draft 'Tamil Nadu State Oil Disaster Contingency Plan', are the nodal agency and the on-scene commander, respectively, took a back seat.

NPSSF further observes that the government has criminally exposed the untrained and unequipped fishers to serious health hazards associated with oil spill by deploying them in the cleaning up operations. Losing their livelihood and without any compensation or assistance, the fishers are forced to choose the only option for survival – cleaning up the oil spill with all the associated hazards. Even children were deployed. PPEs were not available. The court of law had to be moved on these issues.

The NGT deadline for clean-up has expired on December 17. It is quite evident now that much more time is needed to clean the spill. Still more time, extending to months, will be required to restore the eco-system damaged by the spill. Further time will be needed to have safe fishes for human consumption.

### **WHO IS GOING TO COMPENSATE???**

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## NATIONAL PLATFORM FOR SMALL SCALE FISHWORKERS

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### In view of the above NPSSF demands –

1. Immediate livelihood compensation of Rs. 10,000 per fish worker per month along with free ration for fishing families till the ecosystem is restored and the fish is safe for human consumption;
2. Immediate withdrawal of fishing communities from the hazardous cleaning operations and deployment of special force trained and equipped for cleaning of oil spills;
3. Continuous health monitoring with free medical treatment of community members exposed to and/or deployed for cleaning the oil spill;
4. Regular testing of fish to monitor suitability for consumption and efforts to enhance ecosystem restoration;
5. Make polluters pay - Chennai Petroleum Corporation Limited (CPCL) must pay for the compensation and restoration;
6. Fixing of responsibilities for delays, neglects and lapses in preventing, arresting and cleaning the oil spill;
7. The lands and waters used by the fishing communities for their livelihood and habitat are to be protected from encroachments and kept for their use.

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