

## MAIDEN NACOP OPENING HIGHLIGHTS: POWER AND THE PEOPLE'S INTEREST

Nigeria's Minister of Power Prof. Chinedu Nebo has used every opportunity available to him to canvass for the establishment of a National Council on Power, because of the need for such a platform to maximize inputs and harmonise efforts at revamping the sector. This is against the background of non-actualisation of this forum, despite efforts at doing so which date back a few years.

In response to this yearning, President Goodluck Jonathan, in January 2014, took another bold step towards reforming the Power Sector, by giving approval for the establishment of the National Council on Power.

Moving swiftly to actualize this, the Federal Ministry of Power put things in place to host the maiden edition of the Council.

The Inaugural sitting of the National Council of Power which kicked off Monday in Abuja the nation's capital is a 5-day event, ending Friday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2014.

On the historic occasion of Day One of the Council, Minister of State Power Hon. Mohammed Wakil gave an overview of the objectives of the Council which include co-ordination and harmonisation of electricity issues at the federal, state and local government levels, for expedited development.

Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Power Ambassador Godknows Igali, who is credited with spear-heading the establishment of the National Council on Water while he was Permanent Secretary in that Ministry, further explained the benefits which Government expected to derive from the new Council on Power.

He said a major fall-out would be the giving of a place of prominence to electricity matters by state governments, which is expected to give rise to the establishment of full-fledged ministries of power or energy at the state level.

A highly informative presentation by the Director-General of the Bureau for Public Enterprise BPE Benjamin Dikki traced the background, justification, process and benefits of the globally acclaimed huge and successful power sector privatization by the Nigerian Government, which has thrown the sector open for competition and sustainable growth.

He spoke on post-privatisation challenges, how they are being tackled, and the role of the citizenry in the new electricity dispensation.

The presentation by the Chairman of the Nigeria Electricity Regulatory Commission NERC Sam Amadi supplied explanations and new insights to critical issues surrounding the regulation of the sector, especially in the liberalized power regime.

The NERC Chairman spoke on the constitutional grounds for regulating the sector, the benefits to consumers and investors alike, and how government was ensuring a balance between availability and affordability, public and

private interests, conventional and renewable sources of energy, as well as the ever topical issue of tariffs.

An interaction session which followed the presentations provided an opportunity for delegates to get clarifications on electricity matters that had, hitherto, been a source of concern to them, due to insufficient knowledge.

### *...Track up sound.... Questions*

The matters raised by the delegates were systematically tackled by the Government officials.

In addition to his answers on questions about the relationship between power providers and consumers, Dikki also had cheering news on what Government had done to provide gas for the nation's gas-powered plants, towards increasing generation levels.

Matters of infrastructure upgrade and infrastructure security also came up during the opening deliberations of the maiden sitting of the National Council of Power.

NERC Chairman Dr. Amadi commented on Government's plan of targeting 30% renewables in its national energy mix, and also provided further clarification on energy tariff and provisions of the revised MYTO.

Representatives of international partner organizations like ECOWAS, UNIDO, GIZ and others are also attending the summit.

Wrapping up the first plenary session of the National Council on Power, Permanent Secretary Ambassador Godknows Igali also commented on the results so far achieved in Government's efforts to contain the menace of vandalism.

Ambassador Igali appealed to communities across the country to desist from the practice of putting hindrances in the way of the Transmission Company of Nigeria, for the purpose of erecting power facilities.

The Inaugural National Council on Power Meeting is a 5-day event, climaxing with the formal inauguration of the Council by the Vice President Architect Namadi Sambo on Thursday.

Ahead of that, delegates affirm that the reforms in the power sector are beginning to yield visible positive results, with power supplying averaging over 18 hours in many parts of the country.

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SA/Media to HMP