



SPEECH

BY

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ON

2018 EDITION OF THE WORLD MARITIME DAY CELEBRATION

HELD AT

EKO HOTEL & SUITES, VICTORIA ISLAND, LAGOS

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Protocol,

I feel greatly honoured to be invited as the Chairman of the 2018 edition of the World Maritime Day Celebration. This invitation is an emotional one for me as a person for two reasons, one, the fact that the maritime industry has been my primary constituency; two: it was at this same event last year which I was attending as the then Managing Director, National Inland Waterways Authority (NIWA), that I was called out to be informed about my appointment as the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF). Let me commend the zeal, determination, and commitment of the Honourable Minister of Transportation and the entire Ministry to return Nigeria to its place of pride as a maritime hub for West and Central Africa.

2. The Maritime Sector is strategically important as an engine for inclusive sustainable growth and development, with over 90 per cent of global trade carried out by sea. No wonder countries that are blessed with enormous maritime resources are the envy of the world, having at their disposal opportunities for the local populace.

3. As the IMO marks 70 years of its existence in 2018, the theme for this year's celebration "**IMO 70: Our heritage – Better Shipping for a Better Future**" is not merely a slogan for this year's celebration, but a fundamental question that requires individual countries to provide sincere answers in line with the founding objectives of the Organisation which include, better shipping, safety and security of ships and seafarers as well as the prevention of maritime pollution by ships.

4. This year's celebration traces IMO's voyage from the 1948 United Nations conference in Geneva, which saw its founding convention adopted, through to this present day. This voyage highlights key developments such as new rules for tanker safety, the satellite-based Global Maritime Distress and Safety System and the designation of several vital environmentally sensitive areas around the world, which today receive special protection from shipping.

5. Although the first World Maritime Day was celebrated in 1978, the event became an annual occurrence ever since then to provide opportunity for stock-taking, to assess what has been achieved, the present challenges and articulate the way forward for sustainable growth of the maritime industry. After 70 years of global maritime community under the IMO regime, can Nigeria be said to have maximised her maritime potentials? Has the country and its citizens reaped the gains of its maritime resources with positive indices on economic development? Are efforts being made to harness the blue economy prospects in achieving economic diversification for Nigeria? Have the IMO instruments been adequately utilized in bringing about safety and security of the waterways within Nigeria's territorial waters? For me, these are the issues that we must confront with facts and figures if Nigeria hopes to retain its relevance and dominance as a regional maritime hub.

6. Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, you may wish to note that the Government's policy to concession the Nigerian Port Facilities and services to private interests has had a profound effect on job

creation and opportunities in the maritime industry from warehousing, cargo handling/delivery and documentation among others. It was reported that within six years of the Port Concession, private operators had employed over forty-eight thousand (48,000) Nigerians against a little over 14,000 before the policy shift. These are, of course, notable achievements that we need to consolidate on further.

7. In spite of the numerous recorded achievements, the maritime industry in Nigeria and globally has come under siege by criminal elements who orchestrate acts of piracy, sea robbery, arms proliferation, terrorism, migration, illegal and unregulated fishing and oil theft in the Gulf of Guinea and within Nigeria's territorial waters. The gains recorded via dredging, amnesty and port concession exercises in Nigeria nosedived due to this unfortunate scenario thus compelling some foreign shipping companies to request for Government's approval to enter Nigeria's territorial waters with armed security personnel onboard.

8. Thankfully, the Government is not taking the issue of safety and security in the Maritime sector lightly. Like the proverbial goose that lays the golden egg, the maritime industry must be protected to attract foreign investors and also preserve Nigeria's territorial integrity. Permit me to commend the Federal Ministry of Transportation for confronting the matter with all the seriousness it deserves. I am aware that a contract has been awarded for the Integrated National Security and Water Protection Infrastructure in Nigeria under the Deep Blue Project. This project entails the provision of security infrastructure and training of personnel for

the protection of Nigeria's maritime domain. It is envisaged that this project will comprehensively address the emerging cases of insecurity in the maritime industry and restore investors' confidence.

9. The treasures for our future growth and development lie in an improved shipping environment where safety and security of goods, services, seafarers and the shipping community as a whole is guaranteed. The IMO has been resolute in evolving strategies to facilitate efficient shipping and as such, member countries should cultivate the benefits of the Blue Economy concept through creativity, innovativeness and collaboration.

10. Maritime crime is an organized one with elements all over the world. We must therefore drum up the need for regional and sub-regional collaboration at IMO meetings and at other fora, for integrated maritime security strategies in addressing the challenges of insecurity. The maritime domain is vulnerable and ensuring its security is certainly beyond the capacity of one country or any existing regional body acting alone.

11. Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, this present administration has taken great steps to curb the various challenges bedeviling the maritime sector. Some of the steps include:

- i. Revived the patronage of indigenous shipping companies which had collapsed or gone comatose in the past;

- ii. Devised ways to address the Tin Can Island and Apapa gridlock which has caused a lot of lamentations from people doing business, working or resident in the commercial zone;
- iii. Encouraged the Ministry of Transportation and NIMASA to manage the Cabotage Shipping Regime properly to alleviate the untold hardship of the local shipping community as well as implement all Government policies;
- iv. Encouraged the Cabotage Vessel Financing Fund (CVFF) to be disbursed to indigenous shipping companies to improve on the fleet expansion;
- v. Promoted the Ease of Doing Business policy at the nation's ports with the appointment of the Nigerian Shippers' Council as the Economic Regulator which multinational shipping agencies and some terminal operators resists; and
- vi. Resolved the issue of Freight forwarding transaction fees as well as the sharing formula. The Council for the Regulation of Freight Forwarding in Nigeria (CRFFN) is already handling this.

12. Our worries are mitigated when considered that Nigeria is endowed with Knowledgeable industry players who are adequately equipped in the diverse industry-related services such as seafaring, maritime law, maritime administration and maritime education, among others to provide the requisite professional and technical support necessary to reposition the industry. The various reforms being implemented in the maritime industry including the Academic/Institutional reforms

at the Maritime Academy of Nigeria, Oron proves that the annual World Maritime Day celebration is capable of stimulating the requisite to change in policy direction that can bring about leading the re-organization and gradual but steady transformation of the M.A.N. Oron and provide a secured maritime future for Nigeria as well.

13. I am confident that this forum will mark another milestone in the history of maritime development in Nigeria. With the array of maritime practitioners and stakeholders here present, there will be abundant generation of ideas and recommendations to enable Government take further necessary action at ensuring that the Maritime Sector grows better and stronger with time.

14. On this note, I wish to declare open the celebration of the 2018 edition of the World Maritime Day and wish you all happy celebrations.

15. Thank you for your attention.