

Welcome Address by the President, Nigerian Academy of Engineering, Engr. (Mrs.) J. O. Maduka, FIET, FNSE, FAEng, MFR at the 2017 Public Lecture held on Wednesday, March 29th, 2017.

Our distinguished Guests

Fellows of the Academy

Gentlemen of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen

I wish to welcome you all to today's Public Lecture which is to discuss the "Power Sector Reform and the Role of the Nigerian Electricity Regulation Commission (NERC)". You will all agree with me that this is a topic which is of public interest, in the sense that no one is spared of the impact of the power inadequacy in the country.

Concerning our infrastructure, one would not have the slightest hesitation to state that no other issue is of greater concern or interest to the public than the state of our electricity supply in the country. Manufacturers and other businesses have consistently cried out on the huge negative impact of the current poor power supply on their operations. As a result, many businesses have relocated, and some others are at the verge of relocating to other countries or closing down their operations in Nigeria because of high electricity and energy cost. Nigerians in general have also persistently complained, not only of poor supply of electricity, but also of what is now popularly described as "Crazy bills" from electricity distribution companies.

There are also the challenges of power generation and gas supply which would take quite some time to significantly address them and have the desired improvement. There is also the problem of the transmission system.

Against this backdrop, you can understand my delight today, that we have one of us the Commissioner, Engineering Standards & Safety of the Nigerian Electricity Regulation Commission (NERC) as our Guest Speaker. Certainly, he will provide us with useful information and updates on the power supply situation in the country. Without pre-empting his speech, I believe that some of the questions which many of us would like to have answers to include the following:

- Are worries on the financial and technical ability of the private investors in the power sector justified?
- With electricity distribution companies resorting to litigation to settle issues with the government on identified lapses as they affect their operations, will expectations on efficiency in electricity distribution not be unduly delayed till a distant future?
- Why have consumer complaints on estimated billing persisted?
- What is the update on the provision of meters?
- Why do we have so many systems collapse?

On provision of meters for instance, NERC in line with its mandate to ensure that the rights of electricity customers are protected and guarantee investors fair returns on their investments had in June last year directed electricity distribution companies (DisCos) to conclude metering of all maximum demand (MD) electricity customers in their networks not later than November 30, 2016. The Commission at the expiration of that Notice granted three months moratorium to enable Discos comply with the directive.

And this moratorium expired last month. Now, the question is, what next? And when will attention be paid to consumers who are not on the maximum demand category?

Distinguished guests, let me round off the questions with what could be said to be a summary of it all. This is, in fact, the question asked by the Chairman, Senate Committee on Power-Senator Enyinnaya Abaribe during a visit by the committee to NERC sometime ago, as part of its oversight function to government agencies in the power sector. According to Abaribe, "Are you sure the privatization of the power sector is producing the needed result with the under performance by the new investors"?

I am sure that our Guest speaker has educative and informative answers to these questions and many more.

Let me therefore invite you all to listen with rapt attention and enjoy what I believe will be a very educative and quite interactive forum.

I trust that, as usual, you will all be good listeners!

Thank you very much for your attention!

Engr. (Mrs.) J. Olu Maduka, FIET, FNSE, FAEng, MFR

President, Nigerian Academy of Engineering