

LEAD DEBATE ON A BILL FOR AN ACT TO ESTABLISH MARITIME UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA ORON AND FOR MATTERS CONNECTED THEREWITH

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Mr. President, Distinguished Senators, thank you for granting me the opportunity to lead the debate on this very important bill for an act to establish the much needed MARITIME UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA ORON.

Mr. President and distinguished colleagues would recall that this bill was read the first time in this hallowed chamber on Thursday, 23rd June 2016 Essentially Mr. President, this bill seeks the upgrade of the present Maritime Academy of Nigeria Oron to a degree awarding institution.

Background:

Mr. President, Distinguished Senators, in 1977, through Executive Act. No 172, the Federal military Government established Nautical college of Nigeria Oron, with the primary motive of building the much needed capacity for the growing Maritime industry. Prior to this time, most of the Nation's Merchant Navy officers were trained mainly in the United Kingdom, India and Ghana, among other places, at a very high cost to the government. Following the Promulgation of Degree 16 of 1988, the Nautical College Oron, which was officially opened in 1979, had its name changed to Maritime Academy of Nigeria (MAN) Oron, with limited assistance from the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The academy was designed as an integrated institution basically for the education and training of shipboard officers, ratings and shore-based management personnel in line with the requirements of International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE). In addition to training the nation's merchant navy officers, MAN was also expected to facilitate the certification of Nigerian seafarers in line with the provisions of Merchant shipping Act, 1962 and the IMO Convention on Standards, Certification and Watch-Keeping STWC, 1995, for seafarers.

The Federal Government's expectations of the academy, as stated in its mission statement, and enunciated in its service charter, is to provide the merchant Navy, the Maritime industry and allied industries qualitative education and training with up-to-date technology, meet national and international standards and satisfy end-users' expectations.

Statistics show that as at the end of 2010 academic session, MAN had trained about 4,300 merchant navy officers, among others, for both shipboard and shore-based operations. Maritime experts say this is definitely a drop in a mighty ocean considering Nigeria's over 170 million population with the attendant growth in Sea trade in the country. This figure is grossly inadequate for the local Maritime industry, as further study shows that over 50,000 job spaces exist. This also compares with the republic of Philippines, with a population of less than 100 million but exports over 300,000 seafarers annually, representing 30 percent of world seafarers' export, from which she earns over \$5billion annually.

Mr. President, distinguished colleagues, the idea of elevating MAN to a degree awarding institutions has been in the pipeline for over 10 years now. In October 2008, the then minister of state for Transport, Prince John Okechukwu Emeka, said the Federal Government would soon upgrade the academy to a degree-awarding institution. His predecessor in office, Alhaji Yusuf Suleiman, who finally secured Federal Executive Council (FEC) approval for the transformation, had noted that the Primary purpose was to put the products of the academy at par with graduates of other institutions in the international labour market.

At its present status as an academy or a college, the highest certificate issued by MAN is National Diploma while its peers both in Africa and other parts of the world issue degree certificates and so Nigerian cadets who possess ND certificates are rated and paid lower than their peers even though the training is the same, as it must conform to IMO requirements.

Apart from this Mr. President, the elevation of the Maritime Academy of Ghana, owned by five West African countries to Regional Maritime University, Tema, Ghana, also became the catalyst for the government to actualise the dream of establishing the Maritime University of Nigeria.

It was in line with the plan to transform the academy that the government took steps to formalise its funding. The National Assembly, in passing the Nigerian Maritime Administration and safety Agency (NIMASA) Act, which merged the defunct National Maritime Authority (NIMA), joint Maritime Labour Industrial Council (JOMALIC) and the Government Inspectorate of Shipping (GIS), made provision for statutory allocation for the funding of the academy. For instance, relevant sections of the Act ceded five percent of NIMASA's annual budget as a statutory funding for the academy. This is in addition to other grants and internally generated revenue (IGR).

Following IMO's approval for the transformation of the academy to a university status, the Federal Government in 2013 ordered NIMASA to release the sum of N2billion intervention fund to the Academy for it to commence arrangements for the actual transformation.

In addition to this the former governor of Akwa Ibom state, His Excellency Senator (Dr.) Godswill Akpabio, CON, had donated a large parcel of land to the Academy and paid full compensation to the owners, as part of the conditions given by IMO for the upgrade.

Mr. President, distinguished colleagues, from the foregoing, it can be seen that the Academy is ready for upgrading to a degree awarding institution. The purpose of this bill therefore is to give a legal instrument for the upgrade to become a reality and I therefore call on my colleagues to once again show their usual spirit of patriotism by supporting this bill so that MARITIME UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA ORON will be established.

Thank you Mr. President and my amiable colleagues

**TOTAL PROJECTIONS/ESTIMATES FOR THE RCURRENT AND CAPITAL EXPENDITUTE FOR
THE MARITIME UNIVERSITY, ORON IN THE FIRST TWELVE MONTHS IMMEDIATELY
FOLLOWING COMMENCEMENT**

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1. Projected Recurrent Expenditure (Salaries and allowances of personnel)	500,000,000.00
2. Projected Recurrent Expenditure (Maintenance of vehicles, management costs of offices and Other contingency)	50,000,000.00
3. Estimated Capital Expenditure (Office accommodation, furniture, etc	250,000,000.00
Estimated Capital Expenditure (Purchase of vehicles)	100,000,000.00
Total Projected/Estimated Costs for First Year of commencement of the University	N900,000,000.00

SURMISES

The forgoing compilation proffers a fair approximation of the financial implications for the establishment of the Maritime University, Oron in the first year immediately following commencement.

To all intents and purposes, the financial outlay estimated and projected for the University is a modest one. Appropriate for the effective discharge and performance of the duties contemplated in the Bill.