

**LEAD DEBATE ON A BILL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF**  
**MARITIME UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, OKERENKOKO**

**Sponsor: Senator James Manager.**

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, permit me to lead the debate of this very important Bill for the establishment of Maritime University of Nigeria Okerenkoko.

The Bill was read for the First Time in this Hallowed Chamber on the 7th June, 2016.

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, the Maritime University was established on the 10<sup>th</sup> May, 2014 at Okerenkoko, Delta State, in the heart of the creeks of the Niger Delta.

This Bill is a bold step towards, not only addressing the educational backwardness of the people of the difficult Niger Delta terrain but also for joining the league of countries like the United States of America, South Korea, India, China, Britain, Azerbaijan, Panama, Canada, the Netherlands, Brazil, Argentina and Ghana, as countries with universities as platforms for the training of top class manpower for the Maritime Industry. It should be emphasized that in the whole of West Africa, and indeed beyond, only Ghana has a Maritime University.

This Bill seeks to provide a legal framework for the Maritime University which actually started-off and was functional, using a befitting temporary site at Kurutie until sometime in January, 2016. Now the University is closed down and the students are at home.

The objectives for which the University is established are inter alia:

(a) to encourage the advancement of learning and to hold out to all persons without distinction of race, creed, sex or political conviction, the opportunity of acquiring a higher education in Maritime technology;

b) to develop and offer academic and professional programmes leading to the award of diplomas, first degrees, post-graduate research and higher degrees with emphasis on planning, adaptive<sup>1</sup> technical, maintenance, developmental and productive skills in the engineering, scientific, and allied professional disciplines relating to Maritime resources with the aim of producing socially mature men and women with capability not only to understand, use and adapt existing technologies in the maritime industry, but also to improve on them and develop new ones;

(c) to act as agents and catalysts, through post-graduate training, research and innovation for the effective and economic utilization, exploitation and conservation of the country's maritime resources;

(d) to offer to the general population particularly the maritime industry, as a form of public service, the results of training and research and to foster the practical applications of these results;

(e) to establish appropriate relationships with other national institutions involved in training, research and development of technologies in the maritime sector;

(f) to identify the technological problems and needs of the maritime industry and to find solutions to them within the context of overall national development;

g) to provide and promote sound basic scientific training as a foundation for the development of maritime technology and

applied sciences, taking into account indigenous cultures and the need to enhance national unity; and

(h) to undertake any other activities appropriate for a maritime university of the highest standard.

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, the maritime sector of our economy has very high potentials, and requires high level technical, scientific and administrative skills to drive it. The sector as at today is dominated by foreign interests. The very few such professionals were only trained abroad. The question is, why do we not have a university for that purpose? Well, this bill provides the requisite opportunity.

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, Establishment of this University would greatly improve our capacity and manpower in the maritime Sector. Nigeria being a country with an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 1,141,081 square Kilometers, and given its strategic location in Africa has the potentials of being a major hub in shipping and other Maritime activities. In fact way back in 2003, Goldman Sachs identified Nigeria as one of the countries with potentials to be like Brazil, Russia, India and China and that if the vision of increasing local content participation in the Nigerian Maritime Industry is vigorously pursued, Nigeria would immensely enhance her economic fortunes.

The point must also be made that Nigeria, to attain this important aim, needs a minimum of five (5) Universities for this sub-sector.

There is therefore, no gainsaying the fact that the Maritime University of Nigeria Okerenkoko proposed in this bill should be established.

Permit me, Mr. President and Distinguished Colleagues to illustrate by the following table how little Nigeria is currently benefitting from the Maritime Sector vis-à-vis other countries in terms of contributions to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as at 2015, GDP figures provided by Trading Economics.

COUNTRY	SIZE OF EEZ	GDP IN USD	% OF GDP FROM MARITIME SECTOR
China	877,019km <sup>2</sup>	11 Trillion	9.6%
Brazil	3,646,514km <sup>2</sup>	2.3 Trillion	5.4%
Russia	8,096,811km <sup>2</sup>	1.3 Trillion	5.3%
India	2,305,143km <sup>2</sup>	2 Trillion	5.2%
Nigeria	1,141,081,km <sup>2</sup>	481 Billion	1.6%
South Africa	1,535,538km <sup>2</sup>	416 Billion	1.3%

We can see that countries with high Maritime Sector Utilization have a commensurate increase in total GDP and vice-versa.

**Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues,** permit me to conclude by throwing light on the sitting of the University at Okerenkoko in Warri South West Local Government Area, Delta State. Okerenkoko is about Seven (7) nautical miles to the sea. It is virtually surrounded by oil wells. The critical point to make here is

that, sitting the University in Okerenkoko brings the much desired development to the Oil and Gas bearing communities in that area with all the attendant ancillary benefits. The result is that, the people of the area would be employed directly or indirectly, and this would in turn reduce the restiveness of the youths in the area.

Mr. President, Distinguished Colleagues, the enactment of this Bill will help in transforming the educational fortunes in Nigeria by producing the desired manpower and expertise for the Maritime Industry now that Nigeria is yearning for Local Content in the Industry following the passage of the Content Development Act into Law.

In line with our order 77(3), the compendium of financial implication is hereby attached.

I urge you all to support this Bill for its Second Reading.

Thank you.

