



## NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS ENFORCEMENT AGENCY (NESREA)

13<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS' FORUM,  
NICON LUXURY HOTEL, ABUJA,  
29<sup>TH</sup> TO 30<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 2019

### COMMUNIQUÉ

The National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) held her 13<sup>th</sup> Annual National Stakeholders' Forum at NICON Luxury Hotel, Abuja, from 29<sup>th</sup>– 30<sup>th</sup> October 2019. The Forum is a platform created by the Agency for enabling public involvement and citizens' participation in environmental governance. Each year, the Forum focuses the attention of stakeholders on a burning and emerging environmental issue; the theme of the 13<sup>th</sup> Forum was “*Water Pollution: Innovative Solutions for Environmental Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement*”.

The overarching objective of the Forum was to create an occasion for productive deliberation on the importance of curbing the menace associated with water pollution and highlight innovative solutions in compliance monitoring and enforcement towards a healthy water regime for sustainable development.

The Forum's specific objectives were to:

- i) develop strategies that will promote sustainable water management for improved environmental and human health;
- ii) reawaken the consciousness of the regulated community and other stakeholders on the need to promote proper hygiene and reduce water borne epidemics;
- iii) highlight best practices and encourage research on innovative solutions to curb water pollution; and
- iv) highlight the need for synergy with line MDAs and law enforcement Agencies in fighting water pollution.

The Forum had six hundred and twenty eight ( 628) participants drawn from various organisations including Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies at federal and state levels; NESREA-accredited environmental consultants; non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations, the academia and the media.

The opening ceremony had top policymakers and decision-makers in attendance, led by the Special Guest of Honour, the Honourable Minister of Environment, Dr. Mohammed Mamoud Abubakar; Hon. Minister of Water Resources, Mr. Suleiman Adamu represented by Habu Jamilu Deputy Director water Quality Control; Chairman Senate Committee on Environment, Senator Ike Ekweremadu, represented by Senator Ibrahim Hadeija; Chairman House Committee on Environment and Habitat, Hon. Johnson Ogbuma; Chief of Naval Staff, represented by Cmdr. N.M. Abdullahi; former Director General Energy Commission of Nigeria, Prof. Abubakar S. Sambo; and the Forum Chairman; Chairman NESREA Governing Council, H. E. Chief Iyiola Oladokun; Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Environment, Mrs Ibukun Odusote; Director General Nigerian Tourism Development Corporation, Mr Folorunsho Coker; Director General Great Green Wall Agency, Dr Bukar Hassan; Alh. Ibrahim Goni, Conservator General, National Parks Service; and other top government functionaries, captains of industry, academics, and researchers, and participants from non-governmental and civil society organisations.

The lead paper of the Forum, entitled “Water Pollution: Innovative Solutions for Environmental Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement” was delivered by Prof. Salihu Mustafa. His presentation, among other things, examined the relevance of NESREA as an agency established to ensure environmental protection in Nigeria; the complexity of pollution control within the water sector; the impact of uncontrolled population growth on the nation’s water resources; and available approaches and technologies for improving the management of water resources for sustainable development. Additionally, four other resource papers were delivered by eminent environmental experts, namely Prof Oladele Osinbajo, President Waste Management Society of Nigeria; Prof. Abdullahi Suleiman Arabi, Bayero University, Kano; Prof. Anene Moneke, Director Shell UNN Centre for Environmental Management and Control, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus; and Prof. Muhammed. T. Ladan, Director General, Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies represented by Dr. Sam Oguiche.

Plenary sessions were conducted in the course of the Forum with the active participation of all participants to discuss the resource papers. Syndicate sessions were equally held, during which the papers were exhaustively considered in the following areas: sources and causes of water pollution; identification of the challenges of compliance monitoring and enforcement; institutional frameworks and partnerships for curbing water pollution; and the role of technology in solving water pollution.

## **OBSERVATIONS OF THE 13<sup>TH</sup> FORUM**

In the course of the discussions and deliberations on the Keynote of the Honourable Minister for Environment, the Lead Paper and the other technical papers, the Forum made the following key observations:

- NESREA was established by law in 2007 with elaborate functions and with powers to undertake a wide range of activities, particularly powers for environmental compliance monitoring and enforcement.
- NESREA has, since inception, enacted thirty-three (33) regulations targeting various sectors of the environment.
- NESREA's enabling law was amended by the 8<sup>th</sup> Session of the National Assembly and signed into law by Mr. President in 2018, granting the Agency additional powers to strengthen environmental governance in Nigeria.
- Water is a vital resource for sustainable development and its scarcity is an issue of national security, and thus effort must be made by all stakeholders to protect and preserve the country's water resources.
- The provision of clean water is Sustainable Development Goals No. 6 and is, therefore, a major index of development of UN member countries, including Nigeria.
- Nigeria is beset with diverse environmental challenges. With a high population growth rate of about 2.9% and a concomitant decrease in potable water supply, Nigeria is currently categorised hydrologically as being under water stress and by 2024 could fall into water scarcity.
- Common sources and causes of surface and ground-water pollution in Nigeria include refuse dump leachate, spills and leakages from filling stations and underground tanks, industrial effluent, residential/domestic, open defecation, chemical infiltration, misuse of fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides in agricultural practice, discharge of ballast water from ships, improper treatment of municipal supply
- The effects of water pollution on the environment and public health are multifarious. These include eutrophication and destruction of aquatic life; transmission of water-borne diseases, dissemination of antimicrobial resistance and heavy metal intoxication.
- Ineffective environmental reporting on the part of NESREA consultants.
- Overlapping roles and functions, with poor synergy between NESREA and other environmental regulatory agencies, both at the federal and state level.
- Inadequate access to environmental regulatory documents, including those produced by NESREA.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Forum participants, having deliberated extensively at the various sessions on the issues highlighted, proffered the following recommendations:

- i) NESREA should strengthen its compliance monitoring and enforcement activities, especially on those regulations related to curbing water pollution in Nigeria;
- ii) NESREA should, as a matter of urgency, strengthen inter-sectoral partnership and collaboration with relevant ministries, departments and agencies of the government to bolster its regulatory actions in the water sector in Nigeria;
- iii) The National Assembly is urged to provide adequate budgetary provisions to NESREA to enable the actualization of the additional powers and functions granted the Agency with the amendment of its enabling law in 2018. To this end, all stakeholders in the environment should conduct advocacy
- iv) NESREA, in partnership with relevant stakeholders, should embark on a massive water education and literacy drive across the country at federal, state and local government levels, including the involvement of traditional institutions and community structures.
- v) NESREA should embrace volunteering as a way to broaden her regulatory actions and improve its capacity to reach the larger society with a regard to curbing water pollution in the country. In this light, previous efforts at establishing a NESREA Green Corps should be reactivated in partnership with States and Local Government.
- vi) NESREA should support and sponsor research on the impacts of water pollution as well as in technologies for mitigating it. In addition, the Agency should commission meta-analyses of the scientific literature, both within and in collaboration with external researchers to highlight hotspots of water pollution in the country.
- vii) The Agency should work closely with law enforcement agencies like the Nigeria Police as well as the judiciary to sensitize them towards the appropriate prosecution and sentencing of polluters of the nation's water resources.
- viii) NESREA should establish a databank to facilitate data management, enable searches, inform decision-makers and enable compliance monitoring and enforcement of regulations to improve water quality and curb water pollution.

- ix) NESREA should adopt a carrot-and-stick approach to checking water pollution – rewarding and encouraging compliant industries and individuals and applying strict sanctions on offenders.
- x) NESREA should encourage the development of laboratories – both in the public and private space – to enlarge capacity for water quality testing and monitoring in the country.
- xi) NESREA should consider implementing pilot projects that will enable it tap into the carbon credit mechanism.
- xii) NESREA needs to engage in medium to long-term strategic planning and is encouraged to employ a participatory approach in doing the same.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND APPRECIATION**

The 13<sup>th</sup> National Stakeholders' Forum:

- i) Acknowledged with appreciation the invitation extended to all the stakeholders and their participation;
- ii) Commended the Chief Host, Director General of NESREA and his team for the successful organisation of the Forum; and
- iii) Expressed appreciation to the Special Guest of Honour, Dr Mohammed Mamoud Abubakar, Honourable Minister for Environment, who delivered the keynote and declared the Forum open.
- iv) Equally acknowledge the good effort of Professor Abubakar S. Sambo who effectively chaired the Forum.
- v) Recognised with thanks the revered presence of Chief Iyiola Oladokun, the Chairman NESREA Governing Council.