

COMMUNIQUE OF THE 6TH OSH Association ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL SAFETY CONFERENCE & AWARDS 2016, HELD ON NOVEMBER 10, AT MERIT HOUSE BANQUET HALL MAITAMA, ABUJA.

The 6th Annual International Safety Conference & Awards of the Occupational Safety and Health Association (OSH Association) Nigeria Region, which was held on November 10th, 2016 at Merit House Banquet Hall, Maitama, Nigeria, made a remarkable success with the attendance of Professor Isaac Adewole, Honourable Minister of Health represented by Dr. Emmanuel Odu, Acting Executive Director, National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA), Mrs Amina J. Mohammed, Honourable Minister of Environment, represented by Mr. E. O Okogobem, the Deputy Director Oil & Gas, Ministry of Environment, Senator Shehu Sani, Senate Committee Chairman on Local & Foreign Debts, Air Marshall Sadique Abubakar, Chief of Air Staff represented by Director of Medical Services, Nigerian Air Force, Engr Boboye Olayemi Oyeyemi, Corps Marshal/Chief Executive Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC) represented by DCC Felix Afoke, Federal Road Safety Commission, Abuja, Alh. Kashim Akor, DG, National Productivity Centre (NPC), Engr. Peter Ewesor MD/Chief Electrical Inspection of the Federation NEMSA, Dr. Lawrence Anukam, DG, National Environmental Standard and Regulatory Enforcement Agency (NESREA), Dr. Sam Amadi, Former Chairman, Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC), Mr. Jayant Jagtap, GM, Olam Nigeria Limited, Dr. Eugene Itua, Nigeria Chairman IIRSM, and many other dignitaries.

The event was kicked off by taking the National Anthem followed by the welcome speech of Dr. Abraham Nwachukwu, the Nigerian President of the Association, who was so delighted to welcome everyone to the **6th International Safety Conference and Awards 2016**, he stated that the choice of this year's Theme **"SAFETY – Unveiling a New Light in a Challenging Economy"** with its timing right. A time, when the economy of the Nation is dwindling with hundreds of persons losing their jobs per day, leading to an increase in poverty, hunger, starvation and crime in the society. This situation according to him, have created the need for individuals and corporate bodies to strive to reduce expenditure and save cost. Industries and many other private and public organizations ignore and overlook some safety precautions, procedures and requirements due to its cost implication, thereby exposing employees to unsafe work conditions, with some operating in an unsafe environment that leads to daily fatalities, accidents and injuries. This reminds me of the age long adage that says "penny wise – pound foolish". "The fact is that workplace accidents do not just happen, they are caused! And can also be avoided and prevented", the president said.

The conference brought together dignitaries from the public and private sectors who made their keynote speeches and goodwill messages during the opening ceremony, the Chief of Air Staff of the Nigerian Air Force, Air Marshall Sadique Abubakar represented by the Director of Medical Services, Nigerian Air Force, made a declaration and assured the Association of its continuous collaboration in the promotion of Health and Safety.

In line with the opening activities, Senator Shehu Sani, Senate Committee Chairman on local & Foreign Debts delivered his keynote address by appreciating the Association for inviting him to be part of the conference to discuss issues on health and safety facing the country. He made it clear that occupational safety and health is key and central to the development of any organization or nation and the policy makers, as Industries and the Organizations for a long time have not been given proper attention to health and safety issues in Nigeria. In his speech, he said "for the purpose of protecting our future and that of our children, I want to assure this Association, that we shall work together to strengthen the laws and policies on health and safety best practice in Nigeria", he added that for Nigerians to give their best at work, their health and safety should be protected and not to be abandoned because health and safety should be put as a key point in our economic diversification, because it is only when workers are safe that they can have confidence to perform their duties effectively and productively. He also stated that he is currently looking into the OSH Bill presented to the parliament, since the input of the parliament is very important.

Other activities during the conference was presentation of various Individual and Corporate Awards to distinguished personalities who are driving and promoting safety in their various sectors, followed by presentation of a safety drama on kitchen Safety by the Kiddies Safety Club, Abuja. Recipients of the Fellowship Awards include His Excellency Hon. Silas A. Agara, Deputy Governor, Nasarawa State, Dr. Ahmed Isa, Ordinary President and Founder Brekete Family, Mr. Kangeh A. Cephas, General Manager HSE, TCN, Mr. Chukwudum Ezerie, Assistant General Manager HSE TCN, Mrs. Olubena Oluwatosin,

Public Health Lecturer, Ogun State College of Health, Mr. Dutse B. Salka, Deputy Director, Strategic Alliance and Partnership, NESREA, Air Codr. Tuwase Olurotimi Anthony, Director of Armament, Nigerian Air Force, Air Vice Marshal S.S. Bala-Ribah, Chief of Standard and Evaluation, Ms Ikechi Clara Nwosu, Executive Director Corporate Services, Engr. Chief William C. Metieh, Senior Technical Advisor to MD, NEMSA, Engr. Tukur M. Gidado, Executive Director, Technical Nigerian Electricity Management Services Agency (NEMSA), Mallam Ibrahim Idris, Deputy Director, Budget Office of the Federation.

Corporate Membership Awardee recipients include Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN), National Productivity Centre (NPC), Onshore and Offshore Safety Institute of Nigeria, NRI Nigeria Limited. Followed by the Corporate Merit Awardees who contributed to the success of the conference and for their commitment to occupational safety and health in Nigeria which include, **Olam Nigeria Ltd** for their provision of healthy and safe workplace for their workforce across Africa, and **The Future Concerns Nigeria Ltd**, an intelligent safety resource Centre in Nigeria. The Award presentation ended with a Merit Award been given to Dr. Abraham Nwachukwu, the immediate past president of the Association in Nigeria for his passion and contributions towards the promotion of occupational safety and health in Nigeria under the platform of the Association.

The lead paper Presenter, Dr. Eugene Itua, in his presentation on the topic; Management Leadership in Occupational safety and healthy workplaces, made it clear that higher percentage of occupational accidents and work-related diseases are from struggling economies like Nigeria, due to less commitment, poor financing, awareness and inadequate understanding of the real benefit and gains of upholding good practices, especially during this recession. After the paper presentation, the first panelist discussed the role of private and public sectors towards achieving the HSSE best practice in this present economic recession. The first panel included the Hon. Minister of Environment, Chief of Air Staff, Corp Marshal and Chief Executive FRSC, DG National Environmental Standards Regulatory and Enforcement Agency (NESREA), Dr. Sam Amadi, Fmr. Chairman Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission.

After the first and second panel discussion with key government stakeholders and professionals, resolutions and conclusions were made to help control the hazards and risks at workplaces to the barest minimal level. **Therefore, the conference resolved and recommended as follows:**

1. Accidents do not just occur, but are caused by people or by wrong systems/procedures in workplaces, Nigerians should consider safety first on Nigerian roads by ensuring their vehicles are put in order and maintained regularly as stated by the FRSC.
2. There is need for operators in the industries to always welcome inspectors from regulatory agencies with the agenda to correct non compliances and Risk Assessments which should be used as tools to identify and control workplace hazards.
3. Every organization should see safety as one of the key factors in the organization by ensuring there is safety standard in place and best practices should be followed through in carrying out activities in the workplace.
4. Ensuring training and re-training of workers to understand the role of safety in their daily operations help to reduce accidents and injuries at workplaces, while providing the required HSE equipment.
5. The issue of health and safety is a shared responsibility that everybody should be engaged with in both the public & private sectors; by creating health and safety units/departments that will help manage issues of safety in the workplace.
6. OSH Association in collaboration with the regulatory agencies and other professional safety NGOs should maintain constant awareness on occupational health and safety in the society and in industries.
7. Professionals in the field of HSSE should begin to preach the message of health and safety in the communities with the mindset to change the attitude of Nigerians on safety, in other to save the country from collapse.
8. Regulatory Government agencies should be proactive in holding employers accountable to accidents and injuries at their workplaces and employers should provide tools and resources for the safety of their workers.
9. OSH Association should plan sensitization programmes for various levels of the parliament and law makers on Occupational Safety and Health to help the legislators understand the role of safety issues in the industry.
10. Economic recession or NOT, the issue of environmental health and safety cannot be compromised.