

**Welcome Address by the Director General/CEO of Energy
Commission of Nigeria, Prof. Eli Jidere Bala, During the Signing
Ceremony of International Energy Charter by Nigeria, held on 7th
March 2017 at the Banquet Hall, State House, Abuja**

Protocol

The International Energy Charter is a declaration of political intention that aims at strengthening energy cooperation between signatory states and which does not bear any legally binding obligation or financial commitment, unlike the Energy Charter Treaty. While member governments enjoy enhanced global standing as attractive places for energy development, business entities in member states will benefit from attractive investment opportunities,

The Energy Charter process was initiated in 1991 with the Energy Charter declaration, commonly referred to as the European Energy Charter, which was a concise expression of principles underpinning international energy cooperation, based on a shared interest in secured energy supply and sustainable economic development. The European Energy Charter subsequently provided the foundations for the 1994 Energy Charter Treaty, a unique multilateral binding framework for energy cooperation in international law. Energy Charter members are committed to the promotion of energy security through more open and competitive energy markets, while at the same time respecting the principles of sustainable development and sovereignty over energy resources. Protection of foreign investments, non-discriminatory conditions for trade in energy materials, products and energy-related equipment and the guarantee of reliable cross-border energy transit, dispute resolution and the promotion of energy efficiency are the pillars holding up the Energy Charter global governance architecture.

In order to broaden the Charter, rather than just European as contained in 1991 declaration, a process of reform and modernization through negotiations. Since 2003, Nigeria became an observer by invitation to the Energy Charter Conference; and did participate in the 2014 negotiations in Brussels. Negotiations for a new political declaration culminated to the May 2015 International Energy Charter, which offered the opportunity to countries in the world to contribute to the modernized 1991 declaration. Observers by invitation were given opportunity to sign and get their Observer status consolidated.

However, Nigeria could not key-in at the May 2015 opportunity in the Hague, Netherland, nor in the December 2015 opportunity in Tbilisi, Georgia and the November 2016 opportunity in Tokyo, Japan because request for approval was then going through due process. It may be noted that the Energy Charter Conference had decided to abolish Observer-by-Invitation status by 31st December 2016.

Fortunately in the last quarter of December 2016, the President and Commander-in-Chief, Armed Forces of Nigeria, Muhammadu Buhari GCFR duely considered and granted approval as follows:-

1. That Nigeria becomes a State Party to the International Energy Charter;
2. That the Charter be signed on behalf of Nigeria by the Honourable Minister of Science and Technology; and
3. That the Energy Commission of Nigeria be the National Focal Point for the Charter.

The International Energy Charter Secretariat, headed by the Secretary General, Dr. Urban Rusnak and the depository Country, the Netherlands, have both agreed to come to Nigeria to administer the Signing Ceremony by Nigeria and any other ECOWAS member state ready to join. We are therefore here to get just that done during this ceremony.

May I therefore specially welcome His Excellency, the Vice President and Ag. President of Nigeria, Professor Yemi Osinbajo SAN, GCON, who has graciously accepted to Chair this auspicious signing ceremony, despite his very busy schedules. We further welcome the Honourable Minister of Science & Technology, Dr. Ogbonnaya Onu FNSE, FAEng and all other Members of the Federal Executive Council present; Your Excellencies present; the Representative of the Netherlands; the Chairman and Secretary General of IEC; Men of the Fourth Realm of the Estate and distinguished invited guests to this mementos signing ceremony.

Thank you all and God bless Nigeria.

Prof. E. J. Bala, FNSE, FAEng
Director-General/CEO.