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## Oil Exploration: FG Lists Challenges in Chad Basin, Deepwater

By Ejiofor Alike, 06.10.2010

Few days after the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) said it would intensify the search for crude oil in Chad Basin and other frontier areas in the North, the Federal Government has listed the challenges against oil exploration and production in the affected areas and the country's deepwater.

Speaking yesterday at the Nigeria Oil and Gas Technology Conference in Lagos, Minister of Petroleum Resources, Mrs. Diezani Alison-Madueke, said crude oil exploration in Nigeria's frontier areas located in Chad, Bida, Benue, Sokoto, Dahomey and Anambra Basins is faced with critical challenges. These challenges militating against oil field development in the areas, she said, are hinged on integrity and mapping of oil wells.

According to her, the formations in these basins make it difficult to estimate appropriate levels of oil wells and the prospect areas. "To maximise resources deployed in these basins, it is necessary to deploy intelligent well appraisal systems, transmission of real time well data to specialist across the globe and this will involve broadband capacity technology," she said.

The government through the NNPC had intensified the search for oil in the area, saying that discoveries of commercial hydrocarbon deposits in neighbouring countries of Chad, Niger and Sudan which have similar structural settings with the Chad Basin have made it possible for the oil to be available in the Chad basin.

According to NNPC, discoveries made in neighbouring countries in basins with similar structural settings include: Doba, Doseo and Bongor all in Chad amounts to over two billion barrels (Bbbls); Logone Birni in Southern Chad and Northern Cameroun, which amounted to over 100 Bbbls; and Termit-Agadem Basin in Niger, with a total of over 1Bbbls. Madueke also said that the discovery, exploration and exploitation of deep offshore is one area the country has to invest heavily in order to optimise her investment.

Madueke noted that deepwater fields also pose great challenge to operators because of the difficult terrain, especially initiating well control operation, using electronic instead of the traditional hydraulic control systems presently being used in the country. She also identified the method of deploying ocean marine structures such as oil rigs, platforms and subsea well protection equipment as a major challenge and urged the operators to find solution to this problem. "Generating and transmission of real time well data in deep waters would pose great challenges because of the difficulty in underwater wireless transmission. An alternative to this would be to utilize fibre optic umbilical line to the surface, and then transmit through wireless to a control centre. Future technology innovation in deep water oil platform would be to find alternative energy using the ocean waves to generate electricity for use on platform or rigs," she added. The minister, who acknowledged that the country's oil and gas technology is well known to be a premier gathering for problem solving and solution, also charged the oil industry stakeholders to advise the Federal Government on certain critical areas of the industry. She identified the areas to include; marginal field production; initiatives and experience in front end engineering design (FEED); subsea processing –new concept in field development for Nigeria and improved pipeline operation.

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