

Labour threatens to shut ports over disregard for local content by IOCs



•7-day ultimatum expires Friday

By Victor Ahiuma-Young

MARITIME Workers Union of Nigeria, MWUN, has threatened to shut down operations across all ports nationwide over alleged disregard of local content in the work-force by International Oil Companies, IOCs.

This comes against the backdrop of the seven-day strike notice MWUN issued to the Federal Government to compel the IOCs to allow Stevedoring companies and Dockworkers into their operational areas as required by law expires this Friday.

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The union has accused the IOCs of breaching the local content law among others in the past eight years.

In a statement, President-General and Secretary-General of MWUN, Prince Adeyanju Adewale and Felix Akingboye, respectively, warned that if at the expiration of the ultimatum the Union's demand was not met, all port operations nationwide would be shut until the union's demand is met.

MWUN lamented the silence of the Nigerian Ports Authority, NPA; Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, NNPC; and the Federal Government itself to the non-compliance of the IOCs to extant stevedoring regulations and the Marine/Government Notice No. 106 on Stevedoring regulations 2014, issued by the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency, NIMASA.

According to the union "the extant stevedoring/ marine notice is the operational guidelines to all dock labour employers and private operators of any work location including Ports, Jetties, Onshore or Offshore Oil and Gas or bonded terminals, inland container depots (ICDs), off dock terminals, dry ports and platforms.

The law stipulates that government appointed and NIMASA registered stevedores and dockworkers shall be allowed access by the IOCs to the operational areas allocated to them by the NPA.

"We wish to further draw the public attention to the repressive practice of the IOCs by denying our members (dockworkers), access to their operational areas and consequently, denying the dockworkers the opportunity to earn wages.

To worsen the matter, these IOCs have flooded the operational areas with aliens/foreigners at the expense of local workers and in breach of statutory regulations including the Local Content Act, NIMASA and NPA acts that prescribe indigenising of workforce.

"It will be recalled that this matter became worrisome in 2018 which forced the Union to declare a three-day national strike before the intervention of Ministry of

Transportation which summoned a stakeholders' meeting including the IOCs and the Union.

At the end, a communique was reached on how to address the matter.

“It is regrettable that up till now, the content of the communique has not been implemented. It is also very painful and sad that the Federal Government and its agencies especially the Ministry of Transportation and NPA, for the past four years have failed to compel the IOCs to not only comply with the statutory regulations, but also comply with the communique reached at the stakeholders' meeting of 2018.

“We have endured enough promises and the usual government gimmicks of ‘we are looking at the matter’. After several deceptions and unfulfilled promises, we have decided to take our destiny in our hands.

We believe that these IOCs have something to hide which they do not want Nigerians to be aware of.

This is especially bothersome in this era of increasing insecurity across the country. We need to ask why the IOCs are afraid to allow registered and approved stevedores and dockworkers access to their operational areas as prescribed by the law. The Federal Government and our members (dockworkers) have lost huge sums of money both in revenue and wages ever since.

“In view of the continued denial of our members (dockworkers) employment opportunities by the IOCs at designated oil and gas locations with its negative impact on the welfare of our members, in addition to their disrespect for our laws, we are constrained to issue a seven-day ultimatum starting from Friday, April 9, 2021 to the Federal Government, the NNPC, NPA and NIMASA, to as a matter of national interest, immediately compel the IOCs to comply and obey the statutory regulations, and also implement the communique earlier reached.

“We wish to further inform the general public that failure of the Federal Government and its agencies to compel the IOCs to comply with the rules on or before the expiration of this seven- day ultimatum, the Union will have no option than to shut down all forms of operations at the ports, terminals, jetties and other cargo handling locations in the country to press home our demands.”

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