

Nigerian wreck removal warning

In a bid to ensure safe and secure shipping in Nigerian territorial waters, the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) has warned all owners of abandoned vessels to urgently remove them from Nigerian territorial waters on or before 28 April or risk sanctions ranging from forfeiture or removal by the Agency at the owner's expense.

Director General of the Agency, Dr Dakuku Peterside stated this recently in Lagos and stressed the need to ensure that Nigeria's waters remain safe for navigation in order to advance the country's maritime interests.

He went on to warn that all abandoned ships would be declared as wrecks and the Agency would ensure that nothing impedes safe navigation in Nigeria's waters.

In his words: *'In line with our mandate on the protection of the marine environment and safety of navigation within Nigerian waters and our powers as the receiver of wreck; owners of all abandoned ships, vessels and derelicts are sternly warned to seek removal plan permits from the Agency and ensure the removal of these wrecks and derelicts from our waters on or before 28 April, 2017 failure of which would attract appropriate sanction'*.

NIMASA's DG spelled out these sanctions stating that the Agency is empowered to do so in line with the powers vested in it by the Merchant Shipping Act 2007 and other enabling Acts and IMO instruments.

It will be recalled that Nigeria is party to the Nairobi International Convention on the Removal of Wrecks (Nairobi Convention 2007). The Convention is a treaty of the IMO with the purpose of prompt and effective removal of wreck located in the Parties' territorial waters including its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) that may be hazardous to navigation or environment. The convention gives States' Authority to remove wrecks and in Nigeria's case NIMASA is the receiver of wreck.

All abandoned vessels littering the waterways and the shoreline of the country are affected by this directive.

Management of NIMASA has constantly expressed the Agency's commitment to ensuring safer waterways for Nigerian maritime stakeholders to conduct their business.

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