

AGPMPN 36th International Scientific Conference/ Annual General Meeting

Theme: Environmental Protection and Health in a Developing Economy



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Thursday, 3rd April 2014.

PROTOCOLS:

Dear Respected colleagues, it is a privilege and a great pleasure to address and welcome you all to our 36th International Scientific Conference / AGM, holding in this great City of Nigeria, Port Harcourt, called Garden City and hence our Conference / AGM for this year has been tagged “**Garden City 2014**”.

Our Association has witnessed a phenomenal growth in recent time, because of the solid foundation laid by the founding Fathers and previous administrations. I am using this opportunity to salute them.

The choice of our Theme: “**Environmental Protection and Health in a Developing Economy**” this year has been carefully chosen, to reflect the challenges in this part of our country, where there is massive exploration and production of oil.

Rivers State is one of the states in the Niger-Delta region, where crude oil is produced from nearly 200 oil fields, about 1100km of ageing flow lines and nearly 160 Flow stations.

The area has become heavily contaminated with oil and oil wastes from pipeline rupture, oil well blowouts, seepages, tanker accidents etc. All these produce negative impacts including pollution of soils, sediments, plants and human health.

Also gas flaring/venting associated with petroleum exploration and production, which has not been effectively and efficiently managed has led to incomplete combustion, which produces a variety of volatile organic compounds (VOCS), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHS) and inorganic contaminants.

All these above have negative consequences on the environment.

There are wide ranges of toxic responses on human health, including behavioral abnormalities, respiratory diseases, suppressed growth, blood disorders, negative reproductive outcomes, reduced immunity, cancers of various organs and other adverse physiological responses.

Government at all levels must muster enough political will to address these challenges as to reduce the impact of oil exploration and production on the environment and human health.

It's becoming more obvious that our healthcare delivery cannot be improved without the active involvement of the Private health sector, which is responsible for about 70% of healthcare delivery in Nigeria.

For example, the 2014 Nigeria budget, allocated to health the sum of #262.73b (1.7b USD) of which 82% is going to recurrent expenditure, representing about 6% of the total budget and slightly lesser than the #279b allocated to health in 2013, about 6.7% decline.

It's also a fact that healthcare in Sub-Saharan Africa, Nigerian inclusive remains the worst in the world.

Nigeria spends less than \$34-\$40USD a year per person as recommended by WHO as minimum.

In view of all in the above, it calls for a close partnership between the Private and Public sectors, including improvements to regulatory and policy oversight of Private healthcare, and outlines ways that the Private sector could be better engaged to improve sustainability.

Permit me to use this medium to call on Federal government, as a matter of **emergency** to make available a "**Health Infrastructure Fund**" not less than #500

Billion Naira, through Presidential 'order' without an act of the parliament in the interim.

This fund should be made available at 5% interest rate with a moratorium of three years and payable over 15 years to enable the private health sector, to massively improve on the existing health facilities and build mega hospitals of world class.

This measure, with other favorable government regulatory and policy directives, will also impact favorably on healthcare delivery through infrastructural and human capacity development. Nigeria healthcare tourism will in no distant time be the biggest in West Africa and beyond with this approach.

On a longer term, **Health Fund** for healthcare development and sustainability should be backed by an act of parliament.

I congratulate Federal government for launching the Universal health insurance coverage in Nigeria. If this program is properly articulated and implemented, it will go a long way in solving our health challenges and will enable Nigerians to have access to quality and equitable healthcare.

Our Association will continue to work closely with government, non-governmental Agencies and other relevant Bodies locally and internationally in order to improve healthcare delivery to our population.

I thank all members of **AGPMPN** for giving me the opportunity to serve them as a body. Without your unalloyed support I would not have achieved the little I did.

Our journey to our destiny and destination has started well and should be sustained by all, as this to my mind, is the most important solution to our healthcare challenges in Nigeria and also our march to be amongst the comity of healthy and wealthy nations of the world.

Permit me to appreciate the **Spouses Support Group (SSG)**, for their commitments and support to the course of this great Association.

I sincerely thank you, for all you have done for our Association.

I wish you all, an enjoyable and successful Conference and AGM.

Long live AGPMPN!!!

Long lives Federal Republic of Nigeria!!

DR. ANTHONY A. OMOLOLA. DMP
NATIONAL PRESIDENT, AGPMPN.

