

Nigeria Not Interested in Becoming Nuclear Power – but read on

Obasanjo is entirely correct.

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President Olusegun Obasanjo yesterday said that the establishment of a nuclear regulatory authority in Nigeria has nothing to do with making Nigeria a nuclear power but is a means of ensuring the development of Nigeria's socio-economic life.

The President who stated this while inaugurating the Governing Board of the Nigeria Nuclear Regulatory Authority of which he is Chairman, also said that the Atomic Energy Commission Law established thirty years ago was meant to find alternative sources of power generation apart from gas, hydro and coal which Nigeria has been very dependent on.

However, the President said that "the Nigeria Nuclear Regulatory Authority has been set as a means of guiding and guarding the nuclear research, energy development programmes and all aspects, less military, but in medicine, agriculture and dealing with environmental issues".

Regretting that subsequent Governments did not continue with the tempo expected of them over the matter, he however, said that "let me hasten to say that the aim of Nigeria Atomic Energy Commission established some thirty years ago and the Nuclear Regulatory Authority is not to make Nigeria a nuclear power. We aim to use this for the peaceful development and advancement of our socio-economic life.

"When we established the Atomic Energy Commission Law, what we envisaged was that sooner or later, we will exhaust all the known available resources for power generation that we have been endowed with by God.

For example hydro, gas and coal. That time, solar was still very much in the far distance. Today, I believe the vision that brought about the establishment of the Nigerian Atomic Energy Commission law in 1976 is still relevant today".

President Obasanjo said that the establishment of the Nigerian Nuclear Regulatory Authority became expedient "because if research will go on and go on the way it should go on, the planning will go on the way it should go on, I believe that like we have in other regulatory bodies that we have established for communication and now for energy, we must have one for nuclear so that we do not have things run out of hand and control. It will also help us to work with international bodies and organizations in this area".

While noting that successive Governments had not done enough to make these a reality, President Obasanjo noted that "of course, governments come and governments go. The enthusiasm with which we had at that time was not subsequently matched by subsequent administrations. But I believe that it is better late than never because even now, with the gas that we have, with the coal that has been accessed, with the hydro potential that we have, if this country will advance and make progress the way that we believe it should socio-economically, I believe that within the next quarter of a century, we should be producing other sources of power generation that will supplement or complement the three that we heavily depend on (gas, hydro and coal)".

He added that "we hope that the research that is going on in the world today will also advance and we will sufficiently be part of it".

Members of the Governor Board include the Ministers of Defence, Health, Internal Affairs, Solid Minerals, Petroleum Resources, Science and Technology and Environment and the Directors-General of the National Agency for Science and Engineering Infrastructure, Science and Technology Complex and two Nigerians with cognate experience in nuclear science to be appointed by President Obasanjo.

The Minister of Defence, Musa Rabiw Kwankwaso, had in his remarks, stated that the inauguration of the Governing Board "is the culmination of the national legislative and regulatory framework for effective radiation protection, nuclear safety, nuclear security and nuclear safeguards. Acquisition of nuclear power plants calls for a very effective nuclear regulatory system that is transparent and respected by the international community, including neighbouring countries".