

The West African Gas Pipeline Company (WAPCo) and the West African Gas Pipeline Authority (WAGPA) in collaboration with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have held a 2-day meeting on the safety of the West African Gas Pipeline (WAGP).

The meeting brought together about sixty stakeholders from the four WAGP states, Benin, Ghana, Nigeria and Togo and discussed measures to further protect WAGP. It is part of WAPCo's efforts to continuously be abreast with and address emerging threats to the safety of the pipeline through promoting dialogue among the various entities that have a role to play in the protection of the pipeline. The meeting focused on improving upon WAPCo's current pipeline damage prevention program to cover new threats to the pipeline. Participants included representatives of governments, some security agencies, the World Bank and WAPCo shareholders.

WAPCo Managing Director, Mr. Walter Perez, thanked the governments of Ghana, Nigeria, Benin and Togo for the enormous support and cooperation the company has received over the years at every phase of its operations. These include the harmonization of the Pipeline Protection Zone (PPZ) in Nigeria, Benin and Togo, as well as the dedicated patrols by the navies of the four countries, electronic surveillance of vessel traffic in the PPZ and the deterrence of sand mining on the pipeline 'Right of Way' in the various countries, just to mention a few.

Ghana's Minister for Defense, Mr. Mark Woyongo, also lauded the efforts of the various navies and advocated that pipeline safety be accorded high priority. He asked WAPCo to take advantage of the recently commissioned Ghana Maritime Authority Vessel Traffic Management Information Systems (VTMIS). He also advocated for the exploration of other cost effective ways of monitoring activities within the PPZ rather than relying heavily on ships.

The Director General of the West African Gas Pipeline Authority (WAGPA), Mr. Debo Barandao, said since the last breach of the pipeline in August 2012, offshore Lome, which resulted in a ten month interruption of gas delivery, the WAGPA and WAPCo have revised the Offshore Damage Prevention Program.

The Director of Energy at the ECOWAS Commission, B.J.A. Dabire, said WAPCo was created to boost the economic development of the sub region and the initial plan was to have a gas pipeline across the entire region. The final option chosen was to construct a gas pipeline from Nigeria to Ghana, representing the first phase of the project. ECOWAS is currently in talks with stakeholders regarding an extension of the pipeline beyond Ghana. Invited guests present included Professor Thomas Akabzaa, Chief Director, Ministry of Energy and Petroleum and Rear Admiral O. Medani of the Nigeria Navy.