

Tuesday 19/09/04 - 20
X10

Ebola: No Increase in Cargo Freight Rates Says NSC Boss

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MARITIME

The Executive Secretary, Nigerian Shippers Council (NSC), Hassan Bello, has said the outbreak of the Ebola virus disease (EVD) has not led to an increase in the cost of freight on Nigeria-bound cargoes.

Bello's statement is coming against reports in some quarters that the European ship owners had increased freight rates on cargoes and also imposed surcharge on vessels and crew coming to Nigeria and other West African countries affected

by the EVD.

President of the Nigeria Chamber of Shipping (NCS), Chief Adebayo Sarunmi was quoted to have said recently that insurance and freight rates had been increased, while surcharge had been imposed on West African countries battling with EVD.

In the same vein, the Director-General of the NCS, Mrs. Ify Akerele, reportedly confirmed the increase and

stated that shipping lines were taking advantage of the situation as they did during the unrest in the Niger Delta area.

She said Nigeria had become a high risk area as a result of EVD.

However, the NSC boss, who is a lawyer, maintained that there was no truth in the report, even as he allayed the fear of port users, particularly importers and consumers.

"There is no truth in the allegation. We have checked with the line carriers and their agents in Nigeria and they

have all denied the increase. Ordinarily, when something like that is happening, it ought to be published. What we have are the normal rates, the congestion charge, risk insurance and so on".

However, Bello said there was need to eliminate touts in freight forwarding practice, and urged practitioners to seek requisite knowledge in their chosen profession.

According to him, the freight forwarding is a profession and

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the practitioners need to be trained to meet international best practices.

He said as the economy continues to grow, freight forwarders also have a key role to play and that is why they should undergo training in freight forwarding.

He said: "We must all do away with thugs and touts in the freight forwarding profession because we cannot afford to have them in port operations. I don't want to see touts as a freight forwarder, rather I want to see someone that is educated and can have the knowledge of international in the practice.

"A freight forwarder needs training constantly. He needs to have an office where he must operate from because it goes beyond clearing of a cargo from the port. If we have strong freight forwarders in Nigeria, then most of our profession is also solved."