

Press release

GIRL ELECTROCUTION: AEDCL ENTERS LENIENCY PLEA **NIGERIAN ELECTRICITY REGULATORY COMMISSION ADJOURNS HEARING**

The resumed hearing of the petition brought before the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission (NERC) against the Abuja Electricity Distribution Company Limited (AEDCL), was on Friday, April 25, 2008 adjourned for ruling following a plea for leniency by the respondent counsel, Mr. J. Isaiah Dodo.

Dodo had declined cross-examination of the prosecution witnesses in the first hearing which held on Tuesday, April 22, 2008, but invited the Technical Director of the utility, Mr. Chukwuka Emmanuel Onyeneke, to make leniency plea.

Onyeneke in his plea described the event of April 18, 2007, when Aisha Fadeyi, six years, died as a result of electrocution in one of the sub-stations at Sirakoro Street, off Blantyre Street, in Wuse II, Abuja, as a tragedy that was most unfortunate.

He said “The reason for this hearing is on safety and PHCN spends money and time on safety because it understands its importance. However, the tragedy showed that the safety system failed in that circumstance, which is most unfortunate”.

He assured of PHCN compliance with safety standards and disclosed that the utility would audit its sub-stations to determine the ones that have not yet complied with a view to meeting the required standard and regulation.

He said” The network has over 7,000 sub-stations which cannot be claimed to be in excellent shape. So our compliance with safety standards depends on the budget, thus it would take two to three years to actualize this”.

However, the prosecuting counsel, Mr. Chijioke Obi prayed the panel to take the interest of the public into consideration in its final decision and urged that the respondent should abide by the time asked for.

Obi said, “The time frame which the respondent has asked for must be strictly adhered to. Most importantly is that the respondent has come to realize the powers of the Commission and to abide by the industry standards”.

The panel Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of NERC, Dr. Ransome Owan while granting the respondent’s prayer said, “The commission has taken oral and written representation on the matter and would like to state that NERC’s stance on security of lives and property cannot be compromised.”

Owan, thereafter, adjourned the panel till May 30 to deliver its ruling.