

IC HOME
IC NEWS
IC EVENTS
ABOUT IC
SUBSCRIPTIONS
ADVERTISING
CONTACT
IC FRANCE

Digital Edition
free trial issue



[Our Opinions](#)

[Reader's Letters](#)

[Special Reports](#)

[Awards](#)

[African Banker Awards](#)
[African Business Awards](#)

[Classifieds](#)

[Recruitment, courses, tenders and announcements](#)

Services
Markets
Currencies
Events Calendar
Where to find us
Links
Archive
Web Design

News from Africa

07/07/2009 19:09 CAPE TOWN, July 7 (AFP)

Oil in Ghana will be a blessing, 'not a curse': minister

Emerging oil giant Ghana aims to maximise local ownership of its resources to avoid mistakes made by neighbouring nations where oil has become a "curse," its deputy energy minister said Tuesday.

"We are the emerging kid on the block and we are very excited as a people, and fortunately we have very valuable lessons from the neighbourhood on sometimes exactly how not to do it, and on the other side how to do it," said Kwabena Donkor, Ghana's deputy energy minister.

"We are excited and we want to ensure... that we will make Africa proud. Oil and gas will be a blessing and not a curse in Ghana," he told delegates at the Africa Energy Week conference in Cape Town.

Tim O'Hanlon, vice president for Africa with Tullow Oil, the Irish independent which struck black gold in the Jubilee field offshore of Ghana, said it was "rare that a field of that size is found".

He said Jubilee, which has expected reserves of up to 1.8 billion barrels, was expected to begin production in the second half of 2010.

Another exploration off Ghana, Tweneboa, was also described as very exciting, and is expected to have reserves of 1.4 billion barrels of oil.

Oil wealth in Africa has often resulted in conflict and corruption, failing to enrich the people of the country involved and often worsening their situation.

Nigeria's Niger Delta is plagued by unrest as militant groups resort to destroying oil facilities and kidnappings over discontent with the distribution of oil wealth.

"For us the biggest lesson is the lesson from Nigeria. Carrying the people, the community along. Also environmental sustainability, being transparent in the awarding of contracts, those are the major lessons," Donkor told AFP on the sidelines of the conference.

Ghana wants its oil and gas development anchored by gas rather than crude, saying it offers far better opportunities for job creation.

"As long as the people believe they have some ownership in the production process then grounds for agitation will be minimised," said Donkor.

AFP

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08/07/2009 10:33

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08/07/2009 08:40

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08/07/2009 06:42

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08/07/2009 06:00

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08/07/2009 02:10

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As the head of the West African power pool, Ghana intends processing gas to become a major exporter of power in the sub-region.

The country is aiming at a high local content in the industry, with up to 100 percent Ghanaian participation in some segments of production, and up to 80 percent in others.

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