



WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL FOR THE REGULATION OF ENGINEERING IN NIGERIA ENGR. KASHIM A. ALI, FNSE, mni AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 25TH ENGINEERING ASSEMBLY AT 'THE DOME' IN AKURE, ONDO STATE ON TUESDAY, 9TH AUGUST, 2016

Protocol

We are here gathered today, in this beautiful edifice named 'The Dome' for the 25th edition of the Engineering Assembly, an annual Council for the Regulation of Engineering in Nigeria (COREN) congregation of all certified engineering personnel in Nigeria for the purpose of knowledge intercourse, networking, and introspection. It is instructive to put on record that the choice of Akure as venue for this year's Assembly is credit to an Honorary Fellow of the Nigerian Society of Engineers, His Excellency, Dr. Olusegun Rahman Mimiko, who graciously invited us, and also offered us the free use of this legacy facility, as part of his strategic plan to turn Ondo state into a tourism destination of choice.

We are very honoured to welcome His Excellency, President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR, represented by the SGF, Engr. Babachir David Lawal, FNSE; Excellency, the Chairman of the Opening Ceremony and Governor of Ebonyi State, Engr. David Umahi, FNSE, other Governors, Members of the National Assembly, the Honourable Minister of Water Resources, Engr. Suleiman Adamu, FNSE, members of the Ondo State House of Assembly and other State Assemblies, members of the Ondo Executive Council, our spouses and all other



invited guests, distinguished ladies and gentlemen. The theme of this year's Assembly is **“Embracing the Future: Improving the Quality of Engineering Education and Practice in Nigeria”**. It was carefully selected to reflect the current efforts at transforming the nation into a major economic and technological power. It is therefore hoped that this Assembly will awaken the consciousness of the engineering family made up of over 30,000 registered Engineers, 2,870 Technologists, 512 Technicians, 2,245 Craftsmen, 1134 Expatriates and 1315 Consulting Firms, and bring to the fore its role in driving the developmental process of this country in a sustainable manner.

The Council for the Regulation of Engineering in Nigeria, COREN, was established by Decree 55 of 1970, which was amended by Decree 27 of 1992, and now, Engineers (Registration, etc) Act Cap E11, LFN 2004. It has the mandate to control and regulate the practice of engineering in all aspects and ramifications. It also determines what standards of knowledge and skills are to be attained by persons seeking to become registered as Engineering Personnel i.e. Engineers, Engineering Technologists, Engineering Technicians and Engineering Craftsmen.

Excellences, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, since the 24th Assembly, a lot has happened. Council has over the past months considered and taken various decisions aimed at moving forward training and practice of engineering in the country.

In my address to the Assembly last year, I informed you of the completion of work and operationalisation of the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standard for Accreditation of Undergraduate Engineering



programmes in Nigerian universities (BMAS), and proposal for next steps. You will recall also that among the high points of the Assembly was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between COREN and the UNESCO International Science, Technology and Innovation Centre for South-South Cooperation (ISTIC).

As part of the gains of that relationship, a high level policy forum was organised in Abuja from 17th - 22nd July instant, by COREN in collaboration with UNESCO Regional office, Jakarta, UNESCO Regional Office, Abuja, the Federation of Engineering Institutions in Asia and the Pacific (FEIAP) and UNESCO - ISTIC, with the generous funding support of the government of Malaysia, to forge intra and inter-regional cooperation for Engineering Accreditation and mobility of certified Engineering Personnel within Africa and between Africa and Asia and the Pacific.

Five African countries namely: Tanzania, Kenya, Sudan, Cameroun, and Ghana participated in the Forum and the follow up accreditation visits to the Federal University of Technology Minna and Bayero University, Kano. The evaluation report is being awaited, but I am happy to inform you that COREN is now a member of the FEIAP bloc, and when a positive report is turned in, very hopefully, and approved, a COREN practice licence will become a proof of competence to practice engineering in the 48 countries (economies) of Asia and the Pacific, like China, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, South Korea, Hong Kong, Australia, etc. In addition, UNESCO chairs are being considered



for Nigeria and some African countries to create mobility for academics and students.

With the expected harmonisation of engineering qualifications and international mutual recognition agreements, the standard of engineering practice will be raised and engineers practicing in the region will tend towards “**engineers without borders**”. In order to carry this programme to its logical conclusion, COREN in conjunction with stakeholders will develop implementation strategies arising from the recommendations of the Forum.

Your Excellences, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, we are well aware of the change mantra of Mr. President to which the Engineering Profession must key into. We must key into, because **engineering is the real development** and no nation can ever develop without a deliberate utilisation of its engineering capacity. Over the years the engineering profession has played second fiddle in the scheme of things. For instance, engineers are the least paid among professionals, and the least consulted and considered at manning levels, even in key engineering institutions in the public service of our nation. These are very challenging times for our dear country. Unemployment, delayed or unpaid salaries and retirement benefits have held the nation to ransom.

These problems in our opinion derive largely from non-optimisation of our productive capacity via unfriendly policies and tendencies that tend to demoralise the competent and hardworking citizens. What we are witnessing now cannot be blamed on any single administration but the cumulative effect of years of developmental



policies anchored on consumption of foreign goods and services, supported by a single resource. I must confess however that some regimes have recorded feats that cannot be ignored, like President Obasanjo's stabilisation of the cement industry in Nigeria. The regime and the subsequent ones however, didn't appear to have got the power project right, otherwise how can government be talking of raising generation capacity to 6,000MW by end of 2016, 10,000MW in 2019, and 30,000MW in 2030, at this time, as reported by Leadership online of Monday instant . Isn't time to review our methodology? Shouldn't the president order a Rapid Technical Audit of the NIPP, so that going forward, even if we falter, we will be able to trace our steps and make amends more confidently?

The problem of fuel supply is also another sore point. There is simply not enough money to continue importing as this takes the major part of our foreign exchange earnings.

Your Excellences, On April 12, 1961, the Soviet Union succeeded in putting a man, Yuri Gagarin into orbit around the earth. An embarrassed President John F. Kennedy while addressing a joint session of Congress on May 25, 1961 (just 43 days after), challenged the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to put a man on the moon before the end of that decade. Eight years and less than two months after, the Americans successfully landed men on the moon on July 20, 1969. I urge Mr President to challenge the Nigerian engineering family, and provide the needed resources as President Kennedy did, to build modular refineries, power systems, rail permanent ways,



highways and water resource infrastructures, and see if we will not deliver them within record time.

As is perhaps common knowledge, engineering processes are continuously evolving requiring requisite training and practice inflection to keep abreast. To this end, COREN developed and secured approval of the Federal Executive Council to establish the Supervised Industrial Training Scheme in Engineering (SITSIE) in 1990, to give hands-on experience to fresh graduates from Universities and Polytechnics. Under the scheme, fresh graduates are to be posted to relevant industries for one year training prior to their participation in the NYSC scheme.

In 2005, a White Paper on Strategic Plan for Engineering Development and Control endorsed the scheme and further directed MDAs to reserve public works jobs in the value ~~₦~~500Million and below to indigenous firms. Sadly, Excellences, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, till date adequate take-off funds have not been provided for SITSIE, neither have any jobs been reserved. It is therefore my humble prayer that His Excellency, Mr. President, provides for the take-off of SITSIE in 2017, and direct the inclusion of an affirmative action clause in a revised BPP Act, with a threshold of ~~₦~~2.5billion for a start.

We are aware of the Special Intervention Project designed for 500,000 graduates and 100,000 non-graduates jobs, targeted to train unemployed graduates as teaches, and non-graduates as artisans under the N-Power Programme. It is our humble request that the funding of the SITSIE Programme could be accommodated in the scheme.



Your Excellences, COREN is in total support of the anti-corruption war, especially the seizure of illicit funds. In order to reflate the economy, Government should kindly invest the funds in energy infrastructure projects after a rapid technical audit and restructuring of the NDPHC and the NIPP to place round pegs in round holes. I am pleased to announce that our strategic collaboration with the ICPC is paying off pretty well, and defiant participants in engineering projects are being investigated, pretty slowly but surely.

We have also made much progress in entrenching a cohesive engineering family by engendering equitable participation in COREN matters and empowerment of all affiliated engineering associations. This will continue as we welcome constructive suggestions aimed at improving the quality engineering practice in Nigeria.

Within the last twelve months, Council has appeared and made inputs at various fora and public hearings on issues affecting the practice of engineering. Our efforts in this direction have yielded encouraging results. I therefore urge all engineers to be interested in what is going on in their places of work and even outside. You all have a duty to report to COREN with accurate information, whenever and wherever you notice quackery in engineering works. I also urge engineers to serve as whistle blowers to ensure that nobody is doing anything that will take engineering jobs away from the engineering family. COREN will follow up any case of infringement that is brought to her attention.



Finally, I also appeal to all of you to participate actively in the interrogation of the papers so that our resolutions would be robust and provide useful atlas on way forward for our profession and the nation.

Your Excellences, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, once again I welcome you to the 25th COREN Engineering Assembly. We are most honoured to have you here.

Long live the Engineering Profession in Nigeria

Long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Thank you and God bless.

*Engr. Kashim A. Ali, FNSE, mni
President/Chairman of Council.*