

Inaugural Address By
Engr. Dr. Edet J. Amana, DIC, FNSE, FAEng.
At His Investiture as 10th President,
Association of Consulting Engineers Nigeria (ACEN)
On February 24, 2004

His Excellency, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, President, Federal Republic of Nigeria, Grand Patron of the Nigerian Society of Engineers, (NSE)

His Excellency, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Executive Governor of Lagos State, Special Guest of Honour,

His Excellency, Arc. (Obong) Victor Attah, Executive Governor of Akwa Ibom State, Special Guest of Honour,

Otunba Adeseye Ogunlewe, Senator and Honourable Minister of Works, Special Guest of Honour,

Dr. Edmund Daukoru, Senior Special Adviser to the President on Petroleum Matters,

Your Excellencies, The Deputy Governors,

Distinguished Senators and Honourable Members of the National Assembly,

His Eminence Sunday Mbang, Prelate Methodist Church Nigeria,

Present and Past Presidents of COREN

Present and Past Presidents of NSE,

Past Presidents of ACEN,

Present and Past Presidents of Other Professional Bodies,

Captains of Industry,

Fellows and Members of ACEN and NSE,

Gentlemen of the Press,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel highly honoured by your distinguished presence in this ceremony in which, by the grace of God, I have been invested as the 10th President of the Association of Consulting Engineers Nigeria (ACEN). I thank Almighty God for making this day come to be and for bringing all of you safely to be part of this ceremony. I pray that by His grace, we shall all get back to our different destinations safely at the end of this ceremony. God's name be praised for ever and ever. Amen.

WE FACE ENORMOUS CHALLENGES

God has made me President of ACEN at a time when there are enormous developmental challenges in our Country. These include:

§ The need to sustain and nurture our nascent democracy.

§ The need to eradicate corruption in all areas of our national life.

§ The need for the enthronement of transparency and due process in all business transactions.

- § Enthronement of good technical and corporate practices.
- § Eradication of poverty and creation of wealth for our people.
- § Development and sustenance of national pride and value system.
- § Diversification of our national economy by targeting and promoting the exportation of goods and services other than oil and gas.
- § Stem the continuous decline in our GDP, alleviate poverty and create wealth by getting every Nigerian to contribute their quota towards the growth of the economy.
- § The need to mobilise all stakeholders behind the NEPAD initiative.
- § We are confronted daily with the stark reality of the gross insufficiency and dilapidation of our physical infrastructures.
- § The need to work out new ways of funding infrastructure development projects in view of the inadequacy of budgetary allocations for financing such projects.
- § The need to ensure the continuous growth of the engineering profession – the anvil on which all physical developmental processes revolve.
- § The need to increase local content in the Oil and Gas Industry.

WE HAVE THE RESOURCES TO TACKLE THE CHALLENGES

The above list looks daunting and overwhelming; but your Excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, we should not feel overwhelmed because the resources required to tackle all these challenges are within our reach. This enormous resource is the capacity of the Nigerian to excel in all areas of human endeavour in which he is involved. Need I remind this august audience of the noteworthy achievements of Nigerians in the areas of Information Technology, Space Research, Nuclear Research, in the areas of Pure and Applied Sciences, in the Social Sciences, Literature, Sports, in Business and Entrepreneurship. You are all witnesses to the newest football sensation in America, the 14 year old Adu, not to mention Emegwali considered the brightest computer engineer in the world. The list could go on and on and on. **I thank God for Nigeria.** I am sure it will not surprise you to know that coming nearer home many Nigerians in this hall today have been involved in noteworthy achievements in their areas of endeavour. The question we must ask is “**how do we get these great Nigerians in their own country to make noteworthy contributions in tackling the challenges mentioned above**”. The answer we must work with is that “**there is need to create the enabling environment which will ensure the mobilisation and synergy of the great human potential which exists in our great country**”. What part can ACEN play in this great adventure; what is ACEN anyway, and who are Consulting Engineers!!

WHAT IS ACEN AND WHO IS THE CONSULTING ENGINEER

For the benefit of those who have been faced with this puzzle, I shall attempt a definition of the Consulting Engineer. **The Consulting Engineer is that engineer who by virtue of his specialist knowledge and experience is equipped to give expert advice or information or provide expert project planning, design and supervision services.**

The Association of consulting Engineers Nigeria (ACEN) was incorporated in 1979 to promote the advancement of the practice of consulting engineering. It provides the platform for the social, technical and business interaction of firms and individual consultants with necessary knowledge and experience to deliver qualitative project advisory services to clients in a strict professional manner and to the highest technical standards. It has a code of ethics which is in line with international best practice and provides the framework for ensuring delivery of quality services to clients. In line with globalisation principles and the vision of our founding fathers ACEN as member of the International Federation of Consulting Engineers (FIDIC) continues to make noteworthy contributions in the international arena and benefit from the global trend on technologies and methodologies for managing change in the Consulting Engineering Industry.

ACEN'S ROLE IN TACKLING THE CHALLENGES

By virtue of its endowment and objectives, ACEN is an ideal vehicle for driving the changes required in tackling the challenges in the built–environment in our country. Being the business arm of engineering practice, the principles and methods of privatisation and private sector driven economy are ingrained in our culture. Being a member of the larger engineering family which embraces the NSE and COREN (Council for Regulation of Engineering in Nigeria) ACEN has the linkages required to make necessary inputs to ensure the proper practice and regulation of the engineering industry in Nigeria.

Given this background, ACEN is poised to make inputs in the following areas:

- § Build capacity of its members by providing more access to work, providing access to continuing education in both technical and business methods and forming consortia as necessary so that they become more effective players in their chosen profession locally and internationally.
- § Collaborate with other stakeholders, NSE and COREN, to ensure effective regulations of engineering practice and delivery of good value-added services to clients.
- § Work out strategies for effective private sector funding of infrastructural development.
- § Be in the driving seat of the NEPAD initiative for the development of infrastructure in the ECOWAS sub region.
- § Make inputs to the democratic process by appropriate interaction with members of the national and state assemblies by initiating legislation, contributing to debates on national issues and issues which involve engineering practice in particular.

HOW CAN ACEN ACHIEVE ABOVE DEVELOPMENTAL OBJECTIVES

As stated earlier in this address, the key to the effective resolution of the challenges listed above, is the establishment of an enabling environment which facilitates the mobilisation of the enormous local human resources available to our developmental process. For ACEN to play its proper role in this process there is need to address the following issues:

- § **Build ACEN's Capacity** by increasing its membership and increasing its relevance and response to the yearnings and needs of its members. Our target must be an ACEN which embraces all practitioners in the consulting engineering industry. An ACEN which consists of only a small fraction of the practitioners in the Consulting Engineering Industry will remain a weak ACEN. The task of adequate regulation and ensuring ethical practices in the engineering design industry can only be accomplished if all consulting engineering practitioners are brought under the ambit of ACEN. An enlarged ACEN will be a more powerful ACEN with endowments required to empower and build up the capacity of its members.
- § **Build Knowledge Acquisition/Application Infrastructure.** Consulting Engineering is a knowledge based and knowledge driven industry. As new technologies, new markets and new ways of doing business evolve, practitioners need to quickly access new information, learn new methods and acquire software which enable them perform at optimal level. There is therefore need to establish within ACEN necessary infrastructure to give members access to the tools of their trade in the congenial environment of a well set up secretariat. With a well established ICT (Information and Communication Technology) Infrastructure ACEN members can take advantage of membership of Virtual Libraries and on-line access to journals in the various disciplines globally.
- § **Build Capacity of ACEN Members.** To give members more access to work, there must be a paradigm shift in the perception of the Consulting Engineer on how to get work. Workshops will be organised on private sector methods for packaging and executing projects including Turnkey, BOT and Oil and Gas projects. Workshops will be organised on the NEPAD initiatives, the focus being to make ACEN the driver of the NEPAD Infrastructure implementation strategy. This will open new avenues for work for ACEN members in consortia among themselves and in collaboration with other capable international firms.

ACEN member's registration with COREN and commitment to ACEN code of ethics make them the ideal vehicle for the actualisation of government due process policy and drive for quality project delivery. There is therefore need for affirmative action on the part of government on the use of ACEN members for government engineering design projects for quality assurance and eradication of corruption from the engineering construction process.

With increased capacity of ACEN members the present tendency, especially in the Oil and Gas Sector, for wholesale import of engineering design services will be replaced by increased local content. ACEN members have the potential to be exporters of their services within ECOWAS sub region and to other parts of Africa.

Increased capacity of ACEN members means they will have jobs on which to train young people and ensure the growth of the engineering profession.

§ **Procurement Guidelines for Consulting Engineering Services.** ACEN greatly appreciates the cooperation existing between it and the government and pledges its continuous support of all government policies designed to ensure training and utilisation of indigenous manpower, poverty alleviation/wealth creation and sustainable socio-economic development. To facilitate the engagement of services of consulting engineers, ACEN has produced the “**Procurement Guidelines for Consulting Engineering Services**” designed to ensure fair play, transparency, due process and client satisfaction. This document will be available to all our prospective clients.

APPEAL FOR SUPPORT

The need for all stakeholders - government, private sector and consulting engineers to ensure adequate capacity in the consulting engineering industry cannot be over emphasised. We must never forget or underestimate the importance of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. A consulting engineer or the consulting engineering profession which operates at or below subsistence level will only concern itself with the struggle for survival needs. At that level of existence thoughts and actions which add value to society will remain a distant pursuit and so society suffers because its elite cannot deliver. A little investment in capacity building will result in substantial returns ensuring the reaping of enormous benefits from the country's investment in education and manpower training.

Somewhere in this programme is a list of requirements to set up a functional secretariat with a V-Sat to place at the disposal of ACEN members the ability to access information globally, do research on the internet, access virtual libraries and read journals on-line. This is a vital knowledge acquisition tool which will greatly enhance the capacity of our engineers and increase their competitive edge. We solicit for your support for this project.

ACEN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

I am delighted to present to you the other members of ACEN executive committee for year 2004. They are:

§ Engr. Mrs. Mayen Adetiba, FNSE	Vice President
§ Engr. Yomi Lawson, FNSE	Hon. Secretary
§ Engr. G. O. Ogunnowo Bolaji, FNSE	Hon. Treasurer
§ Engr. 'Lanre Sagaya, FNSE	Immediate Past President

I hereby pledge on behalf of the Executive Committee to uphold the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Association of Consulting Engineers Nigeria and, by God's grace, work assiduously for the upliftment of the engineering consulting industry in Nigeria.

APPRECIATION

I return thanks to Almighty God my father and creator who has preserved me through all situations and made this day possible. To him alone are all glory, honour and adoration for the marvellous work He has done in my life.

I thank my friends, some of whom have travelled very long distances to be part of this ceremony. I thank the chairman and members of the investiture committee who have worked tirelessly to ensure the success of the ceremony. I pray Almighty God to bless them.

In my efforts to make meaningful contributions towards the upliftment of the society my wife has remained my greatest ally. She has borne the brunt of my exertions always with a smile and a prayer. To her go my special gratitude.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Senators and Members of the National Assembly, my Lords Spiritual and Temporal, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you once again for honouring us with your presence at this ceremony. We hope your attendance has given you a better appreciation of what ACEN members can do for you. I hope you have made a commitment to assist them serve you better.

Thank you for your support and for your attention.

Engr. Dr. Edet J. Amama
President, Association of Consulting Engineers Nigeria (ACEN).