

INAUGURAL ADDRESS OF THE 17th PRESIDENT OF THE WORLD FEDERATION OF ENGINEERING ORGANIZATIONS (WFEO), ENGR. MUSTAFA BALARABE SHEHU AT THE 2023 WFEO GENERAL ASSEMBLY TAKING PLACE AT THE CSVTS HEADQUARTERS IN PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC ON 14th OCTOBER 2023.

Courtesies....

Today, I stand before you with immense gratitude, pride as well as deep sense of humility as I accept the baton of leadership as the 17th President of the World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO). This momentous occasion fills my heart with joy, even as it reminds me of my responsibilities, knowing that our organization has placed its trust and confidence in me to lead us into a new era. This development has shown that WFEO as a global organization has demonstrated what it preaches in areas inclusivity for all and leaving no one behind. From the diversity of the audience at this General Assembly, I can safely say that my ascension to this position has attracted much interest, enthusiasm, and joy not only from my colleagues from Africa but indeed from all around the world. This in my mind could be because this is the first time WFEO has a President from Sub-Saharan Africa, my homestead, and the fact that this President is a product of grace, and the over whelming support and love I got from all regions of the world that made me run at the last General Assembly in Costa Rica, un-opposed. I am mindful that this trust and confidence in me comes with a lot of expectations to take the WFEO to a higher level than it is now. This, I assure you all, is possible especially if we all team up together and cooperate to make it happen. Together we can!

I cannot proceed without acknowledging the remarkable leaders who came before me, shaping WFEO into what it is today. To Jose Vieira, Gong Ke, Marlene Kanga, Jorge Spitalnik, Marwan Abdulhamid, Adel Al-Kharafi, Maria Prieto Laffarge, Kamel Ayadi, Barry Grear, Dato Lee Yee Cheong and all the other WFEO past presidents, I express my heartfelt gratitude for your mentorship, guidance, inspiration, and the invaluable lessons you imparted upon me. Your leadership has paved the way for me to take up this mantle, and I will do my utmost to continue building upon your legacies with effort to improve on it. I also urge you to

continue opening your doors for me to keep tapping on your experience and guidance for the benefit of the growth of the Federation.

It is appropriate here to express my deepest appreciation to my home organization, the Nigeria Society of Engineers (NSE), for their unwavering support and belief in my capabilities. Without your guidance and mentorship, I would not be standing here today. I am truly grateful for the opportunities you provided me in transforming me from the engineer as I joined the organization in 1990, to the leader I am today. At this point I want to acknowledge the contributions of prominent members of NSE that have contributed to the development of WFEO in the past and recently. Engr. Ife Akintunde and Engr. Joseph Uujamhan where Former Vice Presidents of WFEO, Engr. Mustapha Bulama of blessed memory who died in 2012 serving as National Member Representative, Engr. Alade Ajibola who was Advisor to WFEO President, Engr. Valerie Agberagba who was former Chair of Women in Engineering Committee and Engr. Yetunde Holloway who has just concluded her term as Chair of WiE Committee. The effort of these people together with the consistent effort of the former Chairman of International Affairs Committee of NSE, Engr. Ibrahim Khaleel Inuwa also of blessed memory, who ensured that NSE continues to play role in the affairs of WFEO all these years, made my ascension to this position possible. I am grateful to all of them, all the Past presidents who have nominated me in one position or the other in this journey as well as the Presidents who have been supporting my activities and travels towards discharging my responsibilities at all the positions I occupied. With this bigger responsibility, I certainly need the support of the Nigerian Government and NSE leadership more than ever before, in the next four years.

I would also like to acknowledge the leaderships (Engr. Martin Manuhwa, Carlien Bou-Chedid and Papias Kazawadi) of the Federation of African Engineering Organizations (FAEO) for consistently endorsing my candidature all the times in this journey. Your collective efforts have been instrumental in fostering regional collaboration and unity within the African continent. Your support has been invaluable, and I am humbled by the confidence you have placed in me to represent Africa on this global stage.

To all the National and International Members of WFEO, I extend my sincere appreciation to you for your belief in my ability to serve as a global servant leader.

I am mindful of the tremendous responsibility entrusted to me, and I pledge to promote and support all regions of WFEO, fostering inclusivity, and promoting the principles of equity and diversity.

Distinguished engineers, we are in a world marked by unprecedented challenges, from climate change to disasters such as floods, earthquakes to unsolicited conflicts and wars. All these result in loss of lives, destruction of infrastructure, and properties and displacement of people from their homes, the solutions to which are rooted in engineering. As engineers, we must always be ready to deploy our knowledge and expertise to rebuild these damaged or destroyed infrastructures for the wellbeing and sustenance of our people. However, to be able and capable of handling these challenges we must continuously equip ourselves with the right knowledge, skills, facilities, and equipment for the execution of these tasks. Therefore, continuous professional development in all its ramifications is not only desirable but essential.

While a lot is being done over the years in line with the core mandates of WFEO and our strategic plans, which I endeavor to continue and advance, I want to put special emphasis on the following (which are within the strategic plan) in the next two years:

- i. Membership statistics, growth, satisfaction, and improvement of the finances of the Federation through execution of projects.
- ii. Young Engineers/Future Leaders development with a view to equipping them with the right knowledge and skill sets to face the ever-changing dynamics of the profession.
- iii. Women in Engineering Development
- iv. Engineering Education and Capacity Building of our engineers and engineering institutions to ensure competitiveness and readiness to take on global engineering challenges as well as mobility across borders.
- v. Improved relationship with the United Nations, its various Agencies, the African Union, European Union, MENA and other international organizations including designing clear and concise pathways in attaining Washington Accord signatory status by our member institutions through our collaboration with the International Engineering Alliance.

- vi. Leading the global community in digital transformation, among which is the development and ethical utilization of Artificial Intelligence.
- vii. In line with the WFEO policy of promoting the attainment of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, we shall give special consideration to Africa and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in our projects and programs. This has become necessary as these are the regions where there are still considerable challenges in the attainment of the SDGs to ensure inclusivity and that no one is left behind.

Distinguished engineers, I believe that with your support and cooperation, these 7-point Agenda items are not too ambitious to achieve. I also need your support in ensuring that we run a transparent engineering institution by having seamless communication between all the member organizations and the leadership. We need to know your concerns and opinion on what ever we do on your behalf to enable us to keep doing better.

In conclusion, on behalf of the new Executive Board and Executive Council, I thank you for the trust and confidence you have in us and wish you safe journeys to your various countries.



Engr. Mustafa B. Shehu, *FNSE, FAEng.*
President, WFEO.