

The Guest of Honour – Hon. Minister, Professor NGABITSINZE Jean Chrysostome

WFEO- President Elect – Engr. Mustafa B. SHEHU

Immediate Past President, FAEO – Ing. (Mrs) Carlien Bou – Chedid

Members of FAEO Executive Board and the Council

Regional Presidents of FAEO here present

Presidents of various Engineering Institutions here present

Distinguished Invited Guests

Partners and Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am deeply humbled and honoured to deliver this speech to FAEO members and our esteemed guests. I thank my colleagues on the Board of FAEO for their expression of confidence in me, and I pledge to do utmost during this term of office to warrant your trust, your confidence and your support. I would like also to thank FAEO members and partners for the invaluable support and determination.

I would like to thank my predecessor, the Executive Board, all the members and partners at large for the efforts and team work that was manifested in the last two years where I have been serving the federation as the president elect. I'm humbled that for the two years that I have been here I felt that my fellow engineers have welcomed me and treated me with respect.

Honourable Minister,

The theme for today's conference is **"Unleashing Opportunities in the AfCFTA Implementation"** with an objective to highlight engineering opportunities and challenges to be properly dealt with at national, regional and continental levels, in order to achieve the Africa's agenda 2063 and SDGs. The key note speech revealed that **'AfCFTA is going nowhere without engineering'** and participants reiterated that there is need for a holistic framework to regulate engineering education and practices for mobility within the AfCFTA and have provided recommendations in the resolutions. However, in dealing with such FAEO believes that sustainable mitigations are possible with collaborative initiatives based on trust and mutual benefits which has been the basis for developing focus areas during my term as the 6<sup>th</sup> President of FAEO as summarized on the circulated flyer.

Allow me to take this opportunity to share some history of our organization and the role we are playing as an engineering organization to our esteemed guests. On May 8<sup>th</sup> 2012, in Nairobi, the general assembly agreed to merge the former Federation of African Organisations of Engineers (FAOE) and the African Engineering Forum (AEF) formed in 1972 and 2001 respectively and establish a central united home for all African Engineering Organisations under the name of Federation of Africa Engineering Organisations (FAEO). FAEO represents the African Engineering Agenda at the AU, WFEO and other international organisations. FAEO is currently composed of 42 countries with primary channels by which engineers, technologists and technicians working in particular technical knowledge, regulate professional practice, influence public policy, and maintain the traditions and reputation of the profession.

As I begin this new term as FAEO President, it is my honour and equally a humbling experience to accept the duty to serve diligently. I commit this afternoon that our achievements can never be measured by the quality of speeches we make, rather by the vigour we put in our minds to improve the living standards of our nations that we are representing here. I'm sure that this is not necessarily a moment to celebrate, but a moment to gather more strengths and drive in preparation to continue on FAEO's journey to deliver on its mandate of a better life for all by contributing in the implementation of AfCFTA strategy for the Africa we want.

During my term as president of FAEO, I will be focusing on firstly **institutional reforms**, whereby reforms will be carried out on the current FAEO governing documents in order to align them with the focus areas to pave way for development of a two-year action plan covering the period of my term of office.

Secondly by **enhancing partnerships** through strengthening existing partnerships and creating new ones with like-minded organizations and other potential collaborators in order to expand its resource base to effectively support its mandate. Therefore, more emphasis will be put in advocacy to for example creating independent feedback loop at the African Union and its organs to achieve Africa's desired transformation with engineering community's substantial contributions.

Thirdly by taking **digitalization as a game changer** whereby we shall digitize engineering practitioners' database in order to build a reliable and trusted source of engineering services and personnel data through professional engineering institutions in Africa.

The last but not the least, we shall be focusing on **enhancing equality, diversity and inclusion** - We will continue to support existing initiatives for youths, women and persons with disabilities in the engineering profession in order to becoming more relevant in providing sustainable and reliable solutions to the community and Africa as a whole.

As we continue this journey together, I would like to share the fact that according to the research carried out by the Royal Academy of Engineering; **“42% of the professional engineers believed policymakers had a poor understanding of engineering issues, with only 14% believing they had a good understanding”**.

This in turn results in other deficits such as weak linkages between industry, academia, professional regulatory bodies with research and development institutions. With this situation it would not be an exaggeration to say that engineering and engineers in Africa are like travellers in unexplored territory because it's easy to lose your way or to reach crossroads and not be sure which way to go.

Albert Einstein once said: **“We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them”**. Therefore, all stakeholders must have willingness and commitments to among others grow built environment consultancy firms and contractors in order to boost private sector involvements in promoting sustainable home-grown infrastructure solutions.

As I conclude this speech, I would like to call upon all of you to join hands with me in this journey as we make Africa a better place by allowing necessary institutional reforms, enhancing partnerships, digitalisation with enhancing equality, diversity and inclusion. I believe that many ideas grow better when they are shared with another

mind than the one where they sprang up. Hence, I call upon all of us to join hands and make this dream come true!

As Dr. Seuss once said: **“The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams”**. And the best way to predict the future is by creating it, ladies and gentlemen, let’s create ours together!

**I thank you all for your kind attention**