

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE WORLD FEDERATION OF ENGINEERING ORGANIZATIONS, ENGR. MUSTAFA B. SHEHU AT THE LAUNCH OF THE ENGINEERING CAPACITY BUILDING FOR AFRICA PROGRAMME ON 17<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2025 IN NAIROBI-KENYA.**

Courtesies...

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all, to the launch of this important flagship initiative of the World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO), the ***Engineering Capacity Building for Africa Programme***. The idea of the programme was conceived last year in cognizance of the fact that Africa is at the forefront of the priority Agenda of the United Nations and all its Agencies. It is therefore very much in order if WFEO gives similar priority attention to Africa. Furthermore, according to the Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024, only 17 per cent of the SDG targets are on track, while nearly half are showing minimal or moderate progress, and progress on over one third has stalled or even regressed. If we look at Africa, less than six percent of the 32 measurable SDG targets are on track to be achieved by 2030.

In recognition of the challenges of meeting the SDGs, the United Nations on the 25th of August 2023, at the 78th General Assembly adopted a resolution proclaiming 2024-2033 as the ***“International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development” (IDSSD)***. The UN charged UNESCO with driving the implementation of the Decade through an Executive Committee for which WFEO is a member. As your representative on the Executive Committee, I call on all of you to contribute to the success of the Decade by bringing proposals aimed at addressing pressing societal problems using engineering knowledge and skills. The General Assembly also stressed the need to bridge the divides within and between countries and highlights the importance of capacity-building.

Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, Capacity building is crucial for national development as it empowers individuals, institutions, and communities with the skills, knowledge, and resources to address challenges and drive sustainable progress, fostering resilience and long-term

growth. Capacity building purposefully minimize over-reliance on outside experts as sources of knowledge, resources, and solutions to community issues. By preventing a dependency relationship on outsiders from forming, capacity building encourages local people to take action on local issues themselves. The 2023 Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) identifies capacity-building as one of the five levers to bring about transformation operating on six entry points. This shows the vital role of capacity-building, which needs to be applied cohesively with and in support of other levers including governance, business and finance, individual and collective action, and science and technology.

In a UN resolution titled “Enhancing international cooperation on capacity-building of artificial intelligence”, it stresses “the need and urgency to bridge artificial intelligence and other digital divides between and within countries, and emphasizing the quality of access to the benefits of artificial intelligence, therefore stressing the importance of providing adequate public and private financing, mobilizing action-oriented means of implementation, such as knowledge sharing activities and the transfer of technology on mutually agreed terms, and capacity-building assistance for developing countries in line with their national needs, policies and priorities”.

It is in recognition of the above facts and to facilitate the achievement of the UN 2030 SDGs as well as the African Union Agenda 2063 (The Africa We Want), the World Federation of Engineering Organizations (WFEO) came up with the 10-year ***‘Engineering Capacity Building for Africa Programme (ECBAP)’***. The programme first gained support from the Chinese government through the China Association of Science and Technology (CAST), a National Member of WFEO and from the Federation of African Engineering Organizations (FAEO). Subsequently, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNDESA, AU-ASRIC, AAS, UNU and UNEP have pledged their support while many other organizations have indicated interest in joining. These organizations form the Steering Committee for the Programme. CAST has already provided the International Project Office located at Nankai University as well as some initial funding to support the office, which explains the reason we are here today. I sincerely thank the leadership of CAST for this generous support and solidarity. The support is further strengthened by

the presence of His Excellency HE Junke at this occasion. In addition to the IPO, we intend to have Capacity Building Centers in all the 5 regions of Africa. We may have more than one Centre in a region if the interest and need is there. The programme is to be executed by a Special Task Force led by Prof. Gong Ke (A Past President of WFEO) which will work closely with the Standing Technical Committee on Capacity Building led by Martin Manuhwa (A Vice President of WFEO) and will be responsible for ensuring an effective collaboration between all partners including UN agencies, engineering organizations in Africa and worldwide, governmental agencies and industrial and academic partners to enhance engineering capacity building in Africa for sustainable development. The over-arching goal of the programme is to enhance engineering capacity and bridge the skill gap in Africa in the global digital and green transformation, through engineering education, Continuous Professional Development (CPD), and technology transfer. While the provisional budget for the programme is \$10 million to be spread over the 10-year period, it is aimed at training and up-skilling more than 100,000 engineers for industry and infrastructure demands. Other details of the programme will be provided by Engr. Martin Manuhwa and Prof. Gong Ke during their presentations.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, as mentioned earlier, the programme is ambitious and can only be realized if all of us are committed to it. While we may get support from foreign governments and international organizations, that can never be enough if we do not contribute generously and participate fully. We must come to terms with the fact that the destiny of Africa is in the hands of Africans and there is nobody to blame but ourselves if we fail to develop. Therefore, our governments, engineering institutions, industries, academia and research organizations need to give full support continuously if we are realize the aims and objectives of the programme. I am glad we have high level representation from the government at this occasion. Our engineering institutions also must continuously be active in the affairs and activities of the WFEO in the years ahead by increasing our numbers and participating in the activities of all STCs/PICs/WGs as well as the various leadership roles.

Distinguished guests, while congratulating all of you for the launch of this programme in Nairobi Kenya, I assure you that similar activity will take place

soon in South Africa, Nigeria and other cities in Africa. I therefore thank again the leadership of CAST and Professor Gong Ke for the success of this event. I also thank Martin Manuhwa for developing the initial concept note for this programme and following up at every stage to ensure the success we are witnessing today. I am also lucky to have people like Eng. Nathaniel Matalanga to be in the Executive Council of WFEO during my tenure for the valuable contributions he has been rendering to me unconditionally and always, including issues concerning this programme. My appreciation to the leaderships of IEK and EBK who have been very supportive over the years and have shown seriousness and commitment towards all WFEO programs including this.

Congratulations on the launch and thank you very much!

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