

**Press Conference Speech By ACEN President, ENGR. GEORGE C. OKOROMA, FNSE,  
JP At The 50<sup>th</sup> Golden Jubilee Anniversary of ACEN Delivered on Monday 8th of  
November 2021 at Engineering Close, Victoria Island, Lagos.**

Past Presidents of ACEN,  
Distinguished Firm Members,  
Members of the Press,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

With a heart filled with great joy, I want to welcome you all to the 50<sup>th</sup> Golden Jubilee Press Conference of the Association for Consulting Engineering in Nigeria-ACEN.

I am elated beyond words, and at the same time, grateful to God who has made this day memorable.

I will share a bit about our history as an association, a look at our scorecard so far, pinpoint some challenges that are hampering the advancement of engineering consulting business in Nigeria, then I will give room for questions and answers.

Formerly known as the Association of Consulting Engineers in Nigeria, the Association for Consulting Engineering in Nigeria - ACEN is a body of registered independent private engineering consulting firms in Nigeria formed in 1971 by a team of 12 engineers led by Engr. F.A.O Philips of blessed memory.

The first meeting for the formation of the association was held at the Island Club on the 7th of August 1971 with 12 engineers in attendance. At this meeting, Engr. F.A.O. Philips and late Engr. A.O. Beckley were by consensus appointed Ad Hoc Chairman and Secretary respectively. At the next meeting held on the 9th of October 1971, Engr. Beckley had taken ill and Engr. V.O. Oyefodurin started to act as Secretary of the association.

In sequence, the scepter of leadership of the association has been held by the following engineers of impeccable quality:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Position</b>
Engr. F. A. O. Philips, FNSE	1971-1981	1st
Engr. Obi Obembe, FNSE	1982-1984	2nd
Engr. Chief Dr. A. A. Adejmo, FNSE	1985-1988	3rd
Engr. Dr. J. O. Sonuga, FNSE	1989-1991	4th
Engr. Chief V. O. Oyefodunrin, FNSE	1992-1993	5th
Engr. Dr. J. I. Folayan, FNSE	1994-1996	6th

Engr. I. A.A Okunoren, FNSE	1997-1999	7th
HRH Engr. M. O. Adesina, FNSE	2000-2001	8th
Engr. Y. O. Sagaya, FNSE	2002-2003	9th
Engr. Sir. E. J. Amana, FNSE	2004-2005	10th
Engr. Mrs. Mayen Adetiba, FNSE	2006-2007	11th
Engr. K.A. Adeola, FNSE	2008-2009	12th
Engr. I.S. Ogunbayo, FNSE	2010-2011	13th
Engr. Nuruddeen A. Rafindadi, FNSE	2012-2013	14th
Engr. Dr. Temilola Kenhinde, FNSE	2014-2015	15th
Engr. Suleiman H. Adamu, FNSE	2016-2017	16th
Engr. Charles Akinyele Akindayomi, FNSE	2018-2019	17th
Engr. George C. Okoroma, FNSE	2020-2021	18th

Since its inception, the association prides itself as a pool of independent-minded entrepreneurs of the highest technical skill, intellectual competence, and ethical orientation providing top-notch engineering consultancy services to improve the quality of life of the Nigerian people by being the first point of call for government and the private sector on issues of resilient product design, environmental impact assessments, construction, fabrication, operation and maintenance and rehabilitation of both public and private infrastructure.

Over the past five decades, ACEN member firms have executed dozens of monumental projects of economic importance in all sectors of the Nigerian economy while simultaneously serving as the bridge between the possible and the ideal amidst challenges.

Nationally, ACEN maintains excellent relationships with other engineering associations in Nigeria. These include the statutory body for the regulation of engineering in Nigeria - COREN, the Nigerian Society of Engineers (NSE), and other cadres of engineering profession.

Also, ACEN relates with other non-engineering organizations such as the Nigerian Association of Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA), Infrastructure Concession Regulation Commission (ICRC), etc.

Internationally, ACEN first applied to become member of Fédération Internationale des Ingénieurs-conseils (FIDIC) on 10th May 1976. And at the General Assembly Meeting (GAM) of 8th June 1977 in Helsinki, Finland, Nigeria, along with Hong Kong and Portugal were admitted as members of FIDIC, making Nigeria the fourth African country to become a member of FIDIC after South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Kenya.

Nigerian consulting engineers over the years have participated actively in the activities of FIDIC and taken prominent roles of leadership in this international organization. It is worthy of mention to state that our sixth President, Engr. Dr. Joseph Ibikunle Folayan, FNSE, FAEng was the first Nigerian and the first from Africa to be elected to the FIDIC Executive Committee, and he served from 1988 to 1992. Some years after, our twelfth President, Engr. Bayo K. Adeola, FNSE, FAEng also served as a member of FIDIC Executive Committee.

ACEN is also a member of the Group of African Member Associations (GAMA) of FIDIC (now called FIDIC AFRICA). It is interesting to mention that some past Presidents of ACEN were among the founding members of FIDIC AFRICA.

ACEN has also had her 11th President, Engr. Mrs. Mayen Adetiba, FNSE, FAEng served as the first and only female President of FIDIC AFRICA so far.

It might interest you to note that Engr. Mrs. Mayen Adetiba, FNSE, FAEng is the only female to have served as President of ACEN so far as well as the first Nigerian female Civil Engineer to attend FIDIC International Infrastructure Conference.

The two major official business meetings of ACEN since inception are the Extra-Ordinary General Meeting (EGM) and the Annual General Meeting (AGM). The EGM of the association is a mid-year gathering of the association to review the activities and scorecard of the organization for the first half of the year and to strategize for the remaining half of the year. The Annual General Meeting (AGM) is the closeout meeting of the association for the year where the annual report of activities of the organization, the success, and failures, and plans for the new year is considered. The EGM & AGM of the association has played host to some high-profiled Nigerians such as Vice President Prof. Yemi Osibanjo, the Honourable Minister of Transportation Chubuiké Rotimi Amaechi, Honourable Minister of Power, Works & Housing Mr. Babatunde Fashola, SAN, Honourable Minister of Science and Technology, Engr. Dr. Ogbonaya Onu, FNSE, FAEng, among others.

Before December 2007, ACEN membership was open to individuals and firm members. Since then, membership of ACEN is strictly for engineering consulting firms only. This is in line with FIDIC International standards. Currently, the association has a firm membership base of over 400.

As included in the organization's Memorandum and Article of Association, the Vision Statement of ACEN is *"To remain the ultimate reference business association of choice for organizations providing professional engineering consultancy services in Nigeria."*

To increase the visibility of ACEN across the federation, we segmented the entire membership base of ACEN into seven (7) zones led by Zonal Coordinators to strengthen the ideals of ACEN across the various states of the federation.

So far, these zones have been very effective in organizing “Business Evenings” to spore comparative interest and enthusiasm in member firms to upskill, learn, and relearn for improved quality consultancy service delivery to prospective clients.

We also created Special Interest Groups (S.I.P) to look at various areas of engineering challenges in Nigeria and make appropriate suggestions to government. The S.I.P cut across areas such as roads, electricity, water, transportation, construction, rehabilitation, etc.

In ACEN, we believe in succession and as such, we are committed to the development of young engineers in our firms. These young engineers are housed under the umbrella name “Future Leaders Forum (FLF) in line with FIDIC international and they are being prepared and tutored to carry on the baton of leadership of consulting engineering in the future.

To bring engineering consulting practice to be at par with international best practices, ACEN established the ACEN School of Engineering for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of young engineers and engineers in our member firms.

ACEN also publishes a tri-annual magazine called The Consulting Engineer (TCE) which is loaded with engineering articles written by engineers of repute and circulated to Member Firms, Government Ministries, Department, Agencies (MDAs), Universities, and other corporate entities for knowledge dissemination and advocacy.

So far, while we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our existence as an association, it is worthy of note to put on record that our members have not enjoyed good patronage from the government of our country and the people of Nigeria.

A major challenge that we are facing in discharging our duties aright as consulting firms in Nigeria is the government and Nigerians unrepentant penchant for foreign-made goods and consulting services.

This has led to low patronage of the services of consulting engineers in Nigeria as we now have to compete for contracts with foreign companies in Nigeria.

If our government and people cannot trust us their own to be able to execute their projects according to standards and specifications, then, consulting engineering which is the bedrock of sustainable infrastructural development of nations has a long way to go in Nigeria.

While we are pleased with the government’s policies on the Nigerian Local Content Act of 2010 and the Presidential Executive Order 5 of 2018 which are giant strides outlining procedures for Planning and Execution of Projects, Promotion of Nigerian Content in Contracts and Science, Engineering and Technology, we earnestly hope and pray that the process of implementation and enforcement will be internalized in all Ministries, Department, and Agencies (MDAs) of Government, International and Private Organizations across the length and breadth of our Nation.

Reminiscing on the journey so far, I can tell that we can do far more than we have done if given the chance. What we ask is for the government of this nation and our people to give indigenous

consulting engineers their due place and patronize them in issues of project designs, construction, operation, and maintenance.

If need be, we are willing to collaborate and partner with foreign consulting engineers in areas where we lack or need more expertise. What we are seeking and advocating for is a situation of net-zero foreign content in engineering consulting contracts awards in Nigeria.

Ladies and Gentlemen, sustaining an organization for 50 years is not an easy feat. Whatever we are today or hope to be in the future, we owe them all to the intellectual ingenuity of the engineers and firm members who have given their best that this association might live.

I thank you all for being here, and I wish all of us at ACEN a Happy 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

Thank you so much.

**Engr. George C. Okoroma, FNSE, JP**

President, ACEN.

November 8th 2021