

# **THE ENGINE OF LIFE**

**Text of the Address delivered by the Vice-Chancellor, University of Ilorin, Ilorin,  
Professor Is-haq O. Oloyede, on the Occasion of the Opening Ceremony of the Annual  
Civil Engineering Conference organised by the Department of Civil Engineering on  
Wednesday August 26, 2009 at the Auditorium, University of Ilorin.**

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It is an immense pleasure for me to welcome you too, as I had reason to say recently, august visitors to the University of Ilorin in the month of August. The University deems it a honour for you to be here today, and for the rest of the conference, in furtherance of this important academic exercise, a core component of our calling as academics. It is our collective resolve at the University of Ilorin to continually provide platforms for the meeting of minds and the cross-pollination of ideas that will impact on our today and shape our tomorrow. On behalf of us all at the University of Ilorin, I welcome you most sincerely.

Let me begin by commending the Department of Civil Engineering under the able headship of Dr. S.A. Raji for conceiving and delivering to us this national conference. If I am not mistaken, this is the third time in this year alone that the Department is providing an ample opportunity for the academic exchange of ideas. There was a workshop held early this year where the Kwara State Coordinator of Raw Materials Research and Development Council (RMRDC) was invited as a resource person. This was quickly followed by an innovative e-conference, the first of its kind in the University, where conference papers were presented online with participants and contributors from both the academia and the public conferring from the United States of America, United Kingdom, China and various parts of Nigeria. That we are gathered here today for an annual conference organised by the same Department is an eloquent testimony of the dynamism and resourcefulness of the Department. I congratulate Civil Engineering Department and the academic leadership provided there and I urge other Departments to tow the same line.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, it is well known to those that know that Civil Engineering involves the application of basic scientific and technological principles to the design and construction of facilities necessary for the welfare of the society; that it is concerned with such projects as mass movement of people through railways, harbours and docks, connecting communities through road systems and bridges, providing treated water and wastewater treatment, conserving and controlling water through the construction of dams. As such, civil engineers are important in the construction of tunnels, mining facilities, power projects, offshore structures, and in the design and construction of complex domestic, commercial, and industrial buildings. It is

obvious, therefore, that engineering is involved in everything whether it is built on the ground or inside the ground and it is apposite, nevertheless appropriate, to say that engineering is development and development is engineering.

In the light of the foregoing, you will thus agree with me that a large proportion of the problems confronting this country are engineering problems. Whether a building collapses killing several people or roads are badly designed or constructed, resulting in fatalities; whether electricity is epileptic or water supply is erratic; whether our products are attractive or people prefer foreign products, it is incontestable that engineers play a great role in the making of a nation. There is no way one would be in Abuja or Paris, Kuala Lumpur or London, New York or Madrid without appreciating the work of engineers, particularly civil engineers, in the development of such and several other cities.

I believe that our engineers still need to do more to make life better and make their impact felt more in Nigeria. That is why I am impressed that the issue of curriculum development towards meeting vision 20:2020 was brought to the front burner in the previous online conference of the Department and this time around, the same Department is thematising its impacts on national development, with the hope, I believe, that strategies that will make Nigeria truly developed infrastructurally and technologically will be addressed. There is no doubt that a crucial component of developing this country lies essentially in re-engineering our way of doing things.

The notion of development, to me, is generally physical and psychical, or consists of the external and the internal. All that we often emphasise is physical development in its ramifications: national, social, environmental, economic, etc. It is often assumed, consciously or unconsciously, that the development of the internal domain of the human mind, the psyche, is not important. This is a fatal error because without the internal, the external is in vain. National development in Nigeria is constrained to a large extent by the lack the development of the human soul and the effect of such lack manifests in all forms of criminality, corruption, injustice and everything antithetical to development that are observable in the country. Ultimately, of what relevance is going into the space when the little space within us is yet to be fully explored? What is the benefit

of going nuclear, a race among some countries now, when just the nuclear family cannot be maintained by many? While this is not to say that space exploration and nuclear technology are unimportant, it is rather to emphasise that one comes before the other and first things should be done first. The *engine of life* is God consciousness and if the engine is good and serviced, the sky cannot be the limit. But if *the engine of life* is faulty or dead in a person, then the situation of things becomes grave.

It is in this respect that I think this conference, which is truly national and successful through the participation of scholars and professionals from different parts of the country, as reflected in the abstracts booklet, would have even attracted more participants if it is not held in this month of Ramadan. This is because this is a month in which many people including several engineers, are re-engineering, or if you prefer, ‘rebranding’ their souls, with a view to achieving spiritual or psychical development. I want to suggest that next time, the organisers should consider this factor, which I am sure will make more participants to come, especially those who are not based in Ilorin.

It is time for us all to ensure that *the engine of life*, which everybody has or can have, is kept working always. It is time for us to appreciate the crucial roles we play in our different areas in reinventing the nation through our commitment to excellence in whatever area we are. It is time for us to ask ourselves of the roles we play in the development of the country and determine how effectively and efficiently we play such roles. It is time for engineers to practise the profession well so that our buildings would not collapse during or just after construction, our bridges would not crumble and our roads would be well tarred. I know that this is a collective effort and I know that all stakeholders have roles to play, not just the engineers.

Lastly, as I welcome you to “CIVIL 2009” and declare this conference open, I am sure that if we are civil in our ways, there will be no evil in our society. Once again, I welcome you to the University of Ilorin and I wish you *civil* conference proceedings.

Thank you for your attention.