

WELCOME ADDRESS DELIVERED BY PROF. A. M. AIBINU AT THE ADVANCED ENGINEERING INNOVATION RESEARCH GROUP (AEIRG) 2021 RETREAT HELD IN MINNA ON MONDAY, JANUARY 11TH, 2021.

FINISHING STRONG

Protocols:

Group Coordinators,
Senior Research Fellows,
Research Fellows,
Research Members,
Research Associates,
Invited Guests,
Guest Speakers,
Observers and friends of the Advanced Engineering Innovation Research Group (AEIRG),
Gentlemen of the Press,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

It gives me a tremendous pleasure to welcome you all to the 2021 Retreat of the Advanced Engineering Innovation Research Group (AEIRG) of the Federal University of Technology, Minna. I hope we are all keeping safe as we battle the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic?

We are here again to brainstorm in order to set agenda for the year 2021 on how this our noble and dignified Research Group will finish strong in 2021 by raising the ante of Research and Development (R & D) in the country through solution-based research breakthrough.

Despite the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, the attendant lockdown witnessed in the year 2020, the closure schools and other challenges that we encountered in view of the COVID-19 pandemic as a nation, I am excited to inform you all that the AEIRG has weathered these challenges with impeccable results. Some of our team members broke new grounds in terms of quality research output, publications of research findings in top-notch international journals, networking, securing juicy job placement for members and associates, and more importantly, we also recorded giant strides in terms of product development.

In 2020, AEIRGians recorded notable milestone by surpassing Two Hundred Million naira (₦200, 000. 000) mark in terms of grants. We have been able to accessed grants from: the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund), Kaduna State Government, Royal Academy of Engineering, UK and consultancy work with GIZ, Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), just to mention a few.

The total number of proposals submitted for funding in the year 2020 surpassed the sum of the number of proposals that we submitted in the year 2017, 2018 and 2019. It is germane to note that we still have some of our proposals under consideration for funding with different governmental agencies. We are praying and hoping for favourable consideration cum approval of these proposals.

In addition to the research grant awards, our Acadopreneurship mantra has led to cooperation with notable companies such as Kiakia Gas, Valuehandlers, Ingenium Digital and Innovantage.

In the pipeline for further collaborations this year are the proposed deals with Eclipse Power and Buypower NG. Also, we are still maintaining strong collaboration ties with our old industrial partners despite the lockdown and the attendant challenges that the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic posed.

I am glad to inform this auspicious audience that we have continued to maintain communication with them.

Employability for research associates, research members and friends of AEIRG also witnessed a remarkable progress in 2020. AEIRG earned over 23 postgraduate job prospects from some of our partners, collaborators and various companies in 2020. Similarly, we also earned over 50 internship slots in 2020 and we hope to do the placement this year.

In addition, we also introduced the concept of virtual research assistants in 2020 and this helped us to meet our target and at the same time keep safe from the COVID-19 pandemic. Let me also inform you all that investors have also shown interest in five major items produced by this Research Group, namely: Rona Tea(In collaboration with other partners), Intelligent Aquaculture Machine, Fuelless Generator, E-Waste Extraction and Laboratory Equipment Development. Investors have indicated interest in funding products of up to 100 million naira for each product. We also hope to register and complete intellectual property on some of the products.

The research group has also contributed to the fight against COVID-19 pandemic through the development of numerous products such as face shields, herbal tea, ventilators, disinfecting chambers, online examination systems and misty oil inhaler systems. We also hope to do more in the development of local herbs to boost immunity against COVID-19 infection.

The research group also organized 21 skill building online webinars in 2020. In addition, we have also been able to engage researchers from seven other higher institutions and encourage research and development activities in the organization.

Also worthy to mention is that the Research Group engaged members of our community by sharing information on Radio station about available grants opportunities for members of the University community. We hope to sustain this laudable initiative in 2021. However, despite the above-mentioned achievements, we have also faced litany of challenges, disappointments, and setbacks in 2020. We have tried our best to remain resolute and committed to our growth mantra and I fervently hope that solutions would be proffered to some of these problems during our brainstorming sessions.

Distinguished colleagues, the theme for this year retreat was succinctly coined out in order to develop our mantra for completing all outstanding research grants and survive the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic. In view of this, we have invited Pastor (Arc.) Shola Adesoye to deliver this year's keynote address. He will be sharing his experience on the importance of having a vision. I am optimistic that with a well-defined and SMART vision, we shall be able to finish stronger individually and collectively. Also, the Alumni President of the Federal University of Technology, Minna, Mal. Ahmad Yahaya Alhassan will be sharing his insightful thoughts on how we can work together to achieve a greater FUT Minna despite the ongoing challenges occasioned by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, our distinguished senior research fellows would be sharing experiences with us on contemporary topical issues while two key activities have been included in the programme of events to assist us in coming up with SMART goals for 2021 required for us to **FINISH STRONG**. Lastly, fellow AEIRGians, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, let me implore us to stay safe and follow all COVID-19 protocols expected of us while inside and outside this venue. We can finish this laudable race stronger by keeping safe. Thank you

Thanks,



Prof. A. M. Aibinu
Coordinator, AEIRG