



**Dr. Kase Lawal Address
American Institute of Chemical Engineers Centennial Conference – Minority
Affairs Committee Forum
Philadelphia, PA
Monday, November 17, 2008**

**Future Directions of the Oil and Gas Industries
and Opportunities for Minorities in These Industries**

Good morning and thank you again for that wonderful introduction and for presenting me with the (AIChE) award. I am honored to be with you here today speaking before the Minority Affairs Committee Forum of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend congratulations to the president, the executive board, the officers and the members of the AIChE for reaching this very important milestone in the history of the organization - the centennial anniversary.

I also commend AIChE for their dedication to advancing the field of chemical engineering and for its commitment to diversity through the Minority Affairs Committee Forum.

As you know, engineers of any type are a rather analytical group. **This reminds me of a joke I once heard...**

A man was crossing a road one day when a frog called out to him and said, "If you kiss me, I'll turn into a beautiful princess." He bent over, picked up the frog and put it in his pocket.

The frog spoke up again and said, "If you kiss me and turn me back into a beautiful princess, I will stay with you for one week." The man took the frog out of his pocket, smiled at it and returned it to his pocket.

The frog then cried out, "If you kiss me and turn me back into a princess, I'll stay with you and do ANYTHING you want." Again the man took the frog out, smiled at it and put it back into his pocket.

Finally, the frog asked, "What's the matter with you? I've told you I'm a beautiful princess, that I'll stay with you for a week and do anything you want. Why won't you kiss me?"

The man said, "Look I'm an engineer. I don't have time for a girlfriend, HOWEVER, a talking frog is really interesting!"

Engineers are definitely all about staying on task.

As a chemical engineer by training, I don't think that it would be a stretch to say that through our hard work, we touch virtually every aspect of people's lives, yet most are not aware of it. We are the catalysts for growth and discovery, for understanding process and for enhancing the quality of life.

Chemical engineers work across all sectors from petrochemicals, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, healthcare, design and construction, pulp and paper, food processing, specialty chemicals, polymers, bio technology, environmental health and the safety industries. It is this singular commitment to the work product that allows us to remain authentic to the profession.

We need to get back to the basics and back to the dynamics of discovery. Most of the heavy lifting for the profession is now being done mainly on the behalf of Corporate America and not in our nation's university research laboratories, as it should be.

Necessity is truly the mother of all invention, but often in our quest to realize pure profit we sometimes fail to remember that there must first be the IDEA. If our desire is to continue being a world leader, and I believe that it is, then we must constantly challenge ourselves to run faster and to jump higher. Danger lies ahead in remaining static and resting on the laurels of our past.

I stand here today in Philadelphia in the city where the Declaration of Independence was signed and where so many struggles for freedom in this republic took place. Two weeks ago we embraced a new dawn in the history of this nation and the whole world watched with awe and anticipation as we chart a new course to reclaim our prestige and position.

Now more than ever, we must continue to nurture the spirit of innovation and creativity. This collective action and responsibility is what enabled us to put a man on the moon, to understand the mysteries of the human genome, and to provide life-saving drugs for the world's populations.

Unfortunately, we have strayed from promoting the science, technology, engineering and mathematics, otherwise known as the STEM courses, at the elementary, high school, and college levels. Because of this, we have lost our competitive edge and have fallen woefully behind in developing a core of highly trained professionals to replace an aging American workforce.

Chemical engineers are in fact part of the nation's STEM brain trust. We are already facing a dwindling supply of experienced engineers. Major corporations operating in the Oil Patch feel the impact of this deficiency more acutely today than ever before. We won't have much of a future in the oil and gas industry if this critical shortage is not addressed. It not only impacts our ability to search for new energy resources, but it also contributes to our uncertain future and diminishes our ability to contribute to American ingenuity, expertise and skills.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with my personal story, let me share with you that it was the pioneers of the Civil Rights Movement that first attracted me to these shores to study in American universities; however, it was my interest in being a part of an independent Nigeria that encouraged me to follow my dreams. The oil was everywhere and I knew that I wanted to be a part of the industry. It was in the heart of the American South and later in the Southwest that I received the training that I needed at Fort Valley State University and Texas Southern University to pursue a successful career in the energy industry.

Let me say a word to those students who are presently matriculating through a chemical engineering program and to the new professionals - **keep your goals in sight**. Not long ago, I once sat where you are sitting now and I know the questions that you are asking yourself.

A benefit for you in this workforce supply shortage is that you will be highly sought for employment after graduation. However, the key to a real future in the oil and gas industry for minorities is in understanding that you must be both an employee and a knowledge entrepreneur.

As an employee, I encourage you to learn to use your unique skills and talents to add value in advancing the company's objectives for growth and revenue. However, as a knowledge entrepreneur, I encourage you to seek to become an adept – as in the Greek sense of a highly skilled person – to leverage your knowledge in this globalized society which knows no boundaries to ideas, to talent, and to enterprise.

I was formerly an employee of Shell Oil Company and Dresser Industries and I value the training and work experience that I received in those areas. But, I would not be where I am today if 23 years ago this year I did not ultimately step out on faith and found CAMAC Holdings.

Today, CAMAC International Corporation is a \$2 billion business entity with more than 300 employees in the United States, England, Nigeria and South Africa with a portfolio that includes assets in offshore West Africa and offshore South America.

As an energy consumer, I am sure that you have been following with your wallets and bank accounts the fluctuating price of oil over the past year. All industry veterans know that we have to have strong stomachs because oil and gas exploration and production is not for the faint of heart.

This learned behavior comes from riding the sometimes unpredictable cycles. One day your product may be up and it was just this past July when oil was averaging a \$147.00 per barrel. And, then several months later it is down and averaging below \$60.00 per barrel. Some might say that oil executives are eternal optimists with the glass is half-full philosophy.

The future of the oil and gas exploration and production industry for independently owned companies such as CAMAC is in the power of partnership. Partnership agreements are the only way a company the size of CAMAC can succeed and defray the high production and overhead costs associated with this industry.

For us, this is the true meaning of - synthesis - or the composition or combination of parts or elements to form a whole. Armed with this business plan, the CAMAC group of companies successfully leveraged its technical knowledge, access to the resources and an initial niche strategy of acquiring marginal oil fields to develop a presence in the Nigerian oil sector.

And when we say that we keep good company – we mean it. CAMAC and its Nigerian based affiliate company, Allied Energy PLC, were responsible for bringing CONOCO, Statoil, and BP back to Nigeria after a lengthy absence in the 1990s. In 2005, CAMAC/Allied signed a joint partnership agreement with the Italian energy giant, ENI and their subsidiary, Agip. Allied Energy together with BP/Statoil was the first oil consortium to discover oil in commercial quantity in deep water offshore West Africa in 1995.

CAMAC is on track for producing first oil from this deepwater discovery. We are constantly searching for and evaluating new assets. We also actively looking at optimizing those assets by not only exploring and producing crude oil, but reviewing these prospects for LNG production and production for the secondary markets as well.

CAMAC had a vision of its future and that vision was to become a valued strategic partner for major oil companies in offshore West Africa E & P. We were successful in that vision. Along with our partners, the CAMAC group of companies has invested over \$2 billion in West Africa in creating jobs, training, and skill capacities.

CAMAC has grown to become the 2nd largest African American owned company in the United States. CAMAC was named the 2006 Black Enterprise Magazine *Company of the Year* and charted on the 2006 and 2007 Forbes Magazine List for as one of the 400 largest privately-owned businesses in the United States. In 2007, CAMAC was designated the 8th largest privately owned business in the city of Houston.

It's no coincidence that investors have beaten a path to emerging markets located in offshore West Africa where CAMAC has become a leader in the energy industry. Frequently, these emerging markets boast an impressive return of the investment for business people and stakeholders.

This is the principal reason that CAMAC's subsidiary, Allied Energy PLC., is seeking a listing on the Nigerian Stock Exchange. And although the world's stock markets are currently in a correction, this too is another cycle. When the markets complete their course, Allied Energy Plc will be the first Upstream oil company to offer shares to the public in Nigeria.

As an African American born in Nigeria, I could not be more proud to continue the Allied vision of being a pioneer. Allied Energy Plc will empower Nigerians with the opportunity to own a piece of the oil wealth for which the country is so endowed with.

In closing, let me again thank the American Institute for Chemical Engineers for extending this invitation for me to speak this morning. I appreciate your time and I have enjoyed visiting with you.

It is clear that the future direction for the oil and gas industry is bright as great discoveries in process and in application await each of us in our respective corners of the world. Additionally, I am also encouraged by the opportunities now available for minorities to pursue careers in chemical engineering.

You are part of our nation's STEM brain trust and I welcome the new energy that you will bring to our profession of chemical engineering. Your bright ideas and refreshing approach as employees and as knowledge entrepreneurs are needed in order for the United States to recapture our position as leaders in engineering and leaders in the world.

American essayist and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson once encouraged us to step beyond our boundaries to engage a future of new possibilities. Emerson said to **not go where the path may lead, but to go instead where there is no path**. I think that if we do this, then we will be well prepared for the future. Thank you and enjoy the rest of your morning.