

EDO NATIONAL ASSOCIATION IN THE AMERICAS, INC.

14th Annual National Convention
Wyndham Hotel and Resorts
Elizabeth, New Jersey, USA.

September 2 - September 4, 2005

COMMUNIQUE

The 14th annual national convention of the Edo National Association in the Americas, Inc. (ENA) was held in Elizabeth, New Jersey, from September 2 - 4, 2005. Members of the Edo Club of New Jersey hosted the convention, with their President, Mr. Robert Uyi Igbinovia, as the Convention Chairman.

The ENA convention is a yearly event that provides an atmosphere and forum for social interaction and meeting old friends and making new ones, while at the same time affording Edo people opportunity to reflect on the manifold socio-economic issues confronting the people of the state. Candidly, this year's convention was every bit different from the other conventions in the past. The atmosphere at the convention was a mixture of gaiety and subduedness due to the effect of the devastation of Hurricane Katrina that had visited Edo people residing in the coastal areas of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama a week prior to the convention. Despite the horrible effects of the natural disaster and its destruction of the city of New Orleans, which somewhat stymied and doused the festive mood of the convention, Edo people in the Americas and other parts of the world thronged New Jersey for the yearly event.

The convention attracted congeries of Edo indigenes and people of many different nationalities from all walks of life including high-level government functionaries, intellectuals, businesspersons, and many distinguished Edo sons and daughters from all over the world. Some of the dignitaries and notable Edo indigenes who came from Nigeria to attend the convention included Mr. Kingsley Osadolor, Edo State Commissioner for Information and Orientation, who delivered Governor Lucky Igbiniedion's address; Mr. Lucky Imasuen, Chief of Staff to Edo State Governor; Chief Edebiri, the Esogban of Bein Kingdom, who conveyed the goodwill message of our Royal Father, the Oba of Benin; Chief Igori; Hon. Emmanuel Arigbe-Osula of the Nigerian House of Representatives, Mr. and Mrs. Omoigui, former Surveyor General of Nigeria and retired High Court Judge respectively; Chief. Mike Ozekhome, a renowned lawyer and human right activist; Hon. S. Osagie, Member of Edo State House of Assembly, Arch. Mike Onolememe, Mr. Sam Omede, Member, Iyanomon Federal Rubber Board; Mr. Victor Ebonwonyi, Chairman, Oredo Local Government; Mr. Christopher Agbonwanegbe, former Edo State Commissioner for Agriculture and Mineral Resources; Mr. Emovoen, Chairman of PDP, Egor Local Government; and Mr. Agbonkonkon, who introduced participants to "Otu-Eyotor," laying solid foundation for rebuilding Edo society. Others at the convention included Professor Aisiku, who delivered the keynote speech titled "Excellence in Education and Culture for the New Millennium;" Honorable Justice Aluyi, who delivered a lecture on "Marriage and Culture;" Dr. Irene Isoken Oronsaye-Salami, who gave a speech on "Emerging from the Shadows: Changing Pattern in Edo Women's Political Participation;" Ms. Ifueko Omoigui, Chairman, Federal Board Of Inland Revenue/Joint Tax Board, who delivered a speech on "How to Improve Youth Development in Edo State;" and of course our dynamic Dr. Rosaline Okosun, who directed the fundraising activity at the convention.

In keeping with the custom and culture of ENA convention, meetings for the discussion of the internal matters of the ENA were held, speeches were delivered, lectures were given, presentations were made, and cultural activities were displayed. The conclusions and resolutions reached at the meetings as well as the points and gist of the lectures and speeches aggregated to form the substance of the official pronouncement of the convention. At the

conclusion of the three-day event on September 4, 2005, participants responded to the various issues presented as follows:

§ Accentuated the need for us to continue to come together to reflect on our problems and how we can assist to change the condition of our people and develop Edo State.

§ Affirmed that efforts toward the promotion of security to ensure protection of persons and their properties should be of premier concern and attention of Edo State government.

§ Flayed the security measure the state government has proposed toward combating the waves of violent crimes in the state, describing it as unattainable considering the enabling environment in the society that allowed robbers to operate with impunity.

§ Stressed that the state government must be seen and perceived as actually and truthfully committed to the welfare and security of all the people in Edo State.

§ Called on the state government to intensify its effort in fighting crimes in the state by providing the necessary resources to enable law enforcement agents to combat the waves of violence crimes and robbery in the state.

§ Recognized the need for the ENA to be sending home delegates to see what the government is doing as a way to ensure understanding partnership for the development of Edo State.

§ Recognized the decline of quality education due to government neglect, fraudulent educational practices, and poorly trained and poorly paid teachers.

§ Acknowledged that Edo people in the Diaspora are the main sustenance of our people back home and commended the efforts and the many initiatives undertaken by Edo indigenes in the Diaspora toward the restoration of quality education in Edo State.

§ Recognized the need to revisit our education policy and make our culture the basis of our school curriculum to better educate our people based on what we are.

§ Stressed the need for us as a people to have control over and promote our culture such as refurbishing our cultural and historical sites like the Benin Moat and others.

§ Recognized and punctuated the need to underscore that Edo people have one common ancestral origin and are multi-dialectical, as opposed to being multi-lingua.

§ Emphasized the need and necessity for Edo people to develop and embrace one common Edo language as a basis and instrument for unity.

§ Acknowledged the urgent need for gender equality and women empowerment as a way to enhance equity in our society.

§ Recognized and acknowledged the roles Edo women can play and are already playing in politics and government by some women and that the time for women to change in their political participation has arrived.

§ Acknowledged that although women are gradually making strides in government and politics, a great deal still needs to be done to have women at equal par with their male counterparts.

§ Recognized that the creation of proper environment, responsive government, education, family unit and value, religion, and cultural appreciation are the necessary requirements for effective youth development.

§ Recognized the need to involve youth in understanding and appreciating how to create wealth.

The following resolutions attracted broad support at the convention:

§ Need for internal restructuring of the ENA as a way to properly harness its resources toward the development of Edo people.

§ Creation of a special relief fund to provide assistance to the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

§ Need to develop mechanisms for effective coordination of relief effort to all Edo people affected by Hurricane Katrina.

§ Recognition that Edo people should be more involved and concerned with talking solutions to difficulties rather than voicing grievances and talking our problems all the time.

The Saturday evening will remain in the memory of everyone who attended the convention for a long time. Honestly, the evening function on Saturday witnessed some miscues, avertable debacle at the food service, and the presence of the local authorities that threatened to abruptly abort the function. We applaud all participants for remaining calm during the unpleasant experience. We also applaud all participants for their strength of character and allowing the resolve and fortitude for which Edo people are known in the midst of difficulties to carry the day, which created something wholesome out of what would have been a total disaster on Saturday evening. Special commendation must also go to Dr. Dan Austin and Mr. Edwin Edebiri for their remarkable acts and nobility of thoughts that helped to rescue the situation. The highlight of the evening was the ushered ingress of the ENA Secretary General, Mr. Osagie Odeh, a resident of New Orleans and victim of the deadly aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, who had to fly in from the evacuation center in Houston, Texas. Edo, we must, in the names and spirits of our ancestors, give thanks to the Almighty God for all his mercies.

In all, the New Jersey convention has come and gone. It concluded on Sunday afternoon. While it takes a great deal of planning, organizing, and dedicated people to successfully carry out a big event of the magnitude of the ENA convention, it is to be noted that the actual act of bringing about an event as grand and enormous as the ENA convention cannot be completely devoid of lapses and hiccups. For those that may not be satisfied because of the experience on Saturday evening, it is apropos that appeasing words be offered, and without equivocation, we do so very sincerely and apologetically through this medium. We are humans and cannot vaunt infallibility, but our ability to realize and willingness to accept our mistakes and then take adequate measures to prevent them in future are what matter. Admissively, we are not perfect in what we do and certainly have some areas that require improvement. However, we must continue to do the best we can and pray to God to always guide and give us the strength of will and wisdom to learn and improve.

Long Live ENA! Long Live Edo!! Long Live Nigeria!!!

Respectfully submitted by,
Convention Chairman, Robert Uyi Igbinovia