



IJAW NATIONAL CONGRESS OF THE AMERICAS (INC-AMERICAS)

Motto: Leadership by service

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COMMUNIQUE OF THE MAIDEN CONVENTION OF THE IJAW NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAS (HOUSTON-2024), HELD IN HOUSTON, TEXAS, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

1. Preamble

The Ijaw National Congress of the Americas (INC-Americas) hosted a grand, colourful and successful maiden Convention with the theme ***“Nurturing Partnerships for Symbiotic Relationship Towards Shared Social and Economic Prosperity”*** from Friday, May 10th, to Sunday, 12th, 2024 at the Hilton Gardens-Inn, Houston, Texas, United States.

In his opening remarks, **Professor Benjamin Ogele Okaba**, the President of the Ijaw National Congress Worldwide, extended his warm welcome and thanked everyone from home and abroad for their selfless sacrifice and presence at the inaugural Ijaw National Congress of the Americas (INC-Americas) 2024 Convention.

The President commended Mr. Kenneth Anga, the Chairman of INC-Americas, INC-Americas executive committee (EXCO), and members for their effort in organizing this significant event intended to unite all Ijaws people across the world. According to the president, the Ijaw National Congress Worldwide serves as the umbrella socio-cultural body representing all Ijaw people globally.

2. Participation:

In attendance were community, political, business leaders of Ijaw nation, Niger Delta, other Nigerians, and Friends of Ijaws from across the world. Governor of Bayelsa State, **His Excellency (Senator) Douye Diri**, the Chairman of the Council of Ijaw Traditional Rulers and Elders (CITRE) and King of Ekpetiama Clan, HRM King Bubaraye Dakolo and Queen Timi Dakolo, the Minister of State, Petroleum Resources (Oil), Senator Heineken Lokpobiri, Former INC Worldwide President, Chief Joshua Bernard Fumudoh, Chief Timi Alaibe, Col. Milland Dixio Dikio (Rtd), Princess Ebisine Adesola, Elder Gabriel Benamaisia, Engr. Ebipamowei Wodu, the leader of the Bayelsa House of Assembly and other Honorable members, and over 300 delegates from across the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Europe.

3. Technical Session

The convention's technical session was addressed by resource persons, who focused on the broad theme and sub papers:

Mobilizing the Ijaw diaspora for homeward investment in new economic-growth towns development programs for Ijaw communities in Nigeria. The technical session also explored in detail three (3) specific sub-themes that addressed mechanisms for the following:

- i) Mobilization of financial and technical resources through ***An Ijaw Diaspora Community Trust*** to be registered under legal jurisdiction of the United States of America,
- ii) Business Ideas and Opportunities for ***Real Estate Development SPV (Special Purpose Vehicle)*** that is Private-sector led, commercially driven and market-oriented, supported in an appropriate environment that builds investors' confidence.
- iii) Partnership arrangements with global and local Stakeholders and Investors to pool diaspora and local resources defined by a shared vision and mutual benefit.

4. Ijaw Culture and Heritage Center (ICHC)

The Convention also presented a vision for the establishment of **An Ijaw Culture and Heritage Center (ICHC)** to be built in the Houston Area to promote Ijaw culture and heritage as a tool to relaunch into global friendship and solidarity.

5. 2024- Maiden Award and Recognition by INC-of Americas

The Convention also presented Awards and Recognitions to outstanding Ijaw Sons and Daughters namely:

- **H.E (Dame) Patience Ibifaka Jonathan**, Former Nigerian First Lady, (Ijaw Diaspora Goodwill Ambassador Award)
- **Senator Heineken Lokpobiri**, Minister of State Petroleum Resources (Oil) (Ijaw Diaspora Icon of Resource Preservation Award)
- **HRM King Bubaraye Dakolo**, Renowned author and Ibenanaowei of Ekpetiama Kingdom, the Chairman of Council of Ijaw Traditional Rulers and Elders (CITRE), (Ijaw Diaspora Heritage and Culture Ambassador Award)
- **H.E. (Senator) Douye Diri**, Governor of Bayelsa State (Ijaw Diaspora Icon of Unity and Social Justice Award)
- **H.E. (Sir) Siminalayi Fubara**, GSSRS, Governor of Rivers State (Ijaw Diaspora Icon of Peace and Social Development Award)

6. Key Discussions

6.1 Framework for Diaspora Investment: The convention explored the concept of a USA-registered **Ijaw Diaspora Community Trust** as a **Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)**. This structure would facilitate the pooling of financial and technical resources from the diaspora for investment in Ijaw communities in Nigeria.

6.2 Benefits of Unit Trust: The convention highlighted the advantages of a Unit Trust structure for the Ijaw Diaspora Community Trust. This includes flexibility, transparency, accountability, tax efficiency, and asset protection.

6.3 Overcoming Challenges: Discussions addressed concerns about trust deficits, knowledge gaps, and potential conflicts. Strategies to foster transparency, education, inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, and collaborative leadership were emphasized.

6.4. Legal Framework: The convention explored the legal guarantees and integrity provided by the United States legal system for Unit Trusts. The importance of a well-defined Deed of Trust and adherence to relevant laws and regulations was stressed.

6.5. Technology Integration: The role and important place of technology in managing equity subscriptions, ensuring transparency, and enhancing security was discussed. Potential solutions like cloud computing, blockchain, Artificial Intelligence powered analytic tools, and mobile apps were explored.

7. Business Model for New Town Development:

The convention examined the potential of new town development programs as a vehicle for wealth redistribution. The discussion covered business opportunities in real estate, infrastructure, tourism, agriculture, agro-technology, and industrial parks.

8. Partnership with Government, Private Sector and community:

The need for collaboration with governments of Ijaw States to facilitate land acquisition and provide essential infrastructure for new towns was recognized. Land acquired from communities should give community landowners appropriate market value including equity-Interest using corporate-community structures.

9. Resolutions

9.1 The Convention welcomed the coming to be of Ijaw National Congress of Americas (INC of the Americas). Delegates were particularly happy with the new thrust of organizing Ijaw Diaspora in the direction of productive and value creating social and economic activities that are private-sector led, commercially driven, market-oriented, taking advantage of knowledge, legal foundation of the United States, Technology and such other advances into specifically pooling Diaspora financial and technical resource throw developing new Towns in Ijaw communities in Nigeria.

9.2. Delegates also adopted the establishment of Ijaw Culture and Heritage Center to be developed in the Houston Area.

9.3. The Convention recommended the following persons to form a Business and Investment Advisory Committee of INC of the Americas to work with competent Technical and Business Development Partners to establish a separate SPV for the ICHC.

9.4. Those Recommended into the Business and Investment Advisory Committee of INC of the Americas

- i. Mr. Kenneth Anga (Chairman)
- ii. Chief (Pastor) Jenifer Borel (Vice Chairman)
- iii. Prof. Chris Abili (Secretary)
- iv. Ronald Nkem Igbikiowubo (Assistant Secretary)
- v. Ebikeme Amafini (Auditor)
- vi. Amaopusenibo Shedrack Fubara (Coordinator)
- vii. Timi Ogun (Legal Adviser)
- viii. Dr. Ariayefah Icho (Treasurer)
- ix. Dr. Ibifiri Fubara (Financial Secretary)
- x. Engr. Isaac Thankgod (Organizing Secretary)
- xi. Zee Nagberi (Public Relations Officer)
- xii. Nyengiebi Felicia Akamande (Ex Officio Member)
- xiii. Representative of the INC President

9.5. Delegates adopted the following key elements of the proposal presented to the convention to be pursued and materialized through a Steering Committee for establishment of:

- (1) An **Ijaw Diaspora Community Trust** to be registered in the United States.
- (2) A United States Registered **Real Estate Development Company (REDC)** to employ the standards and practices, proven to have been successful in the United States, and has created a stable middle class and built generational wealth.
- (3) The following person were recommended into the Steering Committee:
 - i. HRM King Bubaraye Dakolo (Chairman)
 - ii. Professor Adiebonye Eunice Jumbo-Abinye (Vice Chairman)
 - iii. Dr. Emomotimi John Agama (Honorary Technical Adviser)
 - iv. Dr. Patterson Ogon
 - v. Honorable Mrs. Ebizi Ndiomu-Brown
 - vi. Mr Ken Etete
 - vii. Miabiye Kuromiema (Coordinator)

- viii. Representative of Ijaws owned Foundation
- ix. USA based Licensed Financial Adviser
- x. USA based Financial Services Specialist Lawyer
- xi. Representative of INC NEC
- xiii. Representative of Government of Bayelsa and Central Zone
- xiv. Representative of Government of Rivers State and Eastern Zone
- xv. Representative of Government of Delta State and Western Zone

10. INC Worldwide President's Remark

The Convention affirmed the position of the INC Worldwide President Prof. Benjamin Okaba on:

- i. The importance of recognizing the bond that unites the Ijaw people: unity of the Ijaw Nation is our strength.
- ii. All sister Ijaw organizations in the US and Canada are encouraged to register with the INC-Americas through whom they are to be affiliated with INC Worldwide.
- iii. The creation of two additional Ijaw states in Nigeria.
- iv. The firm support and solidarity for H.E Sir Siminalayi Fubara and wished to warn all detractors of his administration to stop further sabotage and allow the Governor to deliver the dividend of democracy in a peaceful and prosperous Rivers state.
- v. The Convention frowned at the continuous degradation of our environment through the exploration and exploitation of oil and gas by the Nigerian State and IOCs.
- vi. Finally, should the Nigerian State fail to address these concerns the Ijaw people may be forced to explore the option of exiting the Nigerian State.

11. Conclusion

The Convention thanked the Governor of Bayelsa state and other political, business and community leaders for personally attending the maiden edition of the INC of Americas' Convention. The Convention called on the Governor to bring alongside his Governor colleagues to share in the vision of the Diaspora Ijaws. The Governor was also requested to create a diaspora desk with technical knowledge and visionary leadership to provide coordination with the Government of the State and People in Diaspora.

Finally, the Congress adopted Houston, Texas, as the venue for the INC-Americas 2025 convention.

God bless Ijaw National Congress of the Americas!
God bless Ijaw National Congress Worldwide!!
God bless Ijaw Nation!!!

Signed on behalf of the Ijaw National Congress of the Americas (INC-A).



Mr. Kenneth Anga
Chairman, INC-Americas



Prof. Chris Abili
Secretary, INC-Americas