



IBOM PEOPLES CONGRESS USA, INC.

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“To those people in the huts and villages of half the globe struggling to break the bonds of mass misery, we pledge our best efforts to help them help themselves, for whatever period is required, not because the Communists may be doing it, not because we seek their votes, but because it is right. If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich”. John F. Kennedy

AN OVERVIEW OF 2006 IPC SUMMIT AT UYO

The 2004 Houston summit was obviously a prelude to the Uyo summit. It should be recalled that the baseline of progress in the state or lack of it thereof was what triggered the Houston Summit. Perhaps none was more evident at that time (December 2003) than the deplorable road condition in and around Uyo – the state capital – which was so bad that a pregnant woman could easily be induced into a premature labor.



Dr. Brimmy Olaghere – a Prof. of Econometrics Addressing the Uyo summit. Beside him were: Mr. Eugene Okon, Dr. Edemma Udoh, Dr. Tom Mbeke-Ekanem, and Hon. Patchy Umoh, Comm. for Information

IPC gathering at Houston witnessed some of the best minds among us. One thing and one thing alone brought us out from every nook of the world to Houston under one roof. This was the desire to bring about development in our homeland - Akwa Ibom State. It is pertinent to mention that economic package presented in the Houston Summit attracted most of the participants. Many in Nigeria who wanted to attend the summit could not do so because they

were denied visa at the American Embassy. This situation even affected the Commissioner for Economic Development, Dr. Ebebe Ukpong, who eventually arrived a few days later.

During the Houston summit of May 8-9, 2004, we came up with a communiqué that witnessed an unprecedented 3½ -hour presentation to the State Executive Council, which was chaired by the Gov. Victor Attah on July 19, 2004.

The 2006 Uyo Summit

The Uyo summit, which was planned right after the Houston summit, became necessary for the simple reason that Akwa Ibom is where the economic and political impacts were intended. The reason for taking the second summit home was to reinforce our commitment, replicate what we did in Houston and give Akwa Ibomites who couldn't attend the 1st Summit the opportunity to meet, interact and explore all the available business opportunities that would be at their disposal.

Without a doubt, the summit was to avail everyone the uncommon opportunity of asking ourselves those profound questions just as we had the rare opportunity of deliberating on some key issues that inhibit our growth. A great many of those who couldn't make it to Houston were given opportunity to avail themselves of the historic event.



Then Commissioner of Lands, Godswill Akpabio being introduced by Dr. Edemma Udoh at the summit

The goal of the 2nd Summit at Uyo in September 2006 was by no means devoid of the general agenda adopted in Houston in May 2004. Rather the package was a lot more comprehensive in line with the myriad of problems in Akwa Ibom State, nay Nigeria.

Immediately following the presentation to the Executive Council on July 19, 2004, various meetings were held. We, on three occasions, met with Hon. Commissioner for Economic Development Dr.

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Ebebe Ukpong and his cabinet on matters of economic development and infrastructural maintenance in the state as referenced in the communiqué.



From left: Prof. Hilary Inyang, IPC BOT Chairman, Barr. Uduak Ukpeh, Mrs. Victoriia Udoh, Prof Richard King.

The ministry opted to adopt as part of its projected plans, four major components of the communiqué, namely: "Benchmark Future Strategies..."; "Petroleum Monitoring Agency"; "Development of Small Scale and Medium Enterprises"; and "Civil Service Reforms".

Due to the diverse nature of the communiqué, we held a meeting with the Commissioner for Economic Development on some social issues within the state. That meeting attracted representatives of NGOs, two Americans officials: Mr. Nicholas J. Levintow of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, US Department of State, and Ms. Amanda Johnson, Political Officer, United States Consulate General, Lagos, Hon. Bassey Dan Abia, Attorney General, and Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Economic Development, Dr. Valentine I. Attah.

Another meeting took place with the heads of the Ethical and Attitudinal Re-orientation Commission (EARCOM) located at Obio Imo Street, Uyo. The officers in attendance were the Chairman of the Commission – Mr. Esemey Eyiboh and Mr. Patchy Umoh who later became the Commissioner for Information.



Mr. Carl Greene, American businessman from Washington DC. and Prof. Des Wilson at the summit

As the name suggests, the tasks saddled on this agency was enormous: a near mission impossible. This was an area we never covered in our Houston summit. Since the commission focused on matters of general concern such as student cultism, corrupt practices, social deviance, etc. in the state, IPC did, however, plan at that time to liaise with the Commission in this fight.

A meeting was also held with Dr. Aloysius A. Etok, Chairman, Fortune Schools in Uyo. Dr. Etok was one of the business moguls who attended the communiqué presentation at the Executive Council on July 19, 2004. During the meeting we discussed the need for IPC to become involved in providing quality books to schools and libraries in the state. We also met again with the Commissioner Ebebe Ukpogong who represented the governor at the Akwa Ibom National Convention in Washington DC in August 2004 and he informed us that his ministry had made recommendations to the governor.

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Prof. Brimmy Olaghere from Washington DC addressing the audience



IPC officials putting heads together



Dr. Tom Mbeke-Ekanem and a Turkish industrialist at the summit. Behind him, late Mrs. Emma Brown



Dr. Abel Udoh and two Turkish industrialists. On his left, Nigerian Consulate officer in Turkey

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Conclusion

At the risk of being branded as Socialist(s), the quotation attributed to Leninism is apt here. To wit, “experience confirms that [in general], the ruling classes never relinquish power voluntarily.” This has been the case with Nigeria, as we examine the allocation of oil blocks to the elites, mostly from one part of the country, or the beneficiaries of the so-called oil subsidy, who will go as far as mounting legal challenge to maintain the status quo. The Niger-Delta in general, or Akwa Ibom State in particular, would continue to be a basket case of the nation, even though the area is the bread basket of the nation, but for the strong protest, objections and advocacies of a few voices, ranging from the official political fights of governors like Victor Attah, to the more militant Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). Herein lies the reason why the initiation of IPC became important; to play the advocacy role by carving a niche for itself to supplement the ongoing battle for the progress and development of Akwa Ibom State, within the context of the ongoing fight for justice and equity, especially in the distribution of wealth, be it within Akwa Ibom State, or for Akwa Ibom State as a part of the Nigerian polity.

IPC’s fight against injustice and inequity has been both inward-looking and outward-looking. Inward looking as IPC reviews the events in Akwa Ibom State and fights to ensure that guardians of power within Akwa Ibom are reminded of their responsibilities as servants of the people; outward looking as IPC fights to ensure that Akwa Ibom, as a part of Nigeria, is not disadvantaged through policies and programs that overlook Akwa Ibom’s contribution to the nation. In all instances, justice, fairness and equity remain IPC’s cornerstone, and explains why IPC has stood on its principles even if that means collaborating with the government of Akwa Ibom State under Governor Attah to stage the gubernatorial debate during the Uyo Summit, while equally condemning the seeming undemocratic approach taken by the same Governor Attah during the PDP primary elections. That is why IPC supported and later congratulated Governor Godswill Akpabio for winning the 2007 gubernatorial elections, and equally protested against the rampant insecurity in Akwa Ibom State under the administration of Governor Godswill Akpabio.

Beyond the political sphere, IPC has also made efforts to improve the economic wellbeing of Akwa Ibom State starting with the first summit in Houston in 2004 which unveiled a list of about 80 small businesses. During the second summit at Uyo in 2006, IPC went above and beyond with activities such as the Turkey OSTIM initiative and subsequent endeavours undertaken through its various committees. As noted in the introduction of the article in these series, while IPC has registered some success, some of the challenges have come when IPC seeks partnerships for the advancement of Akwa Ibom State. We are convinced that the problem is not with partnership per se, but with the people who play the partnership role. IPC still believes that with good partners, we can continue to work for economic, political and social progress of Akwa Ibom. All it takes is a few good men and women to join in making Akwa Ibom a progressive state for all Akwa Ibom people, and not for a selected few. While we welcome critics, we equally welcome those who are willing to join IPC in building a better Akwa Ibom. This will ensure that IPC is well positioned to continue to work for justice, fairness and equity for all Akwa Ibom people. We call on all progressive Akwa Ibom people to join us in this onerous journey.

Dr. Tom Mbeke-Ekanem
President
April 20, 2012

ndugu Imeh Inyang
Secretary