

MNA Convention 2008 President's Speech (Full Version)



Umunnem ndi Mbano, Unu emela nwuchu !!
Welcome to the MNA Convention 2008. We have come from all around the globe to gather this week end in the State of Minnesota, “the land of ten thousand lakes”. We have come to enjoy each others company, network with each other, share our experiences, joy, pain, aspirations, expectations and concerns regarding our well being in this country as well as the welfare of those we left behind in Mbano. The ultimate objective of this convention is

to put our hearts and heads together and formulate strategies, initiate processes, and embark on projects to promote the advancement of our people and development of our communities. My dear brothers and sisters, we share one thing together – “Home”. “Home is not where you are, but a state of mind” – Author unknown. In other words, “home” is not where you live; it is where your heart is. Mbano bu ala anyi. Yes! It is our ancestral home. A person who does not know his roots is like a book without a cover. It simply amounts to incompleteness and lack of pride. The accomplishment of our objectives demands that we search our souls and ask ourselves some serious questions about our commitment to unity, solidarity, philanthropy, ishi ikwu, obi nwanne, and selfless humanitarianism. We have to deeply believe in the oneness of Mbano. That is, the unity of Mbano in its totality - “Mbano Gburugburu.”. Today in the United States of America, the umbrella organization that fully and completely represents the spirit of Mbano is unquestionably the Mbano National Assembly (MNA). So, when it comes to Mbano in Diaspora, especially, in the United States, “MNA is It”. All sub groups and associations need to be recognized and accommodated, for they serve various legitimate purposes. However, we should not forget the bonding glue that holds us all together – MNA. “A whole is always more than the sum of its parts” for when we work together, we achieve more. It is the synergistic benefit of collective efforts. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. would put it “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality tied in a single garment of destiny...whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly”. Thus, we must be our brother's keeper, eliminate self-centered selfishness, embrace one another with open minds, and believe that the progress of anyone of us enhances the advancement of Mbano. “No bird soars too high if he soars with his own wings” – William Blake, English poet and artist (1757 – 1827). So, my people, as we gather here this memorial weekend, let's make good use of our precious time and work towards common goals for the development and advancement of Mbano people, where ever they may be.

The founders of this organization has brought us this far and we must forge ahead with great sense of purpose and objectivity. We must actualize and complete our pending programs, while we initiate new ones, so that our longstanding hard labors will not be in vain. We should continue to enhance the health and promote the socio-economic welfare of the people of Mbano. We must embrace and promote our cultural heritage and educate our new generations on the culture and traditions of our people. We must ensure that

Mbano people get their fare share and piece of the pie called Imo State and that of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. We must be good citizens of our immediate communities, respect the laws of our places of residence, excel in our vocations and professions, shine like stars and good ambassador of our homeland, allow our love for each other illuminate and touch our friends and neighbors, and pursue the greater good for the betterment of mankind. That is what we stand for. That is MNA and that is the spirit of Mbano.

For the past seven years, we have worked tirelessly to put some initiatives together. The programs we articulated were so encompassing that they touched on different aspects of our collective objectives. It is therefore the primary objective of the present administration to continue the momentum to actualize and bring our collective efforts to fruition. It is only the pharos that abandons their predecessor's pyramids so as to start building their own. Great societies sustain their greatness by building upon established firm foundations. That foundation we have toiled all these years to establish in MNA. Now it is time to soar to new heights. In just a short period of time, this administration has accomplished a lot.

- We have worked to bring all factions of our organization into a more cohesive union by desensitizing and denouncing sectionalism. We have maintained an open door policy, demonstrated compassion and yet stood firm on matters of principles.
- We have worked hard to accommodate everyone, expanded the role of our Ladies, involved our children, and established a Membership and Youth program to enable us expand on membership benefits.
- We implemented the Education Grant program by making awards to some deserving high institution students back home in Mbano. We also introduced the Essay Competition for Mbano Children in the USA. The first set of those awards will be made to the winners at this convention.
- Our just concluded 2008 Medical Mission was not only very successful, but also set a record and raised the bar of expectations by our people back home. I thank you all for your continuous support. "No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted" – AESOP in the Lion & the Mouse. On behalf of Umu Mbano nile di na obodo America, I thank the following organizations and individuals for their time, steadfast dedication and financial support to the 2008 Mbano Medical Mission: Southern California chapter, Houston chapter, New York chapter, Dallas chapter, Dr. Julius Kpaduwa, Batram C. Uzowuru Sr., Dr. Obinna Nwaneri, Dr. Evelyn Chiakpo, Dr. Stella Kpaduwa, Emmanuel Egbuziem, Christopher Obasi, Basil Njoku, Iyke Ginigeme, Joan Byron, Rhonda Walker, Maria Domingo, Chuck Okeadu, Dr. Eugene Nwaokorie, Clement Eze, Dr. Kevin Adotama, Emmanuel Iroanya, Nkechi Uchendu, Henry Schein, Inc., Victor Awurumibe, Ogadi Anumudu, Samuel Okoronkwo, Teresa Thomas Kostuk, Celestina Ekezie, Rev. Sister Salome Ike, and all the staff and students at Mbano Joint Hospital. "When we look back, what we'll remember most are those times when kindness made a difference in our lives" – Author unknown. Our sincere gratitude also goes to our brother, his Excellency, Governor Ikedi Ohakim, the Chief of Staff, Emma Ohakim, our sister, Ijeoma Iwu, Fidelis Alaefule, Richard

Onuoha, and all the protocol officers at the Government House. It takes a team effort to make great things happen.

- We have been graced with the addition of yet another affiliate chapter to our assembly. The Mbano Federation of Chicago, Inc. has registered with MNA and will be officially admitted into our assembly in this convention.
- We have established an extranet web site for Mbano which will be launched at this very convention.
- We kicked off the Mbano Unity Cup soccer competition which will eventually set the stage for the actualization of Ezurumezu Cultural Festival in Mbano. Ezurumezu will definitely generate the momentum for many more good things for our communities.
- We have liaised with our Ndi Eze, our Local Government Chairpersons, and established a cordial cooperative relationship with Imo State Government. Umunnem, isn't it wonderful that nwa Mbano is in the "Douglas House"? So, we must work with our Governor and continue to give him full and relentless support as he moves Imo State forward in the 21st century.

As we embark on the legacy projects, we must also be innovative and creative in coming up with new initiatives that will benefit our people. We must start to focus on programs that will promote socio-economic advancement of umu Mbano. We need to seriously consider the revitalization of our Micro Credit Finance initiative and create investment opportunities and strategies to benefit our people. We should consider the commission of a research work on Mbano. In other words, let us embark on intellectual investigative research to ascertain and document the true history and cultural heritage of our people. The product of such research work will be invaluable to both the present and future generations to come. So, my dear brothers and sisters, as you can see, we have come a long way. We have achieved a lot, but there is still a lot more work for us to do. In other words, we still have a long way to go!!

So, as we gather at this great convention this weekend let us put our differences aside, put our heads together and work diligently with a sense of purpose and determination to come up with executable strategies and action plan for economic advancement of our people. If we do that, then our time spent here will be worthwhile. I extend my sincere thanks to the Minnesota Chapter and the National Convention Planning Committee for their hospitality and hard work in the planning and hosting of this year's event. I wish you a most successful convention and when we depart at the end of this gathering, may you all have a safe journey to your various places of abode.

Thank you and May God bless you all.

Udo diri unu,

Chief Chidi Anumudu
President, Mbano National Assembly

