

**BEING TEXT OF A COMMUNIQUE**  
**ISSUED AT THE END OF THE FIRST**  
**OKPE WORLD CONFERENCE**  
**ORGANISED BY OKPE VOICE (NORTH AMERICA,**  
**EUROPE AND NIGERIA)**  
**HELD AT OKPE TOWN HALL**  
**SAPELE, DELTA STATE. NIGERIA**  
**NOVEMBER 17 – 19, 2006.**

## **Preamble**

**Okpe Voice** members were impressed by the level of attendance and participation by Okpe indigenes both from home and abroad at this maiden outing. Attendance was drawn from all categories of persons, both from ordinary folks and the elite. Discussions and exchange of ideas were held in a free and conducive environment.

- Conference noted the need to develop and sustain an Okpe agenda, within the framework of a fair and equitable Federal Republic of Nigeria.
- The Okpe agenda centres around Education, Identity, Language, Politics, Culture, Economic development, and the future of our youth.
- Conference was also impressed by the level of commitment displayed by ordinary folks in enunciating the Okpe cause within the ambit of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
- Conference noted the neglect which the Niger Delta has suffered in spite of its abundant natural and human resources. It also frowned at the level of degradation of the environment and pollution which Okpeland

has suffered in oil exploration activities. It therefore called on the government to redress this anomalous situation immediately.

- Conference organisers were pleased that most contributions were in Okpe language, giving hope to everyone that the language will not suffer extinction if the current momentum is maintained.
- Conference officers hereby thank his HRM Orhue 1 (CFR) Orodje of Okpe Kingdom for finding time to grace the opening ceremony. His opening remarks were indeed very informative, instructive and thoughtful.

Arising from opinions and positions expressed at the conference, **Okpe Voice** hereby resolves to bring the following to the notice of the public.

#### **OKPE IDENTITY**

- Conference noted with great satisfaction the enthronement and coronation of our monarch, HRM Orhue 1, who is the major cultural symbol of Okpe identity and recommends that all Okpe indigenes should come together to strengthen the hands of the monarchy by giving unalloyed support.
- As traditional ruler to over 1.3 million Okpe citizens of Delta State Nigeria, the Orodje should be given a place of honour and prominence which he richly deserves.
- It was the view of Conference that Okpe identity as a distinct ethnic group, complete with its historical antecedents, language, cultural nuances, political and economic interests, be stressed and maintained at all times.

- Naming places and institutions in Okpe land should be done with great conscientiousness. This is because a name tends to bestow a degree of ownership on the persons after whom it is named. Areas, streets, and quarters should be named in Okpe.
- Our mode of dressing, our cuisines, and our world view should be highlighted and exploited to the advantage of the Okpe people.
- Marriage rites, inherited from our forefathers should be respected and maintained.
- It was the view of conference that the Okpe person has always been peaceful and friendly. As a result, the Okpe territory was very hospitable to every visitor. This accounts for the expanded landmass of Okpe kingdom.

### **OKPE LANGUAGE**

- Okpe parents should endeavour to speak the language to their children.
- Conference expressed deep concern over the threat posed to Okpe language by the inability of some indigenes to communicate in the language.
- Conference resolved therefore that all efforts should be geared towards keeping the Okpe language alive. To achieve this, it is recommended that primary and secondary schools in the two Okpe-speaking Local Governments areas be mandated to include the teaching of Okpe language in their syllabus.
- Conference resolved that news translations on the State-owned Television and Radio Stations in Okpe language which were stopped for no good reason be restored immediately.
- Any chieftaincy title given in Okpeland should be in Okpe language.

- Okpe language should be used in all places of worship in Okpeland.
- Efforts should be made towards establishing an Institute of Okpe Studies.
- The books that have been written on the teaching of Okpe language should be simplified even for the teachers.
- Adult education schools in Okpeland should include teaching Okpe language in their syllabus.
- There should be an archive where important materials are kept to preserve our culture and language.

## **EDUCATION**

- Conference viewed with concern the current situation in which some Okpe children are unable to pursue their educational dreams.
- Education is the key to modern development. As a result, patriotic individuals and concerned institutions should be encouraged to award scholarships to Okpe students. **Okpe Voice** has set the stage for awarding scholarships to deserving Okpe indigenes to study Linguistics or History. A postgraduate scholarship Fund is also in the process of being instituted.
- The Sapele Lands Trust Fund should be re-invigorated as soon as possible.
- There should be bursary awards for all Okpe indigenes.
- Ten percent of funds accruing from oil firms' donations to Sapele and Okpe local governments should be ploughed into a Scholarship Fund for Okpe boys and girls.

- Okpe indigenes should avail themselves of existing Government and public sector, oil companies, donor agencies scholarships. Information about these scholarship opportunities should be widely disseminated.
- A Board of Trustees to manage such funds has been set up by Conference.
- Laboratories in schools should be properly equipped by government and donor agencies.
- There should be concerted efforts to ensure that a tertiary institution is located in an Okpe town. Sapele Technical College is long over due to be upgraded to a polytechnic.

#### **POWER SUPPLY TO SAPELE**

- Conference viewed with great concern the neglect which Sapele town had suffered ever since the power station was built in Ogorode, Sapele.
- It was also resolved that the step down should be completed before December 31<sup>st</sup> 2006.
- Conference therefore called on the Federal Government to fulfil its obligations to the Okpe people by stepping down power supply to Sapele with utmost urgency.
- The erratic power supply and low voltage which the town perennially suffers from has negatively affected business and standard of living.

#### **THE SAPELE MARKET**

- Conference called on the Sapele Local and Delta State governments involved in the re-construction of Sapele Market to ensure fairness, justice and fair play in the reallocation of stalls when it is completed. Priority should be given to previous shop-owners before considering new allottees.

- We also call on the government to speed up the re-building process so that the economic lives of traders that have been truncated by the demolition be put back on course.

### **OKPE POLITICAL LEADERS**

- Conference noted that there are different types of leadership. It called on known and tested persons to take up the leadership mantle in developing and sustaining an Okpe agenda.
- It was also noted that the level of Okpe leaders' participation in politics is low. No effort should be spared towards increasing participation in partisan politics.
- Conference also observed that followership is crucial in producing leadership. As a result, the people are expected to ask the right questions of persons whom they have placed in office.
- Conference recommends that all elected officials of Okpe extraction should hold interactive meetings with communities to discuss issues pertaining to development in Okpeland.
- Conference also called on political leaders from Okpeland to be accountable to the people. Currently, there is a disconnect between the men and women who represent Okpe at the Federal, State, and local levels. The power base of the Okpe politician should primarily be in Okpeland.
- Okpe is in need of dynamic leaders who will push the Okpe agenda of development at all levels.
- Conference also called for the establishment of an Okpe Leaders' Forum or Leaders of Thought to serve our homeland in an advisory capacity. Such a group will be charged with monitoring all

developmental activities and evaluating the performance of all the leaders to ensure that they discharge their obligations to Okpeland.

### **THE ROLE OF WOMEN**

- The role of women in providing a stable family system was stressed by Conference.
- It was resolved that no woman be discriminated against for the reason of her sex.
- Women should be empowered politically, educationally, socially and financially. Any child with Okpe blood should be welcomed into the Okpe family with a view to strengthening our population.

### **INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND WEALTH GENERATION**

- Conference resolved that the peaceful environment which the two local government councils enjoy should be highlighted and used as a selling point to potential investors. Investors should be courted and encouraged and a deliberate policy on employment be put in place so as to provide opportunities for our people.
- Conference also called for the establishment of an Okpe Monitoring Board (OMB) to monitor the state of local, state and federal projects in Okpeland.
- To attract foreign investment, the main towns in Okpeland could be twinned with major towns and cities in Europe and North America for the purpose of development.

### **THE YOUTH**

- Conference observed the need for our youth to be empowered educationally, economically and politically.

- Such empowerment will engender self confidence and reduce the incidence of violent and anti-social behaviour.
- Opportunities should be provided for young Okpe men and women by those who have access to political and economic power. There should be a deliberate policy on mentoring and providing employment for the young people of Okpe kingdom.

## **RESOLUTIONS OF CONFERENCE**

Arising from the various observations made in the body of this communiqué, the following resolutions were passed:

1. That an Okpe agenda on education, politics, identity, and economic development be developed and sustained.
2. That Okpe identity should be re-enforced and reiterated in all circumstances.
3. That the step down project be given topmost priority and completed before the end of 2006.
4. That Okpe language should be taught in all schools in Sapele and Okpe Local Government areas.
5. That scholarship and bursary awards should be instituted for deserving Okpe boys and girls, men and women.
6. That political leaders and office holders of Okpe extraction should be more accountable to the people.
7. There is the need to set up a Committee that will monitor office holders in Okpeland with a view to ensuring that they implement decisions in the interest of Okpeland and the generality of the polity.
8. That all suggestions of Conference should be brought to the attention of HRM Orhue 1, the Orodje of Okpe Kingdom, for consideration and full implementation.

**THE NEXT CONFERENCE**

Conference resolved that the current momentum of consciousness-awakening activities should be sustained. Before the next conference there should be a public lecture to be delivered here in Sapele by a reputable Okpe indigene.

The next conference was fixed for 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> November 2007 at the same venue.

**Signed:**

**Dr. Igho Natufe -----**

**Chief (Mrs) Margaret Unukegwo-----**

**Rev. (Dr) Charles Osume-----**

**Mrs Roseline Egborge-----**

**Rev. Frank Ekejija-----**

**Dr. Hope Eghagha-----**

**Mr. Style Egbedi-----**

**Ms Beauty Biokoro -----**

**Dr. Emurobome Idolor -----**

**Barr. Friday Hawkins Omoraka-----**

**Rev. David Odjegba-----**

**Dr. Ovaborhene Idamaoyibo-----**

**Mr Jerome Egbedi-----**