

VALEDICTORY SF'EECH FROM BRIG GEN FRED BINI CHIJUKA (RETD) TO MARK THE END OF HIS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF ISSELE-UKU DEVELOPMENT UNION (IDU) AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON 28TH DECEMBER. 2008

His Royal Highness, Obi Hemy Ezeagwuna I JP, The Obi of Issele-Uku,
The Councils of Elders and Chiefs,
Members of the National Executive of IDU,
Chairmen and Members of Branch Unions of IDU,
Indigenes of Issele -Uku,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Please permit me to start this speech by quoting from the Book of Ecclesiastes of the Holy Bible, Chapter 3 verses 1- 2:

"There is an appointed time for everything and a time for every affair under the heavens. A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to uproot the plant".

And like one of the quotations of William Shakespeare, the greatest writer, poet and dramatist of the 16th century [1564 -1616], "a time to quit the stage when the ovation is loudest." My trustworthy executive and my humble self are today going to quit the stage with our heads raised high with pride, contentment and thanksgiving to God Almighty for giving us good health and sanity to pilot the affairs of the IDU for the past eight years to a successful end. It has been a great joy for us to serve our community with unalloyed loyalty and dedication believing that we have to leave our footprints on the sands of time as a signpost to others who will come after us, that they have a solid platform as a take off point ,with a resolution firm and immovable to improve on our limited achievements.

We recognize that we are the millennium or 21st century IDU, at a time when the world has become global and through the internet, the whole world becomes one brotherhood, sharing almost similar aspirations and pains but striving hard to improve the world with the inclusion of our town, Issele-Uku , so much loved, and cherished. We came into office in the year 2000 when the town needed a virile, highly dependable, visible and supporting body to the Councils of Elders and Chiefs which have always been there. We thank His Royal Highness Obi Henry Ezeagwuna I, J P, the Obi of Issele-Uku, who in his wisdom, with the elders and chiefs decided to lift the life of our people to a higher level for initiating a meeting of our people to have a new Issele-Uku Development [IDU] with a human face and dynamism that could galvanise our people at home and in Diaspora for concerted efforts to be seen to carry out activities that would make us alive to our duties and responsibilities; our duties to serve our people and responsibilities to carry out activities that would portray us to other communities around us that we could be responsive to our responsibilities by meeting our challenges. From our report of our stewardship, for the past eight years, you are all aware of what we consider we achieved to justify the confidence you reposed on us when you elected us to office. We agree we had some hiccups, which were avoidable, if the different bodies had operated within the limits prescribed by the extant constitution. However, the joy of our success is that we weathered all the storms that came our way and we are happy we have come successful to the handover peacefully with all the different bodies exuding in joy for this memorable time of the handover. We thank everyone who had contributed to breaking some roadblocks in the performance of our assigned duties. Here it is worthwhile to mention first and foremost, the Ogbelani of Issele -Uku, Mr. Okonkwo

Isichei, Mr. A O Abolo, the village Head of Ogbeowe and Mr. Ikeji Afekwu all of whom had always come to talk with us over areas of impasse with a view to keep the ship sailing to a peaceful harbour. There may be other silent contributors to the all important peace processes, but these are the men who always featured prominently whenever

problems came on our way. We thank them and hope they will continue to render their assistance to other bodies like ours. Of necessity also is to thank the North America Association of IDU for the invaluable contributions it has constantly made in making this body visibly to be reckoned with. It has built a library, which had been adjudged the best in the state. We rejoice with the body for completing the operation of the library which has been dedicated to the memory of late Obi Rufus Osemene II, who welcomed the proposal, provided the location and appointed a group of dependable Issele-Uku sons to supervise the construction and report to him the progress. Last year 2007, it staged one of the most flamboyant conventions I have witnessed that our people can ever hope to organise, in Houston, Texas, USA to which all the branches attended including the National President of IDU my humble self. Please, join us to thank this virile organisation for what it has constantly been doing to project the importance of IDU to which all adults should subscribe. We wish the branch more grease to its elbow and plead that it continues to look back home and render assistance where necessary as it has once again done to support the Vigilante to enhance the protection of our people. It is gratifying that it is represented at this annual conference by Mr. Chris Ijei. Please convey our felicitations to all the members and the national president of North America IDU, Mr. Ifeanyi Iyegbu.

We thank him in a special way for writing the letter, which cleared me, and by extension, members of the national executive of swindling our people of any money. They restored our confidence which made it possible for us to return and continue our job as the national, executive. We also thank them for the contributions they made when the reception was organised for our son, Air Chief Marshal Paul Dike when he was appointed the Chief of Air Staff and promoted 1lt1ft to the rank of Air Marshal.

We must also recognise the contributions of, London Branch which identified with the programme to give a befitting reception to Air Chief Marshal Paul Dike. The incoming executive should please maintain constant contact with these two branches, which are willing to assist in any viable programme to be initiated by our people at home.

We thank everyone who has in one way or the other made our administration successful in resolving some crises we inherited on assumption of office, like the Odogwu of Issele-Uku, Chief Oboli Okwumabua and Dr Benjamin Okwumabua who successfully ended the problem of Ogbeutu and the Council of Elders when Ute Quarters was created as the ninth quarters.

We thank all the branches outside Issele-Uku, which had been working hard to keep our flag of unity flying. We will plead with them to continue in bringing many of our people who are still undecided to become members. Such deviants are advised in their interest to abandon their arrogant aloofness and join wherever they are, before it is too late for them. Back home, we plead with parents to encourage their children in and outside Issele-Uku to join this all important organisation which has been given international recognition by the North American Association which has registered it there and is now registered at home, thereby giving it the authority as the authentic body that can speak for our town and stand up to defend our people.

As the national president who has overseen the general performance of the national executive, the contributions and the activities of the executive members, it is a great honour to me to thank every member of the executive for contributing constantly in making my work bearable. Everyone has done very well to merit accolades but if you do not get any specific one, please accept my heartfelt thanks for your wonderful contributions. None can be discounted in our overall success these eight years, but as

usual, we are grateful to the engine room of the national executive, Hon D O Mordi, the National Secretary for the eight years, ever willing to attend Izuani meetings and represent our interest, answering telephone calls even when everyone is supposed to be sleeping; always calm when provoked. Please remember that Issele-Uku still needs our services, therefore, we should not turn our back on the town believing we have served it for eight years. Our services to our town should be a continuous one until we leave this mother earth. The national secretary, Hon D a Mordi who can be rightly named the Chief of Staff, should please avail himself of the wealth of his experience at all times and continue to help whenever necessary. I am grateful to all the members of the executive for their dedicated, honest and sincere services. I recall with joy your overwhelming confidence you reposed in my integrity by resigning en masse when I resigned, even though I did not give you any prior knowledge of my intention, as I did not want to infest you with the accusation then leveled against me. Above all, I thank you all that you joined me when the coast was cleared and we had to return to complete our tenure. It will be a great pleasure ever working with you again.

We thank Mr. Okechukwu Ngemegwai who became the chairman home branch when we started our second and final term. He brought a lot of dynamism and purposefulness to the association and no doubt, we are sure he would have contributed even more if he had seen the second term through. Unfortunately, along the line, not long after he assumed office, he became ill and when he recovered, he declined to continue even when we went to plead with him to continue with his good work. We thank him for the impetus he brought into IDU and wish him good health and peace. Some other time when our town will require your services, we plead with you not to refuse because the town belongs to all of us and all hands must be on deck to make it a worthwhile place for us to live and contribute our quota. We will always remember your services, though they were cut short by your illness, which we thank God has cleared. Before I bring this valedictory speech to an end, I will like to plead that this gathering approves some amount of money for the incoming president who, maybe like myself, will be located outside the town for his transportation; also important is the need to approve a reasonable amount for entertainment at the quarterly meeting which is always long and tasking, so that members can drink some water and soft drinks. Over these years, I have come to know what it entails to come to meetings all the way from Lagos on the horrible road and risks of armed bandits. I am happy I was able to contain the costs but it is not to be expected that what I went through will be convenient for subsequent national presidents whom we suggest should not be resident in the town at the time of tenure to enable them have objective approach to events affecting our town and people.

I can recollect with mixed feelings that I am glad I have overcome and alive today to give this speech and handover to another executive before the time this conference ends. On two occasions, I had burst tyres on the highway but my driver and I managed to stop without any damage of any kind. The worst happened on the 18th October 2007, when a truck carrying logs left its track, hit two mini buses before landing on top of my car when we were close to Ore town. My driver and I survived but the car was a write off. The most surprising thing about the whole incident was that the owner of the truck refused to produce the driver with the connivance of the police. However, the case has not closed and by the grace of God, I will see the successful end of the case. I had to make the journey barely two weeks after our normal quarterly meeting because we scheduled to meet and go to commiserate with the national president of the North American Association of IDU, Mr. Ifeanyi Iyegbu, who had come home to bury his dead father that weekend. My only visible pain then was that with exception of some members of the national executive who came to see me on the 19th October 2007, only

the Ogbelani of Issele -Uku, Mr. Okonkwo Isichei, came to sympathise with me for which I will remain grateful. I have to add here too that on my journey to Benin-City with my driver later that same 18th October 2007, it would appear that the owner of the truck arranged with some dangerous elements to waylay the vehicle in which we were travelling to Benin City to pass the night, maybe, with the intention to kill me and close the case. But God, in His mercy, sent a well- manned police check- point about 28 minutes after the pursuit of our vehicle by the gang. It was a great relief to us when our driver jumped down at the police check-point and reported what had happened. The police arrested them and we then continued our journey and arrived Benin City at 11.30pm. This was a journey I had started by 9.45am on 18th October, 2007.

I had to narrate this event to show you what leadership entails. If you are committed to what you are doing, be prepared to invest all your capabilities and surrender your life to God and He will see you through. This is a story told, to encourage future leaders in whatever capacity we find ourselves, that leadership involves risks but a good leader must be properly focused and undaunted. So, anyone among us who is elected to lead should not fear anything, just do your duties with sincerity and surrender your life to God to lead and guide you successfully.

I am happy to have served the town into which I was born, for eight years after my public service to the whole country for over 35 years. I hope we will do all within our power, as the constitution so prescribes to quickly move to reconstitute all the branches when they are due and set their proper operational boundaries, avoiding to put in office people who will use any opportunity to serve to massage their personal and selfish interests. Finally, I wish to appeal to our people to continue the yearly mandatory payments and co-operate in the payment of other collections, as a way of raising revenue for our town. If you have found some manipulations and inappropriate use of what you have so far contributed, let us apply proper sanctions and ensure that payments henceforth will properly be accounted for by making payments into any approved account to which accessibility will not be easy. Our town must have a good some of money at any given time to carry out important duties for our community. The quarters that have not been impressive in the collections should wake up and work for the good of the town.

We thank the quarters, which have shown great dedication in collecting necessary dues and plead with them to continue to show the light. I believe we are in good times with the unity we have enhanced these past years and the former President of the United States of America, Mr. Bill Clinton, said in his book, "My Life", "Good times are to be seized and built upon, not coasted through", and we must always remember that in life, ancient faiths have always taught that "the most important fact of life is our common humanity and common brotherhood." We are one and our hands must be on deck for the common good of our town and people.

I thank you all once again for giving my team the opportunity to serve out our eight years. We may not be perfect but that is as much as we can jointly provide. God bless our town and people. Amen.

Brig Gen Fred Bini Chijuka [retd]
National President,
Issele-Uku Development Union (IDU) 2000- 2008.