



NIGERIAN INTERNATIONAL ATHLETES ASSOCIATION 4TH ANNUAL CONVENTION - November 4th - 6th, 2004.

COMMUNIQUE

The following communiqué was issued to the press and general public at the end of the proceedings of the general assembly of the NIAA convention held at the Embassy Suites Hotel, 9090 Southwest Freeway in Houston, Texas, on November 6, 2004.

1. The NIAA Master plan for sports development at the primary and secondary school levels throughout the Federation has been ready since June 2004. The executive summary of the plan has been sent to the Chairmen of the Senate and House Committees on Sports and we are still waiting for an invitation to present it and seek legislative support for its implementation nationwide. The NIAA has been mandated by its general membership (the HOUSE) to seek interested parties, amongst state governments and in the private sector, with whom to collaborate and implement this plan in their areas of operation since there is no interest shown as yet at the federal level.
2. The HOUSE has asked the NIAA to, in particular, seek possible collaboration with the multi-national oil companies for the purpose of implementing NIAA's Grassroots Sports Development Master Plan in their areas/states of operation and hence helping to channel the energy of the restive youths into more constructive endeavors - endeavors that will bring pride to them and the nation.
3. The essential element of the Master Plan calls for the revival of competitive sports at the primary and secondary school levels across the nation. The athletes are discovered at the primary school level or early at the secondary school level. These budding stars are then subjected, all through secondary school, to special training and competition that would prepare them for university where they can perfect the skills and form necessary for international competition for Nigeria. A long-term component of the Master Plan calls for the provision of sports facilities in all zones of the country. Also, the plan requires the NIAA to bring international coaches and experts into Nigeria to help organize regular coaching courses for sportspersons and officials.
4. The defection of Nigerian sportspersons to other countries is of great concern to the NIAA. The cause of this problem is rooted in the neglect of, maltreatment of, lack of proper care for and/or insensitivity to the emotional needs of our young sportsmen and women by administrators. Some of the



problem is also attributable to the fact that too many sports administrators are not former sports achievers themselves and, hence, do not really understand the temperament and true makeup of a sports achiever. The lack of proper care for and the poor treatment of Nigeria's sportsmen and women have gone on for generations and something must now be done to address these maladies at the local, state and national levels. We must value and treat our athletes well to keep them from seeking citizenship in other countries where they can be better cared for, respected and nurtured to international stardom.

5. In order to produce and keep great international sportspersons, Nigeria must put great premium on the welfare of her sportsmen and women. Effort must always be made to provide all their needs including facilities, equipment, medical attention, and prompt payment of allowances. Nigerian sports officials and administrators should become truly sensitive to the needs and aspirations of the vulnerable, young men and women who have dedicated themselves to bringing honor to Nigeria around the world. Nigeria's sports administrators must always be prepared to treat our young sportspersons as they would their own children – with respect, love, dignity and concern. This is how our overseas based sportspersons are treated by their coaches and officials in order to bring out the best in them. The powers that be must also understand that prudence should be exercised to ensure that the right caliber of sports administrators and officials are selected.
6. The lack of accountability and proper management in Nigerian sports administration, and the misappropriation of funds allocated to sports by the government and the private sector are sources of great concern to the NIAA. After all these years, Nigeria deserves to have, as administrators, men and women of integrity and accountability who can be counted on to use available funds ***strictly*** to achieve the purpose for which these funds are allocated.
7. The banning of sportspersons from the national team for speaking their minds, demanding their rightful entitlements, or for minor infractions must stop. Such rash decisions are counter productive, are destructive to the careers of the sportspersons concerned and are often used by officials to intimidate the sportspersons and protect their own guilt. An independent arbitrator or body of arbitrators should investigate any such matter before a sportsperson can be banned.
8. Nothing inspires a sportsperson to excellence like the promise of breaking an existing record. Accordingly, we see that the countries that lead the world in competitive sports have a plethora of sports records sources. These sources all have facilities for preserving sporting records and making them available to the public. There is no doubting the fact that statistics and records help to spur sportsmen and women to excellence, assist coaches and selectors in their team selection, provide sports reporters concise and irrefutable material for their reports, and arouse greater interest and excitement in the general public. NIAA will provide in its Master Plan a template for collecting and preserving records in all levels of sports starting from the Secondary School level upwards and dating back to possibly the beginning of the 20th century,

and for setting up and maintaining Halls of Fame for the sports that may not currently have them.

9. Mr. Akin Aboyade-Cole established a \$50,000.00 dollar scholarship endowment fund in memory of his brother and former international/Olympic hurdler Adeola Aboyade-Cole, who was the fore-runner of the movement of Nigerian athletes to American Universities.
10. Elections were conducted as mandated by the NIAA constitution and the following officers were elected to conduct the affairs of the association for the next three years: President – Dr. Bruce Tajinere Ijirigho, Vice President – Moses Adebajji, Gen. Secretary – Harrison Salami, Asst. Gen. Secretary – Ms. Rita Didikiri, Treasurer – Prof. Nwafejoku Uwadibie, Fin. Secretary – Ms. Hope Waobikeze, PRO – Innocent Egbunike, Asst. PRO – Paul Emordi and Paliamentarian – Dr. Chikpe Okeke.
11. The HOUSE also ratified the appointment of the following dignitaries to serve on the board of trustees of the NIAA: Dr. Macauley Ojeaga, Mr. Lee Evans, Maj. Gen. Steve Asemota, Late Hon. Steve Ibn Akiga, Ms. Modupe Oshikoya, and Mr. Ayanti Udo Udoma.
12. The NIAA executive was mandated by the House to work in collaboration with all Nigerian Sports Federations and other international sports bodies in implementing its programs.
13. The New York / New Jersey region won the bid to host the 5th. NIAA National Convention tentatively scheduled for October 27 - 29, 2005.

Nigeria should implement the NIAA Master Plan **NOW** in order to get the country back on the right path to sustainable progress in the area of sports. As Aristotle said, "Excellence is not an act, it is a habit". If Nigeria is ever to excel in sports, all Nigerians – the spectating public, the sportsmen and women, the mass media, the sports administrators, institutions of learning, sponsors and all governments have to make it a habit to do the right thing for sports in Nigeria. The NIAA Master Plan tries to show everyone exactly how to do that.

Signed

Bruce T. Ijirigho, Ph.D.
President

Harrison Salami
Gen. Secretary

Innocent Egbunike
Public Relations Officer

