

## **HISTORY OF THE IJAW NATIONAL CONGRESS (INC)**

### **IJAW UNITY**

Before 1991, many Ijaw groups had been formed in many parts of Nigeria essentially to draw attention of Government to the plight of the Ijaws and protest the extant state of affairs in Ijaw land, especially among the youths who were eager for a change in the status quo at whatever cost by what ever means possible.

Unfortunately, however, these earlier Ijaw groups were unable to nurture the required central organisation (of all Ijaws) to effectively promote National (Ijaw) Unity, cohesiveness and consciousness, essential for our survival as a people. Again, because of the lack of a central body, they were also ineffective in confronting the marginal political/economic condition of the Ijaws in the Nigerian federation. It was in response to the appalling conditions occasioned, in part by the absence of a central unifying Ijaw organisation that our three distinguished Ijaw fathers/leaders; Chief (Dr.) H. J. R. Dappa-Biriye, Chief George A. Weikezi and Chief F. H. E. Brisibe, all of blessed memory, met with other compatriots at the 29 Calcutta Crescent, Apapa, residence of Chief Weikezi under the auspices of the Ijaw People Union (Lagos) on 25<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of October 1991. The series of meetings was meant to fashion out a way for the Ijaw to gird their loins to face the challenges of endocolonialism that the Nigerian Federation now practised.

The Ijaw leaders came up with the conclusion that the Ijaw nation needed a think tank, an organ that will be the collective brain-box of the nation. The think-tank, whose leadership must never sleep but be alive and awake at all times to know, discover, proffer and provide solutions to all problems of Ijaw individual, groups, clans and nation at large. A decision was then taken to convoke an All-Ijaw National Convention in Patani on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1991.

## **FIRST IJAW NATIONAL CONVENTION (PATANI '91)**

The 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1991 Patani Convention was organized jointly by the Delta State Izon Consultative Committee (Warri) and the Ijaw People's Union (Lagos) and was hosted by HRM Major L. M. Erebulu (Rtd.), Aduo II, the Pere of Kabowei Kingdom, under the chairmanship of Chief F. H. E. Brisibe. Powerful and inspiration speeches and papers were presented by Chief (Dr.) Dappa-Biriye, Chief George Weikezi, Rev. (Dr) C. A. Dime, Justice J. A. P. Oki, Tony Engrube, Morris Ekiye, Prof. P.S. Akponwei and P. Z. Aginighan among others.

The Patani Convention of 1991 saw the emergence of Dr. (now) Prof. C. A. Dime, the leader of the coordinating committee with P. Z. Aginighan as Secretary. The Committee eventually transformed into the INC which was seen as an approximation of the envisioned think-tank. The Dime led tenure ended in 1994 during another Patani Convention held on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 1994.

The two major resolutions of the convention, as reflected in its communiqué were:

- a) The demand made on the Federal Military Government to create homogenous Ijaw States and Local Government Areas for the Ijaws; in the firm conviction that the Ijaw question was more political than economic and could only be solved by situating political power in Ijaw land so that the Ijaws could solve these problems by themselves; and
- b) The constitution of a committee (later to be known as the Ijaw National Co-ordinating Committee, (INCC) which was mandated to "examine various issues raised which affect collective Ijaw interests in the Nigerian federation" and to be the eye of the Ijaws in the affairs of the nation.

## **SECOND ALL-IJAW NATIONAL CONVENTION (AROGBO 92)**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> All-Ijaw National Convention tagged "Arogbo 92" which held in Arogbo, Ondo State from 20<sup>th</sup> — 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1992 was the second major activity of the Dime led Ijaw National Coordinating Committee. Arogbo 92 was graced by the eminent presence of Chief (Dr.) Dappa-Biriye, Chief George Weikeyi (the "Big Daddy"), and a personal envoy of Chief Ada George, the Governor of Rivers State, and HRH Pere D. M. E. Eperetun, Aagah II, the Agadagba of Arogbo-Ijaw Kingdom. The keynote paper was presented by Prof. Kimse Okoko.

This "Arogbo 92" felt that matters of the Ijaw race should not continue to be handled by a committee. The name, All-Ijaw Cultural Association, was therefore adopted instead of the Ijaw National Coordinating Committee. "Arogbo 92" also raised the status of INCC to an interim National Executive Council, although unelected, with a mandate, to within six months to:

- 1) Prepare a draft constitution, and
- 2) Organize a Delegates Conference to ratify the constitution of the Pan Ijaw national body.

## **ALL IJAW DELEGATES CONFERENCE (KAIAMA 93)**

In accordance with the mandate of the 2<sup>nd</sup> All-Ijaw National Convention, "Arogbo 92", an All-Ijaw National Delegates Conference was held at Kaiama on Saturday, May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1993. The name Izon (Ijaw) National Congress was adopted as an umbrella organization to handle all Ijaw matters. The Constitution of the body was also ratified, and the interim NEC led by Dr. (Now Prof.) Dime was mandated to organise the 3<sup>rd</sup> All-Ijaw National Convention and elect National officers in accordance with the new constitution. The communiqué also reiterated the call for the creation of three homogenous Ijaw States namely Toru-Ibe, Oil Rivers and Bayelsa.

At this point, the Ijaw National Congress is said to have taken its current shape and was ready for action. The INC was formed to amongst others to:

- i. Work for Ijaw Unity and promote Ijaw National Consciousness
- ii. Create a forum for all Ijaw people to meet to discuss the plight of Ijaws in Nigeria
- iii. Familiarise the Ijaw people with the problems of the various sections of the Ijaw Nation.
- iv. Adopt a coordinated centralised approach to finding solutions to the Ijaw Question in Nigeria.

## **FIRST INC (CARETAKER) NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

After the several failed attempts to convene the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ijaw National Convention at Abua/Odual in '93, all in Rivers State, a National Representative Council meeting was convened in Patani on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> January 1994 to discuss several issues facing the Congress and to review the position of the Ijaws in the Nigerian Nation. It also helped the Ijaws to take a position on the Constitutional Conference and other issues staring the Ijaw nation "in the face". Members of Council felt strongly that a caretaker National Executive Council be put in place to take charge of affairs of the congress for the period between January and November 1994 when the 3<sup>rd</sup> All-Ijaw National Convention would be held. A caretaker National Executive Council comprising of the following persons was therefore elected:

- 1) Mr. J. B. Fumudoh as President
- 2) Dr. Dinma Denni-Fiberesima as Vice-President
- 3) High Chief F. J. Williams as National Secretary

## **THIRD IJAW NATIONAL CONVENTION (PORT HARCOURT '95)**

In 1995, after several failed attempts to hold the 3<sup>rd</sup> National Convention, a Steering Committee was set up after the resolution of the INC "Crisis" by Ijaw Traditional Rulers, Elders and Ijaw Senior Military officers, to conduct the first democratic elections into the National Executive Council of Congress in accordance with the 1993 INC Constitution. This convention elected the following officers of Congress:

- |  |   |                            |
|--|---|----------------------------|
| 1) President                           | - | Mr. J. B. Fumudoh          |
| 2) Vice President                      | - | Dr. Dinma Denni-Fiberesima |
| 3) National Secretary                  | - | Chief Francis 3. Williams  |
| 4) National Asst. Secretary            | - | Mr. Erasmus U. Patrick     |
| 5) National Treasurer                  | - | Chief M. Y. Waritimi       |
| 6) National Publicity Secretary        | - | Mr. Eric Senibo            |
| 7) National Asst. Publicity Secretary  | - | Mr. A. E. Esete            |
| 8) National Organising Secretary       | - | Mr. Douye Diri             |
| 9) National Asst. Organising Secretary | - | Mr. Godspower T. Oporomo   |
| 10) National Financial Secretary       | - | Mr. Pius Uromi-Owu X       |
| 11) National Legal Adviser             | - | Hon. J. L. D. Dagogo       |
| 12) National Auditor                   | - | Dr. M. P. Okonny           |

**a. Pre-Constitutional Conference/Ijaw Colloquium (PCIC)**

The National Executive Council organized a Pre-Conference Ijaw Colloquium on the proposed National Constitutional Conference on Tuesday, March 1<sup>st</sup> 1994 at the Cinema Hall of Hotel Presidential, Port Harcourt and a communiqué was published in the Guardian of March 13<sup>th</sup> 1994.

**b. Inauguration of Council of Ijaw Elders and Conference of Ijaw Traditional Rulers**

By virtue of the relevant provisions of the Constitution of Congress, the Fumudoh led National Executive Council inaugurated the first ever Council of Ijaw Elders and Conference of Ijaw Traditional Rulers on Tuesday March 22<sup>nd</sup> and Wednesday March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1994, respectively at the Cinema Hall of Hotel Presidential, Port Harcourt.

The Council of Ijaw Elders and Conference of Ijaw Traditional Rulers issued the following as part of its communique which was jointly signed by HRH Jones A. Ere II, Ebenanawei of Ogboin Kingdom for Traditional Rulers, Chief (Dr) H. J. R. Dappa-Biriye for Council of Elders and Mr. J. B. Fumudoh, President of INC.:

- I. It asserts the inalienable rights of the Ijaw to all their territories, self-determination and control of all resources under the earth, the airspace and the water including the Exclusive Economic Zone.
  
- II. It decried the deliberate balkanization of the Ijaw and gave approval to any form of struggle for the unification of the Ijaw in Nigeria.

**FOURTH IJAW NATIONAL CONVENTION (YENAGOA 2000)**

The fourth Ijaw National Convention (Yenagoa 2000) was almost marred by succession crisis but held on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2000 at the Yenagoa Stadium and was declared open by His Excellency, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, then Deputy Governor of Bayelsa State. The convention lecture was given by Prof. E J. Alagoa on the theme: "The Ijaw Nation in the new millennium".

The elections scheduled for the next day could not hold due to a Warri High Court ex parte injunction which, though had been vacated, created a non-conducive atmosphere for intra-Ijaw elections. The elections eventually held on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September 2000 at the Yenagoa Sports Hall, and produced the **2<sup>nd</sup> democratically elected National Executive Council of Congress** and the **3<sup>rd</sup> INC NEC** with membership as follows:

1) Prof. Kimse Okoko	-	President
2) Hon. WG. CMDR. P. Y. Biakpara	-	Vice President
3) Dr. S. A. Bobo-Jama	-	National Secretary
4) Mr. Dan Ekpebide	-	Nat. Asst. Secretary
5) Sir. S. H. Wilson-Allison	-	Treasurer
6) Mr. Erasmus U. Patrick	-	Organising Secretary
7) Chief Senibo E. Princewill	-	Publicity Secretary
8) Barr. H. S. Dickson	-	Legal Adviser
9) Chief H. H. Krukrubo	-	Financial Secretary
10) Com. Cletus Monie Ozeke	-	Auditor
11) Hon. Mrs. Marie Ebikake	-	Asst. Org. Sec.

### **FIFTH IJAW NATIONAL CONVENTION (YENAGOA 2005)**

Prof. Kimse Okoko was re-elected to lead the **4<sup>th</sup> INC NEC** in the fifth National Convention held in Yenagoa on the 15<sup>th</sup> January 2005.

### **SIXTH IJAW NATIONAL CONVENTION (YENAGOA 2009)**

The **5<sup>th</sup> INC NEC** led by Dr. (later Prof.) Obinime was elected at a National Convention held in Yenagoa on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2009.

### **SEVENTH IJAW NATIONAL CONVENTION (YENAGOA 2009)**

The **6<sup>th</sup> INC NEC** led by Dr. Tari Sekibo was elected in the seventh National Convention held in Yenagoa on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March 2013, with the following as members of his Exco.

Chief (Sen.) T. J. Sekibo	-	President
Engr. E. Charles Ambaiowei	-	Vice President
Sir Theodore Ezonfade	-	National Secretary
Chief Sir. Kalaiti Jephthah	-	National Treasurer
Pastor Victor Burubo	-	National Publicity Secretary
Lady Ebriere Gold	-	National Welfare Secretary
Arc. Amagbe D. Kentebe	-	National Organizing Secretary
Chief (Barr.) V. B. Bamuza- Mutu	-	National Legal Adviser
Chief Phillip Brown Agu	-	National Auditor
Ms. Margareth W. Agidee	-	National Financial Secretary
Mr. William H. Mpkah	-	National Assistant Secretary

However, the President, Dr. Sekibo died in active service on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November 2013 in Yenagoa and in 2015, Barr. Boma Obuoforibo was elected to complete the rest of his tenure. However, the process of election of a replacement for Dr. Sekibo was very contentious and not accepted by some sections of the Ijaw ethnic nationality. In the mist of the crisis, another convention was claimed to have held in Port Harcourt in 2016 and Chief Charles Harry was elected as President, following the claim that Barr. Boma Obuoforibo had been impeached.

The INC was thrown into a series of crises and became comatose till 2019 when the process to hold the convention that elected the current NEC commenced. It is therefore not very clear who the President of the **7<sup>TH</sup> INC NEC** is.

### **EIGHTH IJAW NATIONAL CONVENTION (YENAGOA 2019)**

With the intervention of notable Ijaw traditional leaders and some elders, the crises in the INC were eventually resolved, especially as the official tenure of all sides laying claim to the Presidency of the INC had elapsed. A National Convention of the INC was then held in Yenagoa in 2019 to elect a new set of NEC members. This convention was eventually botched on the day of the election due to some unforeseen circumstances engineered by some highly placed Ijaw personalities and this again threw the INC into another round of crises. One main reason for the botched election was the open involvement of government (especially, the Bayelsa State) officials in the election of the Ijaw National Congress. The governor of Bayelsa State is viewed as the Governor-General of Ijaw Nation and Bayelsa is the Jerusalem of the Ijaw Nation. It is proper that whoever holds that position should see himself as the political leader of the Ijaw Nation and endeavour to be neutral.

Finally, by the Mercies of GOD Almighty and the intervention once again of Ijaw Traditional Rulers and Elders, with the active support of the miracle Governor of Bayelsa State, Senator Douye Diri, another National Convention was held in Ijaw House, Yenagoa on the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021. This Convention elected the current NEC, the **8<sup>th</sup> INC NEC** led by Prof. Benjamin Ogele Okaba in a transparent and first electronically conducted election in the history of the Ijaw National Congress.

The full list of members of the **8<sup>th</sup> INC NEC** is as presented below:

Prof. Benjamin Ogele Okaba	-	President
Mr. Atamuno Atamuno	-	Vice President 1
Alabo Nengi James	-	Vice President 2
High Chief F. J. Williams	-	Vice President 3

Engr. Ebipamowei Wodu	-	National Secretary
Hon. Samson Uroupa	-	National Assistant Secretary
Chief Kennedy Odiowei	-	National Financial Secretary
Engr. Ezonebi Oyakemeagbegha	-	National Publicity Secretary
Engr. Onengiyefori Hector Fenibo	-	National Organizing Secretary
High Chief Phillip Brown Agu	-	National Treasurer
Barr. Mrs Bomo Tons Fetepigi Obhe	-	National Legal Adviser
High Chief Tamara-emi Taiwo Abisagbo	-	National Auditor
Mrs. Peremo R. Isenah Opiah	-	National Welfare Secretary
Alali Danagogo	-	National Women Affairs Secretary

### **THE CURRENT ZONAL AND CHAPTER CHAIRMEN**

- I. Chairman, Western Zone: Chief Robinson Akin Ogunkoru
- II. Chairman, Central Zone: Hon. Dr. Doodei Week
- III. Chairman, Eastern Zone: HRH N. L. A. Iraron (Edeobolo II)
- IV. Chairman, Abuja Chapter: Chief Dr. Ebizimoh Okolo
- V. Chairman, Lagos Chapter: Rev. Ebitimi Dio-Posibi
- VI. Chairman, Benin Chapter: Sir Dr. Bibowei James Braie
- VII. Chairman, Akure Chapter: Hon. Bonasuwe Ominidougha
- VIII. Chairman, North America Chapter: Mr. Kenneth Anga
- IX. Chairman, Europe Chapter: Mr. John Opuogulaya



## **SUMMITS ORGANISED BY THE IJAW NATIONAL CONGRESS**

Since its formation, the INC had organised several summits to galvanise the various views of individuals, groups, and organisations to formulate policies for the Ijaw Nation in its quest to address the Ijaw Question in the Nigerian Nation State. Some of the summits organised include:

- i. The 1<sup>st</sup> summit “the All-Ijaw National Conference” held in Yenagoa on the 27<sup>th</sup> August 1998 was organised by the Chief Joshua Fumudoh led National Executive Council of the Ijaw National Congress. The major outcome of this conference was;
  - a. The decision to form the National Solidarity Movement (NSM) and the setting up of the Steering Committee to actualise its formation.
  
- ii. The 2<sup>nd</sup> summit “the Pan Ijaw Conference” that took place from 28<sup>th</sup> February to 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2003 was organised by the Prof. Kimse Okoko led NEC of the Ijaw National Congress. The major outcome of the Conference were:
  - a. Establishment of the Ijaw National (Trust) Fund
  - b. The restructuring of the standing Committees of Congress
  - c. Formal commissioning of the Ijaw National anthem.
  
- iii. The 3<sup>rd</sup> summit “the Mini Pan-Ijaw Conference” on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2014 in Yenagoa organised by the Engr. Charles Ambaiowei, who as acting President of Ijaw National Congress following the death of Dr. Tari James Sekibo, MFR) led the 6<sup>th</sup> NEC of the Ijaw National Congress. The major outcome of the Conference were:
  
- iv. An all Ijaw Summit was organised by the 8<sup>th</sup> NEC of the Ijaw National Congress, being the fourth in the series of Summits organised by the Ijaw National Congress. The All Ijaw Summit with the theme “The State of the Nigerian Nation and the Ijaw Question” was intended to provide an opportunity for a review of the Ijaw Position in the current Nigerian Nation-State and also create a platform to articulate a common position on the future of the Ijaw Nation. The All Ijaw Summit held on Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> of December 2021 released the following as its communique:

## **COMMUNIQUE OF THE INC ONE-DAY DIALOGUE**

The Ijaw National Congress (INC), the apex Ijaw socio-cultural organization, held a one-day talk themed, "The Imperative for Paradigm Shift", at the INC national headquarters in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State, on Friday, January 19, 2024 to deliberate on pertinent issues and challenges confronting the Ijaw nation with a view to articulating what we intend to do differently as a homogeneous people in all ramifications.

Critical Ijaw stakeholders comprising the INC National leadership and its organs, the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), eminent sons and daughters of Ijaw nationality participated in the forum presided over by the President of INC, Professor Benjamin Okaba. At the meeting, incisive papers were presented, and robust interactions took place.

### **OBSERVATIONS**

1. Despite contributing over 60% to oil and gas production, which is the mainstay of the country's economic survival, there are no major infrastructures across Ijaw land. For instance, the East-West Road that traverses Ijaw land is still deplorable and impassable and several Ijaw communities remain inaccessible by road. Also, port facilities in Warri, Sapele, Port Harcourt etc. that were hitherto economically viable are no longer in use. Proposed seaports at Agge and other towns in Ijaw territories are yet to exponentially impact the economic climate of Ijaw land. We also lack energy infrastructure and other drivers of social, economic and technological advancement.
2. The Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) is anti-Ijaw people in all ramifications. The NNPC has been privatized by the Federal Government and International Oil Companies (IOCs) are divesting their assets around Ijaw land with local consortiums buying up shares. The new investors should relocate their headquarters to Ijaw territories where they have their oil facilities. We also wish to note that very soon, Ijaw territories would become private estates of these local investors with international connections.

However, before the IOCs are allowed to pull out, they should be made to clean up the environmental mess they have created.

3. Even though the Ijaws are one of the largest ethnic nationalities in the Country, they have been deliberately balkanized to make them minorities in all States they exist.
4. We are unhappy with the lopsided political appointments at the federal level.

## **RESOLUTIONS**

1. We resolve, as Ijaw people, to imbibe the spirit of oneness and unity, and recalibrate our psyches to align with the collective aspirations of Ijaw nation for self-actualization, resource control and environmental justice, equity and fairness.
2. We should set up a think-tank to interrogate every aspect of our existence, articulate and provide strategic templates for the collective growth and development of Ijaw nation.
3. We will strengthen collaborations and consultations towards our internal security as Ijaw people. We will also work with other ethnic nationalities that share similar aspirations with Ijaw Nation to forge a formidable front to achieve common goals.
4. We reject the deliberate balkanization of Ijaw territories into minorities to deny us the socio-economic/political advantages that are associated with majority status. We are resolute on this.
5. INC should galvanize efforts to develop and improve Ijaw traditional medicine and pharmacology.
6. The Ijaw nation condemns the recent judgement of the supreme court on the ownership and control of the inland waterways in the country. We view it as anti-Ijaw.

**Prof. Benjamin Ogele Okaba**  
President

**Engr. Ebipamowei Wodu**  
National Secretary

## **FIRST PAN-IJAW CONFERENCE**

The second Pan-Ijaw conference was held from 28<sup>th</sup> February – 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2003 under the leadership of Prof. Kimse Okoko, President of the INC. The major achievements of the conference were the establishment of an Ijaw National (Trust) Fund in accordance with article 17 (b) subsection 4 of the INC Constitution and the restructuring of the standing committees of Congress. The conference also attracted various shapes of opinion especially from Ijaw intellectuals at home and in the Diaspora; engendered a strong sense of unity across the six states indigenous to the Ijaw and rooted a psychological approach to the Ijaw struggle. The Ijaw National Anthem was formally commissioned at this conference.

On September 15 2000, a new Executive Committee was sworn in following the highly acclaimed successful elections held in Yenagoa on the same day with Prof. Kimse Okoko emerging as the new president of the Ijaw National Congress (INC).

In its first term 2000 - December 2005, the Okoko led Executive successfully executed many landmark projects and programmes aimed at consolidating the gains of the previous regimes despite the externally induced crisis which engulfed the Executive Council. The attempt to compromise the lofty ideals of the Okoko led Executive anchored in part on the principles of selfless service and zero tolerance for corruption however, failed through the patriotic efforts of the then Governor of Bayelsa State Chief D. S. P. Alamiyeseigha Ph.D and other well-meaning senior citizens of the Ijaw Nation and the determined commitment of its leader to stay on course regardless of these evil external / internal influences.

Some of the major successes of the Okoko led executive council include:

- 1) The production of an authentic Ijaw map
- 2) Initiated the composition of the Ijaw National Anthem under the aegis of the late Dr. Adams Fiberesima, Dr. Gabriel Okara and Mr. David suowari
- 3) Organised the First Pan Ijaw Conference with the theme: "The Ijaw Nation: Forging a Common Destiny" in 2003 in the Alfred Diette Spiff Civic Centre, Port Harcourt.
- 4) Organised the First Ijaw National Day Celebrations and a World Summit with the theme: "The Ijaw Ethnic Nationality and the Nigerian State" in the multi-purpose hall, sports complex, Yenagoa on 23<sup>rd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2005.
- 5) The constitution for the first time of the 13 statutory committees of INC
- 6) Reconstruction of the National Representative Council (NRC) with Dr. T. A. T. Allison as leader and General Cletus Emein (Rtd.) as the deputy.

- 7) In line with its policy of strengthening our boarder areas which constitute our weakest links, an NRC meeting was held in Ibeno in Akwa Ibom in 2004 including visits to several Ijaw communities in Toru-Ibe in Edo State.
- 8) Staunchly supported the first struggle of the Ijaws in Warri
- 9) Undertook conflict resolution interventions in several crises turn areas of the Ijaw nation etc.

### **JOINT COMMUNIOUÉ OF CONFERENCE OF IJAW TRADITIONAL RULERS AND COUNCIL OF IJAW ELDERS**

The Pre-Conference Ijaw Colloquium asserted the inalienable rights of the Ijaw to all their territories, self-determination and control of all resources under the earth, the airspace and the water including the Exclusive Economic Zone. The conference and council decried the deliberate balkanization of the Ijaw and gave approval to any form of struggle for the unification of the Ijaw in Nigeria. The communiqué was jointly signed by HRH Jones A. Ere II, Ebenanawei of Ogboin Kingdom for Traditional Rulers, Chief (Dr) H. J. R. Dappa-Biriye for Council of Elders and Mr. J. B. Fumudoh, President of INC.

### **BOYCOTT OF NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE**

The conference of Ijaw Traditional Rulers also met with the National Representative Council. A joint communiqué of the meeting of the Conference and Council, which was published in the Guardian on Saturday May 21, 1994, endorsed the boycott call of the INC on the ground that a conference of the nature being proposed was incapable of addressing the fundamental issues of the Ijaw question in Nigeria.

#### **1) REVIEW OF THE 1993 CONSTITUTION OF INC**

The Ghomorai Commitee was set up and charged to carry out an in-depth and extensive review of the 1993 Constitution and produce a constitution to regulate the affairs of the virile Pan-Ijaw organisation, as the INC, for the benefit of the Ijaw Nation. The CRC submitted its draft report to the NEC of Congress on the 30<sup>th</sup> May 1995. The Ijaw National Representative Council (INRC) concluded debate on the proposed amendments on the 28<sup>th</sup> of July 1995. A special convention of Congress at Patani on the 10<sup>th</sup> of February 1996, by a unanimous resolution, amended the 1993 INC Constitution which thenceforth became

the Constitution of the Ijaw National Congress and referred to as the INC Constituting 1996.

## **2) DEMAND FOR CREATION OF THREE HOMOGENOUS IJAW STATES**

Following the setting up of the State Creation, Local Government and Boundary Adjustment Committee and the request for submission of memoranda, the INC responded by submitting an Ijaw National Memorandum dated January 1996 demanding for the creation of three homogenous Ijaw States, namely; Toru-Ibe, Oil Rivers and Bayelsa with corresponding Local Government Areas and adjustment of boundaries such that Eastern Andoni could be excised from Akwa Ibom State and merged with their kith and kin in the proposed oil Rivers State; the Ijaws of former Ekenwan, Ofunama and Siluko districts be excised from Edo State and merged with their kith and kin in the proposed Toru-Ibe State and Arogbo-Ijaws, Apoi-Ijaws and Furupagha-Ijaws of Ondo State be excised and merged with their kith and kin in the proposed Toru-Ibe State. The subsequent creation of Bayelsa State was one great landmark in the struggle of the INC for self-determination and control of resources for the Ijaw in Nigeria.

## **3) FIRST ALL-IJAW NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

The first Pan-Ijaw Conference was held at the auditorium of the Women's Affairs Ministry at Yenagoa on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August 1998. Following the death of General Sani Abacha, the assumption of office of Gen, Abubakar Junta, the INC convened this Conference for the main purpose of bringing together Ijaw politicians to debate the need to form a single political organisation base controlled in Ijaw land. It was felt an Ijaw political party would provide opportunity for the Ijaw to negotiate on equal terms with other ethnic groups to form a merger, coalition or a broad based political party which would give ample regard to Ijaw interests. Such an Ijaw controlled political party, it was generally believed, would give meaning to and sustain our age-long desire and aspiration to stand on our own as a distinct geo-political zone and further that such a political organisation would provide a formidable platform for the continued articulation of Ijaw interests in Nigeria.

The major outcome of this conference was the formation of the National Solidarity Movement (NSM), an Ijaw political party. A steering committee was formed to actualize the goals of the movement.

## **POSITIONS OF IJAWS IN LINGERING POLITICAL AND SOCIO- ECONOMIC PROBLEMS**

The INC published a position paper stating that the way forward for Nigeria was to practice true federalism in which the federating units shall approximate ethnic national boundaries and in which each unit shall have political and economic autonomy with ample opportunities for putting up plans of their own for self-development.

### **INCUSA AND THE LAUNCHING OF IJAW NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF THE AMERICAS**

The awareness generated by the activities of the INC and efforts at internationalization of the Ijaw struggle led to the establishment of INC in USA (INCUSA) and the Ijaw National Alliance of the Americas on Saturday, 5<sup>th</sup> September 1998 at 100 Capital Boulevard, Rocky Hill, Connecticut USA.

In Britain, Ijaw People's Association (IPA) and Federated Ijaw communities of Great Britain and Ireland (FEDICOM) Picked up the mantle of the Ijaw struggle. In recognition of the efforts of the INC, the President of Congress, Mr. J. B. Fumudoh was given the responsibility of presenting the keynote address at the INAA launching in USA. The keynote address dated August 1998 used the occasion to educate the international communities on the Ijaw question in Nigeria, highlighting who the Ijaw are, the history of their struggle for self-determination, the Ijaw question in Nigeria and the way forward in the resolution of the Question.

### **MEMORANDUM SUBMITTED TO THE PRESIDENTIAL TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON REVIEW OF THE 1999 CONSTITUTION OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA**

A memorandum dated January 2000 was submitted by the INC to the Presidential Technical Committee on Review of the 1999 Constitution by the Federal Republic of Nigeria. As usual, the memorandum recommended a true Federal Structure of Governance for the country in which ethnic nationalities or group of voluntarily associating nationalities will form the basic units of the Federation. Ten of such groups were recommended, including the Southern Federation comprising entirely of the Ijaw.

## **THE 68 CLANS**

**THE IJAW NATION:** The Congress has established three zones (Eastern, Central and Western) and three chapters (Benin, Lagos and Abuja). The clans within the zones are:

**EASTERN ZONE:** Ataba, Ngo, Unyeada, Eastern Obolo, Asarama, Ibeno, Bille, Ibani, Kalabari, Nkoro, Okrika, Opobo, Udekema.

**CENTRAL ZONE:** Abua, Akassa, Apoi, Bassan, Bomo, Engenni, Ekpetiama, Epie, Atisa, Gbarain, Iduwini, Kabowei, Kolokuma, Opokuma, Nembe, Odual, Ogbia, Ogboin, Ogobiri-Mein, Okordia, Zarama, Biseni, Kou, Olodiana, Oporoma, Oyiakiri, Iarakiri, Kumbo, Tungbo, Kugbo, Gbaraun, Koluama

**WESTERN ZONE:** Akugben-Mein, Apoi, Arogbo, Egbema, Gbaramatu, Iduwini, Isaba, Kabowei, Kumbo, Ngbelebiri-Mein, Obotebe, Ogbe-Ijo, Ogbolubiri-Mein, Ogulagha, Okomu, Gbaraun, Furupagha, Olodiana, Oporomo, Seimbiri, Tarakiri, Tuomo, Diebiri