

## PRESS RELEASE

### TAFIDA RECEIVES IJAW NATIONAL CONGRESS (EUROPE)

His Excellency Dr. Dalhatu Sarki Tafida, OFR, High Commissioner of Nigeria, on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2010 received in audience a six-man delegation of the Ijaw National Congress (INC) led by the Chairman, Mr. Stephen Benamaisia. The objectives of the visit were to pay a courtesy call on the High Commissioner, condole His Excellency on the passing away of the former President, Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, GCFR, commend him on the ongoing transformational works at the Chancery and to express the will of the Congress to partner with him as he grapples with the restoration of the good image of the Mission.

2. Responding, Dr. Tafida thanked the visiting members of the Executive of the Congress for their abiding faith in the Mission as Nigeria's windows to the United Kingdom. He congratulated the Congress as a newly elected body. He noted that it was not part of his policy to grant audience to sub-national and tribal Nigerian associations in the UK, but for his high regard for some members of the Executive of INC (Europe). Dr. Tafida expressed delight at the affiliation of INC with CANUK, the umbrella body of Nigerian groups and individuals in the UK. He enjoined them to always think first of Nigeria's national interest before that of their sub-national identity.

3. Dr. Tafida also expressed delight to know that some executive members of the Congress were in Nigeria. He, therefore, urged the visiting members to ensure that the good practices of the UK were taken home to Nigeria. He declared, "Don't only enjoy the attractive social amenities of the UK, but to ensure that its best practices were replicated in Nigeria". Dr. Tafida also took time to take a swipe at some Nigerians with "settlerS syndrome in the United Kingdom for making

disparaging comments on Nigeria in order to gain acceptance by the white man". The High Commissioner was of the opinion that it is uncommon among white men abroad to make disparaging remarks about their country. Dr. Tafida however assured the delegation that the Mission was established to serve Nigerians in the UK and will continue to fight in defence of their rights. He enjoined them not to shy away from seeking their legitimate rights from the Mission.

### **Interactive Session**

4. Five critical issues were raised by the delegation during the interactive session notably:

- i] Need for the transformation of the Mission from its nightmarish past to a Diplomatic and Consular Mission that befits the name Nigeria.
- ii] The importance of further inculcating the notion of due process in Nigerians who visit the Mission for services.
- iii] The need for the Mission local staff to eschew favouritism in all its manifestations.
- iv] The problem of negative profiling of Nigerians by the UK media and the need for the Mission to evolve more socio-economic and cultural programmes that would help boost the confidence of affected Nigerians in the UK.
- v] Empowerment of women in Nigeria.

5. Responding, Tafida gave a rundown of the achievements of its administration and pledged to do more in the battle for the restoration of the dignity of the Mission. He promised that he would not relent until all perceived irritants in the relation of the

Nigerian community with the High Commission were eliminated. He reiterated the need not to blame British media for Nigeria's negative image in the country but on those Nigerians he described as exhibiting the "settlers syndrome".

6. The Congress and the High Commission pledged to support each other for the attainment of mutually beneficial ends.

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London.

1<sup>st</sup> June 2010.