

## **2014 ICOB Convention - Washington DC**

From July 31 to August 04, 2014, the International Community of Banyakigezi (ICOB) hosted its annual convention in Washington D.C. Accommodated at the Holiday Inn Rosslyn at Key Bridge Hotel—just a 10-minutes' drive from the White House—delegates celebrated the ten year anniversary of ICOB since it was formally launched in Washington DC, its headquarters, in July 2004.

The convention drew a large crowd of over 200 delegates, thrilled by not only the publicity associated with the anniversary, but also the US-Africa Leaders Summit where President Barack Obama welcomed leaders from across Africa to the United States capital. Likewise, ICOB welcomed Banyakigezi and friends to Washington DC for what proved to be an exciting summer weekend of conferences, tours, networking, and entertainment.

Delegates, especially those from outside Washington, started arriving and checking into the hotel on Thursday evening July 31st. A few members of our Washington Chapter were on hand to welcome delegates to the city and share personalized packets of information regarding local food, transport, and services. Most importantly, unregistered delegates were greeted at reception and introduced to the exciting weekend ahead.



### **Innovations and Entrepreneurship for Youth Employment in Uganda**

On Friday morning, ICOB delegates rolled up their sleeves for the first day of convention proceedings. The day started with a sumptuous, buffet-style breakfast, free for delegates and served in the conference room where the main Convention discussions were taking place.

With breakfast served and the national anthems of the United States and Uganda heartily performed, the official commencement of ICOB's 11<sup>th</sup> annual convention was both on time and memorable.

In her welcoming remarks to the delegates, the President of ICOB USA local Chapter, Ms. Ann Karasanyi, highlighted the theme of the convention as that of promoting innovations and entrepreneurship to generate jobs for the youth. After welcoming delegates, Ms. Karasanyi invited Uganda's Ambassador to the United States of America, Her Excellency Oliver Wonekha, to formally open the Convention.

Thereafter, a keynote address was presented by the Rt. Hon. Amama Mbabazi, Prime Minister of Uganda and Member of Parliament for Kinkizi West who is also a Munyakigezi. His address highlighted the need to promote *Youth Employment in Uganda* and government's strategies and programs to deal with it.

Consistent with the theme, the morning and afternoon sessions were devoted to presentations highlighting innovations and entrepreneurship including *Applying ICT Technology to promoting innovations and entrepreneurship*, and *Business and employment Opportunities in Oil and Gas Production in Uganda*.

The morning and afternoon sessions were punctuated by a buffet-style luncheon in a fantastic Chinese Restaurant, free for convention Delegates. In the evening, the delegates were entertained by a DJ and Cash Bar until midnight, before delegates retreated for rest before a second exciting day with ICOB.

Saturday's session began with a hearty breakfast at the Hotel, again buffet-style, free for delegates and served within the conference room in which the meetings were held.

After breakfast, the morning sessions covered ICT applications to create employment; challenges and opportunities to developing competitiveness and entrepreneurship in light of a fast growing population; and social dimensions of Development.

At lunch break, delegates were encouraged to eat where they liked given the many choices of restaurants in and outside the hotel. The afternoon was dedicated to a General Assembly of ICOB, where delegates refined resolutions for the Convention and made presentations of both local chapter reports and the Annual Report of ICOB Apex.

### **Dinner Banquet & Cultural Extravaganza**

No convention would be considered a success without immersing the delegates into a cultural rendezvous, consistent with ICOB's mission. Efforts were not spared in making sure that the Washington convention would leave a lasting impression on attendees.

Accordingly, on Saturday evening, the delegates and guests were welcomed to a Dinner Banquet and Cultural Extravaganza to not only celebrate Banyakigezi, but also raise money for ICOB's flagship initiative, the Kigezi Education Fund (KEF). A sumptuous buffet-style dinner was beautifully accompanied by cultural dancing in which every able-bodied soul was invited to participate especially in Kikiga dances. Dinner was immediately followed by an auction of some Ugandan products, including Uganda waragi, to support KEF. Between the auction and the pledges made by attendees, the passion for ICOB's mission was unmistakable. By the end of the dinner banquet, US\$14,000 was contributed to the Kigezi Education Fund, both in cash and pledges. The remainder of the action-packed evening was spent dancing to the intoxicating rhythms of modern African music.

Sunday started with ecumenical service, followed by independent tours of Washington DC. The convention organizers commissioned a bus to drop delegates in downtown Washington D.C., nearby major tourist attractions such as the Air & Space Museum, Capitol Hill and the White House.



Delegates later reconvened for a warm, Sunday afternoon at Gravelly Point, a grassy knoll where locals host picnics and watch flights land a few hundred feet away at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. ICOB delegates reveled in this picturesque Site through the evening while playing soccer, eating food, and enjoying drinks.



Monday morning was a time for farewells. Everyone parted company, duly convinced, that the convention had been well spent. Delegates looked forward to the next convention in Dallas, Texas, hoping to build on the achievements made in Washington DC.

By all measures, the ICOB Convention in Washington DC was a great success. In addition to enjoying and networking, delegates made serious commitments to the Kigezi Education Fund, contributing about US\$14,000. In addition, the organizers of the Convention were so efficient that they made a surplus of about US\$7,665 which was contributed to the Kigezi Education Fund. Altogether, the Convention raised money for the Kigezi Education Fund that exceeded US\$21,000.