



# ICOB NEW JERSEY 2019 CONVENTION REPORT INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF BANYAKIGEZI



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## OVERVIEW

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The 17th Convention and Annual General Meeting of the International Community of Banyakigezi (ICOB) were held at the Hilton Meadowlands 2 Meadowlands Plaza, East Rutherford, NJ 07073 from Thursday August 1, 2019 to Monday August 05, 2019. The theme for the Convention was **“Innovation Driven Tourism”**. This year’s theme was an extension of last year’s convention theme and program that focused on Tourism as an Engine of Uganda’s Development.



# ICOB NEW JERSEY 2019 CONVENTION REPORT INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF BANYAKIGEZI



The organizing committee comprised of the following members:

- Sarah Sebikari-Rukunda - Chairperson
- Dora Ayebare - Vice Chairperson
- Carol Kemigisha - Secretary
- Innocent Byamugisha - Acting Treasurer
- Clare Bagazonzya - Assistant Secretary/Head, Youth Program
- Michelle Byamugisha - Website Administrator
- Muniini Mulera - Member
- Peninah Ngategize - Member
- Margaret Tumusiime - Member
- Judie Nkusi - Member
- Tim Kazinduka - Member

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## CONVENTION OBJECTIVES

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- To showcase Uganda as a priority tourist destination
- To present and promote the case for sustainable tourism in Uganda
- Explore tourism beyond the national parks and animal tracking (e.g. film tourism, sports tourism, culinary tourism);
- Learn about tourism promotion and management in the Information Age
- To create an opportunity for Ugandan tourism operators and entrepreneurs to promote their businesses and to network with American tourism operators and companies.
- Roll-out the Kigezi Investment Fund, a venture that is intended to give Ugandan investors opportunities to take advantage of a well-managed investment vehicle operating under the stringent rules of and regulations of countries like the Canada, United States and United Kingdom.
- Fundraise for the Kigezi Education and raise funds for information and communication technology (ICT) education in Kigezi.



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## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

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### Thursday August 1, 2019:

Although some guests arrived early on Wednesday July 31, 2019, most guests arrived on Thursday August 1, 2019. The registration desk was ready to check in guests by 3:30 pm to enable guests start registration by 4pm.

The organizing committee had their final meeting with some of the Board members in attendance from 8p.m to 10p.m in the board room, thereafter the chairperson gave them a tour of the conference rooms. A decision was then made to move the main conference from Aqueduct to Seminar room which comfortably accommodated the delegates.

### Friday August 2, 2019:

Delegates continued to arrive and register while the exhibitors started to set up in the Monmouth and Aqueduct rooms. The following exhibitors were on site:

- Uganda Embassy
- National Identification and Registration Authority (NIRA)
- Centenary Bank
- Breathtaking Uganda
- Nyakagezi tours and travel
- Harkiss Designs
- Sarah Mukasa

The main conference commenced with a welcome address from the Chairperson Organizing Committee, Sarah Sebikari-Rukunda who then introduced Judy Ross Vice President, Meadowlands Chamber and Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) Meadowlands Regional Chamber of Commerce Convention to add her voice in welcoming the delegates to New Jersey.



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The chairperson then introduced the President ICOB, Muniini K. Mulera who briefed delegates as to why the theme resonated so strongly with the Kigezi region given its untapped tourism development potential.

Consequently, His Excellency Mull Sebuja Katende the Ambassador of Uganda to the US was introduced to the delegates and gave his opening speech which reiterated the Uganda government's continued support to diaspora initiatives like ICOB. The Ambassador informed delegates about the services his embassy provides Ugandans in the diaspora and introduced key staff who were in attendance.

He was then followed by Ambassador Philip Odida Uganda's Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN who conveyed the Permanent Representatives regrets at not being able to attend and applauded ICOB for its efforts in promoting beneficial linkages in the fields of education and tourism between Ugandans in the diaspora and those in Uganda.

The keynote address was then delivered by Ashley Norman Director of Public Relations PHG Consulting Uganda who spoke about the Uganda Tourism Marketing Efforts in the US.

Dr Peter Ngategize Head of the Private Sector Development Unit (PSDU) Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development spoke about Community Involvement in Tourism Development - Home Stay

The guests were then treated to an Italian lunch in the Pimlico room.

On Friday afternoon, Isaiah Jobs Rwanyekiro CEO and Founder Breathtaking Uganda Campaign spoke about the work his company is doing to document the beauty of Uganda.

The youth panel discussion moderated by Michelle Byamugisha comprised of Jeff Fonda Founder and CEO of The Literate Earth Project as well as Irene Jennifer discussed - putting Uganda on the Map: Innovative Youth Led Case Studies.

The first day of the convention was crowned with a candid panel discussion on the Untapped Tourism Potential of Uganda moderated by Mrs. Peninah Ngategize. The Panel discussion included Ashley Norman, Ann Karasanyi, H.E. Ambassador Mull Katende, Ambassador Philip Odida and Muniini K. Mulera.



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The proceedings were adjourned at 5:30pm and delegates later met for a networking session and music by DJ Clein at 8pm in the Diamond AB room.

### **Saturday August 3rd, 2019**

The convention on Saturday morning commenced with a presentation by Emmanuel Turyamuhaki which covered the Kigezi Investment Fund (KIF) Roll Out.

ICOB Strategic Planning Strategic Plan: Primed for Renewal and Take Off was championed by: Henry K Bagazonzya

ICOB Youth led by: Marie-Claire Bagazonzya also participated in a Speed Networking and Mentorship Session

Before the guests were treated to lunch, the president ICOB Muniini K. Mulera introduced the nominees for election.

Annual General Meeting Reports - President's Report, Chapter Reports, Treasurer's Report & Auditors report Elections of ICOB Officers Relax and prepare for dinner gala

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## **ELECTIONS**

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New leaders were elected to the executive and board. The election was over seen and monitored by H.E Ambassador Mull Katende, Ambassador Duncan Muhumuza Laki and Dr Richard Otto. Voting by secret ballot was free and fair. The following were elected to the executive and board.



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### Executive Members:

- Vice President - Bridget Begin Nkojo
- Secretary – Carol Kemigisha
- Assistant Secretary – Marie-Claire Bagazonya
- Treasurer – Leonard Nkurunziza

### Board Members:

- Peter Bikangaga
- Beatrice Hamujuni-Smith
- Ruth Kyamatuuku-Katarikawe
- Grace Mugabirwe Mutebile
- Sarah Sebikari-Rukunda
- Emmanuel Turyamuhaki

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## FUNDRAISING DINNER, DANCE AND GALA

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On Saturday night as is customary, the delegates were treated to a dinner, dance and fundraising event to raise funds for the Kigezi Education Fund (KEF).

An opening prayer led by Mrs. Florence Mulera. The chairperson organizing committee then introduced the organizing committee team and thanked the guests for supporting ICOB.

The President ICOB, Muniini K. Mulera updated guests on how the funds from previous years have been put to good use in promoting information communication technology (ICT) education in Kigezi and encouraged guests to give generously to the cause.

The President ICOB introduced Ms. Barbara Neogy Lapcek who founded the Nommo Gallery in 1964 as the 2019 ICOB honouree. Ms. Barbara Neogy Lapcek was an avid supporter of the arts in Uganda and abroad. She truly deserved to be recognized and was grateful that her role in promoting the arts has not been forgotten.

Leaders elected to ICOB executive committee and board members were then presented and introduced to the attendees.



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We were honoured to have Mrs. Ann Karasanyi from the Washington DC Chapter in attendance as she together with ICOB UK chairperson Emmanuel Turyamuhaki led the fundraising efforts which realized a total of approximately \$15,000 in pledges.

The guests were serenaded with music from the popular Ugandan saxophonist Isaiah Katumwa and a traditional Kinyarwanda dancer who performed the Intore, Damien Mupenzi, joined by the guests. Thereafter guests were treated to Music by DJ Clein.

### Sunday August 4th, 2019

On Sunday morning at 9:30am guest came together for a lively and well attended Worship Service Led by Elvis Muhaabwa, thereafter, the delegates were treated to a Family Friendly Lunch Buffet Cruise aboard the Infinity Hornblower Yacht across the Hudson river. Aboard the Cruise was DJ Clein playing Music

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## RECOMMENDATIONS FROM MEMBERS

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- Involve more men and volunteers in the preparation of the conventions
- Encourage the local community to be a part of the convention, this can be achieved by starting preparations early.
- Choose a strategic date a week or two before UNAA or after the Uganda Canada Convention as delegates normally will stay around touring 2 weeks but cannot afford to stay over 2 weeks.
- Broaden the budget to include items such as logistic, printing, magazine and programs
- The convention magazine should be provided to delegates
- To limit loopholes in collections and use receipt book or list diligently
- Set payment cut off dates for any extra activities such as cruises.
- Although a good number of T shirts were sold other promotional items such as caps, water bottles (since we are normally in the height of summer when the convention occurs) with ICOB Logo and Vision should be sold as well. A wider variety of popular statements like “Once a Munyakigezi always a Munyakigezi” should be added to those that featured during the 17<sup>th</sup> annual convention.
- Stay away from use of a third party when signing contract for hotel



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- Hotel must provide basic conference facilities such as Audio-Visual Equipment
- Vendor visibility must be considered when hotel is chosen i.e. can we use hall way for our vendors
- Hotel must be able to provide some incentives i.e. some free rooms
- A suggestion box during the convention would be a good addition with a suggestion template for delegates to voice opinions
- Popular entertainment personalities should be booked well in advance as this will encourage and motivate convention attendance
- Convention fee should be increased based on the host city
- Assign a rapporteur during the Convention
- Revamp the website
- Improve communication on social media
- Start planning next convention early, during convention, sometime should be spent discussing location and theme of next convention

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### RECOMMENDATIONS FROM AGM

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- To establish a comprehensive resolution monitoring mechanism
- Establish an elder's forum
- Establish a Fundraising and marketing strategy
- Establish an advocacy and lobbying committee
- Recommit to a healing and reconciliation mechanism
- Incorporate other similar groups like the Bakiga Nation
- Strengthen the governance and leadership structures
- As a requirement to satisfy US 501(c)3 requirements, all chapters holding ICOB funds should send funds to the ICOB apex account for accountability