

# Sasse Alumni Association Inc

"An Alumna Association of the Ex-Students  
of St. Joseph's College, Sasse-Cameroon"  
A 501(c)3 Charitable Organization



SOBA AMERICA

## *2018 SOBA America Convention Minutes*

*Boston, Massachusetts – May 26th, 2018*

*Theme: Working Together*

1 - Mass 7:30am: The mass was full and was presided over by a Reverend Father. This was the second mass held at a SOBA Convention and a welcome addition to our tradition

2 - Registration of delegates, convention credentials and packages: 8:15am to 9:45am.

3 - Breakfast/Snacks: 8am-9:45am

### **Deliberations began at 10:00 am**

1 - Introduction of moderator

Moderator was Soban Edwin "Mola" Ndoko who was elected by a majority vote by the General Assembly (GA)

2 - Prayer

The meeting began with a prayer where SOBANS asked for the Lord's blessing over our deliberations.

3 - Sasse Anthem, sang by the entire General Assembly and conducted by our moderator Soban Edwin "Mola" Ndoko

4 - Roll call/registration/introduction

Every SOBAN in the hall introduced themselves by their name, their Class and their local chapter. We had the most international gathering of SOBANS in the house from far and wide. From the US, we had large representations from SOBA members from the hosts, SOBA New England, Houston, Dallas, Georgia, California, Arizona, DMV (DC/Maryland/Virginia), the new chapter Oklahoma, Minnesota, the Carolinas, and several other cities. We also had a large delegation from Canada, including Montreal and Toronto.

In addition, we had several SOBANS from Europe including the UK, Ireland, and Germany. Cameroon was also represented which made it a truly international gathering.

Once every member introduced themselves, class of 1984 was shown once again to be in full force with over 20 members. However, a special introduction was reserved for the most senior Soban Dr. Bill Tita of New England, who beat out Sessekou Dr. Augustine Agbor. He was introduced last to thunderous applause, standing ovation and cries of admiration from the entire GA.

Additionally, a thunderous round of applause was given to the youngest SOBAN at the convention, Brian Njotsa of Dallas, TX.

5 - Opening remarks by the president of SOBA New England, President Julius Enang and Convention Chairman Nobert Kong.

President Julius Enang gave opening remarks welcoming the GA. President Enang mentioned that New England was one of the staunchest and strongest chapters in the SOBA America network and welcomed the GA back to Boston. He also acknowledged SOBA New England members and their spouses in his opening remarks for all their sacrifices to make this convention happen. He also thanked all the patrons for their support for this convention.

Chairman Kong also reiterated his thanks to the SOBANESE for all their sacrifices and their efforts in putting together a successful convention. He acknowledged their tireless work in providing the food and logistics and thanked them for their hard work. He also thanked members of the GA for their support and promised them an unbelievable convention, one that would be talked about for the ages.

6 - Reading of last convention minutes by Secretary General and adoption

As a point of procedure, the agenda was adopted prior to the meeting and a summarized version of the 2017 SOBA Convention minutes were read to the GA. The SG Mbei Enoh directed those who wanted a more detailed version to the membership portal in order to save precious time. SG Enoh reiterated that the goal was to conclude all deliberations by 2pm to leave time for members and guests to

prepare for the evening activities and the Gala. The minutes were read and adopted.

#### 7 - Review of agenda by Secretary General and adoption

The agenda was read by SG Mbei Enoch and were adopted without any modifications

#### 8 - Life insurance- Emeritus Quintus Enow

Emeritus Quintus gave several updates and procedures for the life insurance and asked that he be contacted if members had any questions. Emeritus Quintus spoke briefly about life insurance available for \$118.80 for individuals, and \$122.40 for a family with dependent children under 18 for a death benefit of \$25,000. He took some questions and referred interested members to our Policy and Procedure Manual for more information.

#### 9 - SAGI

Dr. Kevin Njabo updated members on the state of SAGI. President Itoe explained to members that there was also a group called SAGIC which was a newer organization with increased benefits. Dr. Njabo and President Itoe provided explanation on SAGI and SAGIC, AND an explanation of the benefits of each one. The General Assembly expressed interest in SAGIC as an additional option which should be made available to members. President Itoe promised to make more information available after further discussions he had initiated with SAGIC so interested members could join if needed.

#### 10 - Chapter Reports

There were chapter report presentations at the convention this year only from presidents who submitted their reports to SG Mbei Enoch before the deadline. These chapters included Houston, New England, Dallas, Maryland, DMV, Arizona, and Carolinas. SOBA DMV President "Boss" Fonjongo announced the annual Soban Father's Day Gala and reported the great Mini-Convention which took place in November 2017 in DC. Soban Albert Sekoh presented Montreal's readiness for the Mini-Convention in 2018. Houston announced their elections with a new President, Mbei Enoch, the growth of their chapter and the relaunch of their annual end of year party this November.

#### 11 - Financial Presentation/updates, response to concerns, new system and changes with comments/suggestions from Leadership - Treasurer Fomenky

Two days before the Convention, Mr. Paul Ayah wrote a scintillating email message on the open SOBA America forum highlighting certain recommendations from the

fact-finding committee that he thought needed to be changed. He also highlighted the need for standardized reporting and more rigorous financial practices.

Treasurer Fomenky stated that some of the recommendations were good and that his team was implementing those for the most part. However, he said that some of them, such as using only checks for all withdrawals and purchases were impractical, because several vendors do not accept checks. He brought up the example of purchasing the voting devices from China, and how the sellers would not take checks or debit cards and the need for a way to withdraw funds expediently for SOBA American business. He raised concerns over the committee wanting accountability for even transactional fees which are negligible based on GAAP or materiality. Some of the recommendations per his assessment are good for big companies and not practical for a small organization like ours with limited funds to implement such reforms. Due to time constraints, his full rebuttal will be posted in our membership portal. He however appreciated the work done and thanked the committee. He took a few questions and heard some recommendations from some members.

Treasurer Fomenky recommended that- SOBA America create an advisory board composed of the present and former Treasurer, other NLT members, and experts in the field of finance and accounting to provide continuity during government transitions in the NLT.

President Itoe thanked the fact-finding committee for their hard work and time in preparing such a detail report. He reminded the General Assembly that he had ordered a review of the document for implementation where necessary and needed by the Financial Team two months ago. He however reminded the General Assembly for the need of members to raise concerns in a way which will not create an unnecessary air of suspicion especially when dealing with finances. Such acts can undermine trust in the group and lead to a decline in membership. Some concerns or questions are best directed to the appropriate NLT member for answers. Solving some issues by trying to cause an unnecessary quagmire can mar the association for a longtime and potentially kill it. Whistle blower methods should be applauded if answers are not given to concerns raised through the appropriate channels. He rejected some of the characterization of some assertions of Ayah's WhatsApp message which he considered misleading such as "drastic reduction" in registration due to a lack of accountability in our finances. He said the list of members who have not renewed grows each year because it includes any

additional potential members we find each year regardless of their previous registration history. So even if all members of the previous year register, the list of those who did not register will still grow. However, mention a small decline in registration caused primarily by some members worried about paying \$300.00 to be up to date with their registrations. Half of the members of SOBA America had failed to pay the mandatory \$200.00 for our two fallen brothers. So we faced resistance from some who felt paying their \$100.00 will still make them ineligible for benefits so why register? Maybe skip the registration year...President Itoe said the NLT had taken some steps to alleviate this fear which threatened to drastically reduce our membership.

President Itoe further said he had hoped for a faster implementation of most of the important aspects raised by the Ayah report presented during the last convention. But due to the professional and personal activities of the members of the Financial Team, they said it will take some more time but had made significant progress. This is a challenge in most volunteer organizations. He promised to keep pushing the team work faster in order for an updated financial system per the fact finding report. Based on the fact-finding committee report, he recommended that the GA approve the following recommendations:

- That SOBA America create financial benchmarks and standardization for financial reports
- To create a manual with standard operating procedures (SOP) for all financial reporting. The manual will make it easier for each member to interpret and understand all our financial documents.
- Create standardized templates for all relevant reports which will make it easier for all to understand.
- That SOBA America create an advisory board composed of the present and former Treasurer, two members appointed by the GA, and two experts in the field of finance and accounting (SOBA America members-CPAs) to provide continuity during government transitions in the NLT. One of the CPAs will head the board. This board will provide oversight over the respect of our financial standard operating procedures every quarter and annual.
- He will appoint two of our inhouse CPA who worked in the committee to review the Fact-finding committees report and suggestions above to come up with a way forward which the advisory board can use going forward. He hoped they will be done before the end of November so that all transactions and templates as from June 1<sup>st</sup> could be adjusted to meet up with the SOP.
- Quarterly and annual audits by the members of the advisory going forward effective June 2018. Reason being it will be hard to dig into some past years due to different accounting standards used which could be complex to understand due to the lack of a SOP. With one being done now, it will make it

easy. Audit or reviews by the advisory board will be made available in our portal and at our national conventions. The general assembly will select the members who meet the appropriate qualifications. In the event of a vacancy, in midyear, the president can appoint a replacement. Members not serving by virtue of a position they hold or held will serve for 2 years.

The GA voted overwhelmingly 53-2 to implement these recommendations as a new way forward in ensuring transparency and standardization, which will make all audits and financial reviews easy. They will go into effect once the CPAs complete the job SOP job listed above.

## 12 - State of SOBA America Presentation – President Frederick Itoe

President Itoe started by extending thanks to all the Sobans and Sobanese who helped make the Convention a reality. He recognized several SOBA New Englanders and SOBANESE for overcoming tough circumstances to host a record-breaking convention. He also appreciated members of the NLT, NEC, and all visitors who came to make this occasion truly one of a kind. SOBA America received best wishes from Mayor Marty Walsh of Boston, and from Pa Ngando and family.

### **Recognitions**

- President Itoe recognized the following for their outstanding contributions to Sasse and SOBA America: President Julius Enang and Chairman Nobert Kong for their contributions to the 2018 SOBA Convention.
- The SOBA New England Chapter for their financial contributions to the Convention. Each member donated \$200.00 non-refundable to ensure the success of our 2018 Convention.
- The New England SOBANESE for their cooking and hospitality. He also mentioned a SOBANESE surprise that would be unveiled during lunch.

### **Highlights & Proposals**

- President Itoe also discussed details of a permanent financial system and report templates for SOBA America. Some changes will include standardizing all reports, implementing financial and membership management software, and periodic audits.
- The President also made the GA aware of a committee to explore a new management system for Sasse chaired by HRH Michael Fondungallah. This proposal has Sasse run as a Catholic institution with a Board of Trustees consisting of the Bishop and other stakeholder representatives. There will

also be a retirement rider attached for priests as leverage. The GA approved the exploration of this concept

- Proposed a new governing structure for SOBA worldwide post UK crises headed by regional presidents. It will be known as SOBA Supreme Governing Council. It will be made of all regional presidents- SOBA America, SOBA UK, SOBA Nigeria, SOBA SA, SOBA Ireland, SOBA General...etc. It will be permanently chaired by the President of SOBA General. It will address issues and decisions which can affect members of SOBA in the diaspora and will be the highest decision maker on such issues. Each region will have one vote. Details on the functioning of this body will be worked out by these presidents and take for approval to the General Assembly of SOBA for approval.
- President Itoe proposed the formation of an Office of Alumni Affairs representative to lead on implementation of SOBA America projects as well as act as a liaison with other chapters, class groups and serve any other purposes SOBA chapters may deem necessary. This office will serve students as a resource on studying abroad as it will liaise with diaspora chapters. Each regional chapter will eventually pay for the running of this office. Initial plans is for the office to go operational and open for two days a week at a cost of under \$200.00 a month. The general assembly approved this decision under the leadership of SOBA America.
- Updated Policy and Procedures Manual (PPM) will provide rules and structure to help transitions, award committee guidelines, financials system, final goodbye protocol(funeral processions), chapter creation and guidelines, conventions, etc.
- Create an e-book on the history of SOBA America before the our 2018 Mini Convention
- Completing the Band Project
- Creation of additional chapters

### **Some SOBA accomplishments during the past year**

- Launch of the SOBA America led Band Project which already has over \$30,000 in pledges and donations
- SOBA America sponsored staff party
- Sasse Alumni Association formation, with an official SOBA America Day annually every 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in October
- Donation of books to Sasse in partnership with Joe Mofor
- Completion of the SOBA Dallas Borehole Project
- 2017 Newsletter
- 3D Model of Sasse
- The birth of SOBA Oklahoma and SOBA Arizona

In conclusion, President Itoe stated that the state of the union is the strongest it has ever been, and that SOBA America leads the way in every category and still remains the number one alumni association from Africa. This was met by a standing ovation and applause, which reverberated from east to west and north to south of the hotel.

#### 13 – Office of Alumni Affairs in Sasse – President Frederick Itoe

This would be a campus liaison to support projects by SOBA Chapters, Class Groups, Administration and students which would have a supervisory role for SOBA related donations and projects.

It would also be an academic liaison for students to identify and discuss their needs. Their role would be to supply progress reports and coordinate maintenance on donated property. It will also assist in coordinating our scholarship paperwork. Finally, this office would coordinate donations and projects between SOBA groups.

The proposal was approved 60 Yes/3 No/3 Abstain.

#### 14 – Proposal for New Management Structure

HRH Michael Fondungallah is chairing a committee to create a proposal for Sasse to run as a Catholic institution with a Board of Trustees consisting of the Bishop and other stakeholder representatives. Schools like Notre Dame in the US are being run like this and it has canonical precedent. This idea will be proposed to the Bishop during his USA trip in a few months and there will also be a retirement rider attached for priests as leverage. The GA approved the exploration of this concept.

#### 15 – E-book on the History of SOBA America

There were some discussions last year after the convention about the history of SOBA America. The National Leadership Team proposed a book to document the history of SOBA America. VP Dr. Bertrand Fote did the presentation on the e-book to document the facts and immortalize SOBA America's history. The draft

will be presented in Montreal during the Mini Convention or 2019 Convention for approval.

#### 16 – SOBA Carolinas Proposal to move the Convention date

SOBA Carolinas led by VP Bertrand Fote presented a strong case to change the convention date from Memorial Day weekend to a later date. The reasons for their proposal to move the convention were:

- Hotels and air travel was very expensive due to the holiday weekend.



- Carolinas children were still in school making it difficult for the entire family to attend the convention.

The proposal to change the date was defeated: Yes 5/ No 55

#### 17 – Enrichment

This was foregone due to time constraints.

#### 18 – SAGIC

SAGIC is a new organization that paid to transport loved ones to their final resting place with no restrictions and irrespective of where they died. The difference is that SAGI only pays out for transportation of loved ones from the US to Cameroon.

#### 19 - SOBA New England's bereavement proposal

SOBA NE proposed a bereavement contribution scheme where we do away with fund drives because they raise unpredictable amounts based on popularity, and instead implement a flat contribution which was members had to opt into.

The proposal was defeated Yes 28/ No 38.

#### 20 – Report on Co-Chairs of Sasse Alumni Association and updates on SOBA America Day in Sasse

There wasn't much activity due to the political and social unrest right now. Stakeholders will decide if the 2018 SOBA America Day will take place.

#### 21 – Introduction of the Chairman of the SOBA DMV 2019 Convention

President Fonjungo introduced 2 Co-Chairs for the SOBA DMV Convention: SOBANS William Mpafe and Aldrin Ngwa. They promised SOBANS the time of their lives in the DMV area

#### 22 – November 2018 Mini-Convention – VP Albert Sekoh

Montreal presented the GA with an absolutely stunning vision of what a Montreal mini-convention would offer guests. Visions of luxurious hotel accommodations, exciting activities and beautiful sight-seeing awaits all mini-convention attendees

#### 23 – Matters arising

The GA was addressed by the SOBA UK President Ako-Arrey who thanked SOBA America for their hospitality, their forward-thinking and their innovation. He expressed his delight in having been present at 3 out of the last 4 conventions and invited everyone to their convention in September 2018.

## 24 – Adjournment

Dr. Bill Tita who was the most senior SOBAN in the room was called to give the final address and closing statements to the GA. He expressed a joy and pride in our association and the progress we have made especially under President Itoe. He also encouraged the GA to give a vote of confidence for the executive team, which they did resoundingly. The 2018 SOBA America Convention deliberations were subsequently adjourned.