

NIGERIAN UNION OF SWITZERLAND



CONSTITUTION

WE THE CITIZENS OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA, LIVING IN SWITZERLAND,

HAVING firmly and solemnly resolved, to live in unity and harmony as one indivisible Union under God, dedicated to the promotion of our solidarity, co-operation and understanding, AND to provide a Constitution for the purpose of promoting the well being of all Nigerians in Switzerland on the principles of encouragement, progress, freedom, equality and justice, AND for promoting the good image of our country **DO HEREBY make, enact and give to us the following Constitution:**

Article I:

TITLE

The Union shall be known as "NIGERIA UNION OF SWITZERLAND" (NUS); the headquarters of the Union shall be in BERN and its official address shall be the address of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in Switzerland.

Article II:

MOTTO

The motto of the Union shall be: HONESTY, UNITY AND PROGRESS.

Article III:

AIMS and OBJECTIVES

The aims and objectives of the Union shall be to:

- (1) Provide a forum for Nigerians in Switzerland to meet one another, to promote Co-operation and the spirit of oneness among them and to protect the interest of Nigeria and Nigerians;
- (2) Promote, so far as is possible, the well-being of Nigerians in Switzerland;
 - Organizing social, cultural and educational activities;
 - Attending functions organized by members upon invitation;
- (3) Provide a medium whereby members can take interest in, and contribute towards the activities of any institution or organization for the improvement of the social, cultural, and educational status of Nigeria;
- (4) Assist Nigerians as much as possible, by furnishing them with relevant information concerning living conditions in Switzerland and career opportunities where appropriate.
- (5) Institute a mechanism to help one another in times of need.
- (6) Create a genuine and effective communication link through which the views of Nigerians in Switzerland on matters of national interest may be addressed to the appropriate quarters.
- (7) Promote and share Nigerian cultural heritage with people of all races.
- (8) In case of a member in difficulties, the NUS can where and when necessary liaise with the Embassy to offer assistance within their jurisdiction.

In order to promote the said aims and objectives, the Union will not be engaged in partisan politics or religious activities.

Article IV:

MEMBERSHIP

- (1) Membership of the Union shall be open to all Nigerians including their families resident or working in Switzerland and Liechtenstein.
In Pursuant to the above paragraph, a person is considered a member if he/she satisfies the following conditions:
 - i. The person satisfies the condition of the above paragraph
 - ii the person is a major, 18 years or more
 - iii the person is up-to-date with his/her annual dues
- (2) Members who have not attained the age of 18 years shall have no financial obligations to the Union and shall have no right to vote at meetings and elections of the Union;
- (3) Any further questions or dispute as to whether a person qualifies for membership shall be decided by the Executive Committee on a vote concurred by at least a two-thirds majority of the members present.

- (4) The Nigerian Ambassador to Switzerland or the Head of the Mission of the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to Switzerland shall be the Grand Patron of the Union.

LOST OF BENEFITS

- a). Failure to pay annual dues for two (2) consecutive years
These include: Benefits accrue to up-to-date members during NUS functions
Other benefits as may be specified by the general assembly

LOST OF MEMBERSHIP

- a). Involvement in continuous act of gross indiscipline that affects the union's activities. However, this applies only as a last resort when other disciplinary measures proved unsuccessful.

Article V:

CALENDAR

The Union Year shall be a period of twelve months commencing on the first day of the month of January and shall end on the 31st day of the month of December.

Article VI:

ORGANS OF NUS

(1) The General Assembly

- (a) The General Assembly is the supreme organ of the Union.
- (b) The General Assembly shall elect the Executive Committee from among its Members; it has the power to dissolve the Executive Committee, should the said Executive Committee failed to perform its duties. A resolution to this effect shall be subject to a vote to be approved by 2/3rds of the members present.
- (c) The General Assembly shall approve the annual and financial reports which the Executive Committee must present to it at the end of each Union Calendar Year
- (d) The General assembly shall each year, after the general elections, appoint two Auditors from among its members to audit the accounts presented by the Executive Committee.

(2) The Executive Committee

- (a) The Union shall have an Executive Committee which shall be composed of the following officers elected by the General Assembly:
 - (i) President
 - (ii) Vice-President
 - (iii) Secretary
 - (iv) Assistant Secretary
 - (v) Social and Publicity Secretary
 - (vi) Financial Secretary/Treasurer
 - (vii) Cultural Coordinator
 - (viii) Provost

- (b) Functions and powers
 - (i) The Executive Committee shall have general responsibility for running the affairs of the Union and shall co-operate with and give effective support to other bodies established by the General Assembly in the discharge of their various functions.
 - (ii) The Executive Committee shall act in a manner consistent with the aims and objectives of the Union, and the members of the Committee shall be individually and collectively responsible and accountable to the General Assembly in the discharge of the functions of the Committee.

- (c) Meetings of the Executive Committee
 - (i) The Executive Committee shall hold as many meetings as it considers necessary in order to discharge effectively the function assigned to it under the present Constitution, or by the general assembly.
 - (ii) It shall have power to invite any person to participate without vote, at any of its meetings when a specific matter on which the person can make valuable contribution will be discussed.

- (d) Filling of vacancies

If a position shall for any reason fall vacant during the term of an Executive Committee, the Committee shall by majority vote, appoint any member of the Union to fill the vacancy until the next general elections are held by the General Assembly.

(3) Patrons

- (a) The General Assembly shall appoint individuals who shall have responsibility to advise the Executive Committee on policy and sensitive matters.
- (b) Appointment as a Patron shall be for a five-year period, at the end of which a Patron may be re-appointed, except that a Patron may at any time be removed by a simple majority vote of the General Assembly.
- (c) Persons to be nominated, as a Patron shall include the following:

- (i) The Ambassador or Head of mission of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to Switzerland shall be the Grand Patron
- (ii) Founding Members of the Union as approved by the General assembly
- (iii) Any former member of the Executive Committee who successfully completed a full term of office as may be nominated by the Executive Committee.
- (iv) Any Nigerian nominated and approved by the General Assembly
- (v) Any suitable personality irrespective of his/her Nationality can be nominated for approval at the General Assembly.
- (vi) Nomination of prospective Patrons shall be forwarded to the General Secretary not later than 30 days before the date of the next General Assembly

4. Advisory Board

There shall be an Advisory Board, which shall have responsibility to advise the Executive Committee on Policy and sensitive matters

- a. Shall hold joint meeting with the Executive Committee at least twice in a NUS Calendar year
- b. May suggest name of suitable Personalities for nomination as Patrons to the Executive Committee
- c. Membership of the Board shall be for two years period, at the end of which an Adviser may be re-appointed, except that he/she may at any time be removed by a simple majority vote of a General Assembly
- d. Membership of the Board shall include the following
 - i Founding Member of the Union as approved by the General Assembly
 - ii Any former Member of the Executive Committee who successfully completed a full term of office as may be nominated by the Executive Committee
 - iii Any outstanding member of the Union, who has demonstrated serious commitment to the Union may be nominated for approval by the General Assembly

Article VII:

DUTIES OF OFFICERS

President

- (1) The President is the Chief Executive of the Union
- (2) The President shall preside over all meetings of the General Assembly and of the Executive Committee of the Union
- (3) The President, together with the treasurer or the Vice President, shall be signatory to the bank account(s) of the Union
- (4) The President shall be entitled to a casting vote at all meetings over which he presides

Vice-President shall:

- (1) Assist the president in the performance of his duties
- (2) In the absence of the President perform the duties of the President
- (3) Perform such other duties as may be assigned to him by the Executive Committee
- (4) Be signatory to the bank account(s) of the Union together with the President and the Treasurer.

General Secretary shall:

- (1) Issue circulars and agenda for General, Executive Committee and other Meetings of the Union
- (2) Conduct such correspondence as may be necessary in fulfillment of the aims and Objectives of the Union
- (3) Keep an up-to date register of Union members
- (4) Be responsible for the affairs of the Union in the absence of the President and Vice-President
- (5) Keep an impress account of an amount, which shall from time to time be determined by the Executive Committee.

Assistant General Secretary shall:

- (1) Assist the Secretary in the performance of his duties
- (2) Undertake such other functions as may be assigned to him
- (3) In the absence of the Secretary perform the duties of the Secretary.

Financial Secretary/Treasurer shall:

perform work pertaining to the financial affairs of the Union and in particular shall:

- (1) Issue official receipt to members of the Union for all monies received by way of acknowledgement of the same
- (2) Pay into the bank account of the Union within seven days of receipt, all money received on behalf of the Union
- (3) Keep a true and accurate account of all income and expenditure of the Union
- (4) Present a statement of account at the end of the Union year
- (5) Keep the Union chequebook
- (6) Prepare cheques for withdrawals from the Union account
- (7) Together with the president and the Vice President, be signatory to the bank account of the Union

Provost shall:

- (1) See to the orderliness and discipline at every General Assembly and Functions organized by the Union
- (2) Use every available means including disciplinary measures to maintain order at NUS functions

- (3) See to the welfare of members of the Union
- (4) Perform any other duties as may be assigned by the President and the Executive Committee

Cultural Coordinator shall:

- (1) Be responsible for organizing all cultural activities of the Union as will from time to time be determined by the Executive Committee.
- (2) Keep members of the Union informed of cultural events in Switzerland relevant to Nigerians.

Social and Publicity Secretary shall:

- (1) Be Chief of protocol of the Union
- (2) Perform such other functions as may be assigned to him by the Executive
- (3) Be the Editor in Chief of all Publications of the Union
- (4) Be Chairman of Editorial Board and the Press Committee

Article VIII.

ELECTIONS

Elections to all offices in the Executive Committee shall be held every two years at the annual general meeting.

- (1) If a position shall for any reason fall vacant during the term of an Executive Committee, the Committee shall by majority vote, appoint any member of the Union to fill the vacancy until the General holds the next general elections Assembly.
- (2) Every paid up member shall be eligible to vote or be voted for in the election of officers of the Union.
- (3) Elections shall be by secret ballot and each participating member shall have one vote.
- (4) A Returning Officer shall be elected by the General Assembly for the purpose of each general election. It shall be the duty of the Returning Officer to accept nominations and to conduct the elections. The Returning Officer shall not be a candidate at those elections.
- (5) No defaulting member shall hold an elective office.
- (6) All candidates for elective offices especially President or Secretary shall file their nomination papers latest two weeks before the elections. And two other members who are financially up-to-date must endorse his nomination paper.
- (7) Notification of elections shall be contained in the agenda of the general meeting to be sent to all members at least one month before the meeting.
- (8) The term of office of the Executive Committee shall be for a period of two years expiring on the 31st day of the month of December following the new elections

earlier conducted in November same year during the second annual general meeting. No Officer can serve more than two (2) consecutive terms.

- (9) An oath officer shall be nominated for the purpose of swearing in elected Members of the Executive Committee.

Article IX.

GENERAL MEETING

A general meeting or the General Assembly shall be held twice a year

- (1) An emergency meeting of the Union shall be held at any time following a decision of the Executive Committee or at the written request of seven or more members of the Union addressed to the President. At least, a seven-day notice shall be given to members.
- (2) The quorum for a general or emergency meeting shall be ten, excluding members of the Executive Committee.
- (3) Voting for resolutions at the general or emergency meeting shall be by raising of hands and, decisions shall be adopted by a simple majority of the votes cast, except where otherwise provided for in the present Constitution.

Article X.

FINANCE

- (1) Each Union member shall, at the beginning of the Union Year, pay an annual Subscription fee of Sfr.100 for singles and Sfr.150 for families. Payment by new members will be immediately upon admission or registration plus Sfr.10.- as enrollment fee.
- (2) The General Assembly shall have the power to change the sum payable under this article, and also to impose levies to finance specific programs when necessary.
- (3) In the event of unforeseen circumstances, the Executive Committee may decide to levy a payment on each Union member.
- (4) The Union may raise funds through parties and other activities.
- (5) The Union shall accept voluntary donations towards the attainment of its aims and objectives.
- (6) The Executive Committee shall appoint two non-members of the Executive Committee to check the amount of money realized after each fund raising Activity.
- (7) The Executive Committee shall maintain for the Union, a bank account.
- (8) The following officers of the Union shall be joint signatories to the bank account of the Union, namely: the President, the Vice President and the Treasurer/Financial Secretary/treasurer.

Article XI.

UNION NEWSLETTER AND “NUS DIGEST”

There shall be established a newsmagazine to be known as “NUS DIGEST” and a newsletter to be called "NUS Newsletter". The said NUS Digest and NUS newsletter shall:

- (1) Be issued quarterly or at such intervals as the Executive Committee may decide based on such considerations as the availability of financial and man-power resources.
- (2) Contain information about Union activities
- (3) Contain news on Nigerian culture, educational activities, etc;
- (4) Be a medium through which members can express their views and contribute, in their individual capacity, towards the aims and objectives of the Union; Economic situation of Nigeria and Switzerland;
- (5) Not be used to promote the political ideals of any political party in Nigeria;
- (6) Contain news that can enlighten members about African affairs.
- (7) Contain any other information, as the Executive Committee shall deem appropriate

Article XII:

PRESS COMMITTEE

For the purpose of this article, there shall be established a Press Committee.

- (1) It shall be composed of five members: including Publicity Secretary, a Webmaster and three others members nominated by the General Assembly;
- (2) Press Committee Secretary shall be appointed from the remaining three persons nominated by the General Assembly.
- (3) The Publicity Secretary shall be chairman of the Press Committee as well as chairman of the Editorial Board
- (4) The Social and Publicity Secretary shall be the Editor-in-Chief of the newsletter.
- (5) The Press Committee shall be the Editorial Board of the NUS Digest and the Newsletter and as such shall edit and circulate the two publications
- (6) The Press Committee shall function under the supervision of the Executive Committee.
- (7) The Press committee shall oversee the daily update of the Union’s website.

Article XIII:

DISCIPLINE

The Executive Committee shall have power to take such disciplinary action as it may deem necessary against any Union member who acts in a manner contrary to Union interests; or who conducts him/herself improperly during meetings and other Union activities

- (1) Members shall, regularly and punctually, attend all Union meetings and activities:
- (2) In the event of a member embezzling funds of the Union, the law will take its course. The law herein referred to is Swiss law.
- (3) Any behavior by any member, which is considered likely to:
 - a) Bring the Union into disrepute,
 - b) Disrupt the smooth running of the Union, for example, habitual late coming would be viewed seriously, and appropriate punishment given if deemed necessary after a hearing by the Executive Committee.

Article XIV:

AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION

Procedure

- (1) This Constitution may be amended at any Union general meeting by the Concurring votes cast by three-quarters of the members present and entitled to vote.
- (2) Notice of any proposal to amend the Constitution shall be given to the general Secretary, at least one month before the date of the next general meeting.
- (3) Draft copies of the proposed amendment shall be circulated to reach members not later than one week before the date of the next meeting.

Article XV:

DISSOLUTION

In the event of the dissolution of the Union, any surplus funds after the discharge of the liabilities of the Union shall be donated to charity.

BERNE, 6 MAY 1995

AND AMMENDED TODAY (01.06.2002) IN BERNE BY THE G.A.

[SCHEDULED] OATH OF OFFICE

Name

Position

I do solemnly swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to the cause of the NIGERIA UNION OF SWITZERLAND; that I will discharge my duties to the best of my ability, faithfully and in accordance with the Constitution and law of the Nigeria Union of Switzerland, and always in the interest of solidarity, co-operation, understanding, well-being and prosperity of the UNION.

That I will strive to preserve the fundamental objectives and directive principles of the Executive Committee as contained in the Constitution; that I will not allow my personal interest to influence my official conduct or decisions; that I will not directly or indirectly communicate or reveal to any person any matter, which by its nature is privileged, brought under my consideration or shall become known to me by virtue of my office as, except as my be required for the due discharge of my duties. So help me GOD.

.....
Signature of Officer

BEFORE THE OATH OFFICER, THIS:DAY OFMONTH, YEAR.....

.....
Signature of Oath Officer