



**Chioma Mensah-Bonsu**

First of all, I want to say a huge thank you to all of our readers and contributors for their support and best wishes since the launch of our newsletter. In this issue, we are pleased to bring to you a brief on the global network and NIDOE repositioning objectives for 2016 —2018. This is further addressed at the recent NIDOE Europe Leadership and Orientation retreat in Hamburg.

We are very much excited to introduce to you, one of our sister's journey to living her dream— The BelgianRose and of course, we bring the latest excerpt from our young writer, Miss Alexandra Mensah-Bonsu. We truly hope you enjoy this edition. Happy reading, writing and sharing.

**The Editor**

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**Message**

*from the The Nigerian Embassy (Belgium and Luxembourg)*

History has shown that people are the back bone of any society. Nigeria as a nation is one such nation that is blessed by the abundance of such human resources. Nigerians in Diaspora Organization (NIDO) is one such organization that harmonises the teeming Nigerian Human Resources outside the shores of our Country.

This publication therefore has come at no better time

than now. It is therefore an important source of disseminating information to our Nigerian population for whom it is intended. I therefore recommend it to all Nigerians and friends alike.

Once more let me extend on behalf of the Mission and all the officers our congratulation to NIDO in Belgium and Luxembourg, the Executives and all friends for the publication.

**NIDO Europe and NIDO Worldwide: Global Networking for local developmental agenda of the Federal Government of Nigeria.**

By Hon. Kenneth Gbandi  
 Chairman Central Executive Council /Board of Trustees NIDO Europe

**The birth of NIDO - A brief X-Ray**

The Nigerians in Diaspora Organization (NIDO) was formed in 2000 by the then President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, following a series of meetings, in September 2000 with Nigerians in Washington and London.

The objectives of NIDO could be summarized as: *re-branding of Nigeria, promote business, trade & investment opportunities, provide a professional resource pool from where the interests of Nigerian and countries where Nigerians are resident could be managed in a secure, respectful and fair manner.*

**NIDO Europe: An Overview**

The Nigerians in Diaspora Organization Europe (NIDOE) is the European arm of a global Nigerian Diaspora network. Established in the year 2000 and registered in England and Wales in 2002 under the Companies Act, with Headquarters in London. There are currently 20 Regional Chapters in 19 European Countries under the umbrella

of NIDOE. Azerbaijan is set to join the family which will bring the total number of Regional Chapters to 21, with more to follow.

Today, NIDO Europe is made-up of Nigerians resident in Europe from a variety of professional backgrounds. The members of NIDO are practicing professionals with years of experience in various fields of profession which are not necessarily with academic qualifications. The central vision of NIDO Europe as stipulated in our MEMART (constitution) is to bring Nigerians living in Europe together and to identify those able to offer their skills in various disciplines (Education, Information Technology, Health, Economic, Science, etc.) to assist Nigeria's national development.

**NIDO Worldwide: Concept and Structure**

The core philosophy and principle of NIDO worldwide is that it belongs to the four (4) continental NIDOs (NIDO Americas, NIDO Europe, and NIDO Africa, whose registrations have been formalized and NIDO Asia which is still being accorded equal partnership status).

**IMPORTANT NOTICE**

The Embassy of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in Brussels is updating the records of Nigerians in the Belgium & Luxembourg Diaspora in various fields of profession.

This is in an effort to facilitate Diaspora participation in the general development thrust of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

NIDO Belgium-Luxembourg chapter and ANBELUX have been mandated by the Mission to compile this list as stated in the embassy website ([www.nigeriabusels.be](http://www.nigeriabusels.be)) no later than 15<sup>th</sup> March 2017. To this end, please visit the NIDO website ([www.nidobelux.org](http://www.nidobelux.org)) for further information on how to participate.

All NIDO member organizations have equitable stakes and benefits. It is conceived as a special purpose vehicle (SPV) whose operations are based on "cooperation and collaboration" between its continental NIDO members. The NIDO worldwide (NIDO WW) is not intended to be another level of management above existing continental NIDO organizations, but rather a non-person organizational membership base comprising only the continental NIDO organizations. The aim of this platform as envisaged by the founding fathers is in response to the concerns expressed by the Diaspora regarding the lack of a coherent platform through which NIDO projects and programs are communicated and implemented in Nigeria from the Diaspora. It is intended to strengthen the NIDO platform and improve its profile, as well as the public's understanding of its purposes in Nigeria. Crucial Diaspora issues like the Diaspora Commission, Diaspora Voting Rights and Diaspora Day are matters that concern all Nigerians outside Nigeria. These are areas of importance that is accorded due attention by NIDO WW.

*The immediate objective of the NIDOE 2016-2018 Executive Term is a holistic repositioning of NIDOE to make it a self-reliant body, meeting the needs of its members from its own resources. .... to make the organization become project-driven thus possessing the ability to promote national development by highlighting the trade & investment opportunities in Nigeria.....*

*The take home message ..... every chapter needs to review its commitment to the organization ensuring its sense of purpose and mission is in alignment with the driver for formation of the diaspora organization.*

A strategic cooperation and synergy with other Nigerian Diaspora Groups is part of the NIDO Worldwide agenda which we see as cardinal for achieving Global networking for national development.

#### **Our Past Challenges -A Positive Outlook**

Over the years, successive Nigerian in Diaspora Organization have struggled with a lot of issues and series of challenges that negatively impacted on the abilities of the organization from achieving its founding objectives. Some of the issues that the organization has faced are externally inspired while some were internally generated. It is my opinion that part of the problem has been the absence of a robust, competent and Advisory Board/ Patrons that has seriously affected NIDOE's ability to quickly resolve the internal issues and also effectively take advantage of institutional opportunities available to lobby for the organization externally.

It is also important to know that none of the efforts of Nigerians in Diaspora will germinate if our leaders, policy makers and opinion leaders at home and in Diaspora do not provide a fertile ground for these efforts. Together with the NIDOE stakeholders in Nigeria, a concerted effort is being made to provide this necessary fertile ground through intensive lobby for the creation of important enabling institutions. Top on the Diaspora list are the Diaspora Database, the

Diaspora Commission and the Diaspora Voting Rights.

The Central Executive Council (CEC) and the Board of Trustees (BOT) are cognizant of these challenges and are proactively working to address them. For example, in a joint meeting held on 5 February 2017, the BOT unanimously approved the appointments of member of the Patrons in line with art. 45 - 46§6 of the "Articles of Association" of NIDOE. The Advisory board members cut across professional backgrounds, experience and sphere of influence a needed constellations to influence positive change in any organization and by extension in our nation Nigeria.

#### **Repositioning NIDO Europe and the Diaspora for National Development**

The challenges facing NIDO Europe and the current leadership is to put the right processes in place and to help ensure that carefully conceived projects are successfully delivered. Diaspora engagement in my view should equate with being in a service-driven role; an important life-wire, supplying economic and development lifeline to Nigeria. Viewed from this perspective, NIDO Europe must be repositioned as facilitators to the local developmental agenda of the Federal Government. NIDO must be view as a symbolic 37th State of Nigeria or the 7th Geopolitical Region of Nigeria in terms of economic and social politico-structural importance and contributions.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The immediate objective of the NIDOE 2016-2018 Executive Term is a holistic repositioning of NIDOE to make it a self-reliant body, meeting the needs of its members from its own resources. Secondly, to make the organization become project-driven thus possessing the ability to promote national development by highlighting the trade & investment opportunities in Nigeria; and thirdly, providing a professional resource pool from where national developmental interests could be managed. Considering the challenges facing Nigeria today, it is obvious that the formation of NIDO was a well thought-out concept and the arguments in favour of its Diaspora leadership role are still valid.

NIDO needs however to be given the enabling legislative structure to continue to contribute to national development. The Diaspora must not only be praised for its \$35b annual remittance to Nigeria, but also be given the opportunity to contribute knowledge, transfer of technology etc. in order to meet what was envisaged by the founding fathers. Inclusion of 10% of Nigerian Diaspora as represented by NIDO members at all level of governance is the starting point.

## **NIDO Europe Orientation & Leadership Retreat, 17/18 February 2017, Hamburg, Germany**

By Dr Chinedu Madichie, Honourable Collins Nweke

The NIDO Europe Orientation and Leadership retreat was attended by over 41 delegates representing many chapters, past NIDO board including chairpersons and patrons. NIDO BeLux was represented by Dr Chinedu Madichie (Chairperson) and Hon Collins Nweke who was a guest speaker, delivered a key note message entitled "Role of the Diaspora in Nigeria's Development & Nation building – A Historical Review" - see the full report @ <http://www.collinsnweke.eu/?p=257>

Speakers were drawn from Nigeria, Europe and the Nigerian diplomatic mission in Berlin. The chairman of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) of Nigeria,

Mr Ekpo Nta was in attendance and delivered a lecture entitled "The Nigerian Strides, Challenges with the Diaspora Community: emerging trends and strategy for re-orientation and success in national development". Honorable Rita Orji, Member Federal House of Representatives also presented the Legislative perspective on the Role of the Diaspora in Nigeria's Development & Nation building. A key discussion points was the vision & mission of NIDO Europe. The vision of the organization was re-affirmed as "National Development of Nigeria from Diaspora vantage point" whilst the mission includes "Advocacy, Volunteering and Networking" as the key items.

The subject of branding and re-positioning of the NIDO brand was also discussed by several speakers including Alistair Soyode, Founder Bright Entertainment Network (BEN) television, past Board Chairman, current Patron in the reconstituted Advisory Board and member of NIDOE UK South.

A debate on the following strategic issues took place: Diaspora Commission Bill, Diaspora Policy, Voting Rights for Diaspora, Diaspora Day & Diaspora Bond. For each strategic item, a state of play was provided, followed by interactive learning session, a debate and determination of NIDO Europe position.





## NIDO Europe Leadership retreat

The reviewed MEMART (Memorandum & Article of Association) of NIDO Europe was also presented highlighting areas that have been changed and adopted to ensure efficient management of the organization at both continent and chapter level. The topic of Leadership and succession planning was ably addressed by Pastor Ibrahim Abarshi. The take home message from the retreat was clear that every chapter needs to review its

commitment to the organization ensuring its sense of purpose and mission is in alignment with the driver for formation of the diaspora organization. NIDO at both continent and chapter level must adapt with the changes in the external environment to ensure it remains relevant and has something to offer to the Nigerian development narrative at Federal, State & Local government levels.

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## The BelgianRose

By Vivian Okonkwo

It started months after it had sunk in that my beloved brother, whom I lost to cancer in 2007, was never going to call to check up on me, give me the latest news and gossip from home nor were we ever going to make that planned mad-fun trip to Cuba. I had no appetite for anything at all (and I don't mean just food). I went through every shade of disappointment and anger about how God could allow this to happen to me – ME!, His prayerful one, His loyal one, His special one, His chosen one.

Several months passed by and after all that anger had piped down and tired of feeling sorry for myself, I became listless. My job wasn't enough for me anymore. More so, there was a lot of managerial and staff shake-up and uncertainties at work (Belgium) which was the last thing I needed at the time. I started to feel the need for something else to occupy the void. I took up classes for a second degree programme. I sought guidance from family members but came to no clear-cut decision about what to do with myself.

But I had always enjoyed baking and cooking. I was, and still, am very comfortable in the kitchen. So I took up a 2-year course in chocolate making at CERIA, Brussels. I can tell you that it was no walk in the park, running from work (literally), hopping unto the metro at Herman Debroux to travel to the opposite end of Brussels trying to make it on time for my 3.5hrs long classes... phew!!

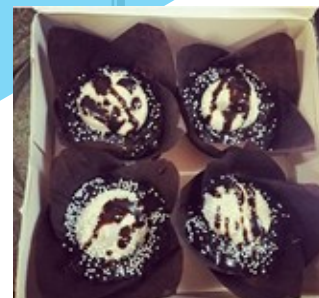
The course was a life-saver! I totally enjoyed creating such delicious pleasures and indulgences; most of my classmates were very funny, in different degrees of funny. Whilst doing the course, the idea of setting up a chocolate shop in Lagos, Nigeria started to tickle my thoughts. I knew it would need money, lots of it and I didn't have it! By the end of my training, I was convinced it was what I wanted to do. My dream began to formulate.....then my challenge changed from 'what to do' to 'how to do it'. I got a second job, regular 9-5 weekday job and then on Sundays I worked 8hrs at a chocolate shop – Planète Chocolat, in the centre of Brussels – Rue du

Lombard 24. They were really nice folks and after 6 months, I stopped the second job!! It was just tiring, the extra income added to my kitty but the tax was just too much, so in the end, the second job wasn't really worth it.

Over the next couple of years, and as my dream became clearer, I planned my return to Lagos, Nigeria. The plans included, where to source and buy the needed machines and equipment for my dream creation. In the meantime, I changed jobs, it was going well and again my life was rocked. I got a call that my father had suffered a stroke! The news was the catalyst that speeded up the countdown to my return to Lagos...

Fast forward and the move back to Lagos happened in December 2015. The last of my belongings arrived at Lagos Port in February 2016 and unfortunately, the truck in which I had transported my belongings was vandalised and some items stolen, but of course, no one took responsibility..... Welcome to Nigeria.

*I knew it would need money, lots of it and I didn't have it! By the end of my training, I was convinced it was what I wanted to do. My dream began to formulate.....but my challenge changed from 'what to do' to 'how to do it'.*



I started renovating the shop and of course encountered obstacles along the way: from the bricklayer whose work was very mediocre...but thought he was doing me a favour through to the plumber and electrician who over-priced their services, then disappeared into thin air with my money....Installing water supply took over a month to complete because we had to wait for the availability of the expert and many just simply would not touch a job started by someone else.....talk about being stuck between a devil and the deep blue sea!

My father, my biggest fan, is doing well .....

The story continues .....

**Do you have any questions, comments, articles or stories to share? We want to hear from you.**

**Write to us at:**  
[newsletter@nidoebelux.org](mailto:newsletter@nidoebelux.org)

## ON FATHERHOOD

To all our wonderful fathers, we bring you the latest interview by our very own Honourable Collins Nweke — The first non-Belgian to be elected to political office in West Flanders Province Belgium. Read about his interview on *Raising kids in Europe Challenging* published in the PUNCH NEWSPAPER. We hope you enjoy the full interview, follow the link: <http://punchng.com/raising-kids-europe-challenging-nweke/>

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## OUR CHILDREN THEIR INSPIRATIONAL CORNER

### The Glasses By Miss Alexandra Mensah-Bonsu (aged 10)

"What is that noise" said Elizabeth, looking around – there was nobody in sight. "Take me back home back to Olivia the Optician" said the glasses. "Aaaaaaaaaaarrrrrrrrrrrrggggggggghhhhh" bellowed Elizabeth; she couldn't believe the voice was coming from her brand new glasses. "Pleeeeeease don't scream you're giving me a headache" said glasses in a sad voice. Elizabeth couldn't talk she was shocked!

She could hear her parents running down the hallway....."Darling what's the matter? Why are you hollering, we can hear you all the way down the hallway" said dad. Elizabeth replied, "Oh my Gosh!! I just had a frightful nightmare about my new glasses talking to me and telling to take it back to Miss Olivia". "This can't be happening to me". "Don't be silly, glasses don't talk" mum said. "It's midnight this is the first and last time you will be able to do this, let's go downstairs and watch your favourite movie Lord of The Rings!" I really need some peace and quiet tonight".

"Yayyyyy, thanks mum...dad, I'll come

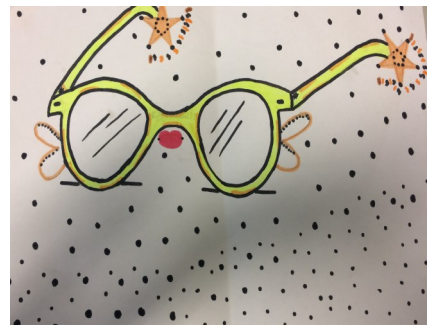
downstairs in 5mins" shouted Elizabeth in excitement. Elizabeth quickly put on her comfy onesie and my slipper and hurried downstairs to watch her favourite movie – Lord of the Rings. Her glasses was already on so she could see well. Hmmm, maybe she imagined the whole thing about her glasses talking! But it did get her to watch a late night movie though, she thought and smiled.

She went downstairs to find that her dad was struggling to play and get the DVD into the DVD player; mum had to step in and give a pair of helping hands. "Hello, mum, dad everything OK?" asked Elizabeth in her tiny anxious voice. "Yes all good" muttered dad". Let me help" said Elizabeth as her parents collapse on the white leather sofa, giving her space to work her tiny magic on the DVD player. Within a few minutes, it got working. "Got it" shouted Elizabeth in excitement as the familiar music of Lord of The Rings blasted into the air.

The movie lasted 3 hrs 48 minutes and it was 4:00 am when the movie finally

finished. Elizabeth had slept through the last 48 minutes. Her dad took off her glasses and carried her off to bed whilst mum switched off the DVD player and television. It had been a long night and dad wanted to get Elizabeth to bed as soon as possible.

Elizabeth would get less than three hours



sleep (although she slept a bit through the movie) she had to wake up at 6:30 am to get all of her snacks and school books ready in the morning and walk the 10 short minutes to Aspire Academy in her hometown Essex.

The story continues.....