

CONSTITUTION

OF

THE OGBIA COMMUNITY (UK)



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THE OGBIA COMMUNITY OF THE UNITED KINGDOM CONSTITUTION

(i) INTRODUCTION

(a) The “Ogbia Community of the United Kingdom” (OCOM - UK) came into being as a formal organisation on Saturday 23 October 1993. The formation of the organisation evolved from the need to bring together all UK-based persons of Ogbia origin and all their relations, with a view to promoting mutual awareness of our common heritage and fostering a united front with regard to the social well-being of all Ogbia persons in the United Kingdom as well as addressing the endemic problems of our people back home in Nigeria.

(b) The unanimous decision to form a UK-based Ogbia organisation was taken on the said day during the first ever meeting of all UK-based Ogbia people, held at the residence of Mr Oxford Olali. This meeting was consequent upon a letter titled “Calling all Ogbia Sons and Daughters” (see appendix 1), issued by Mr Harcourt Anthony Otokito to all known Ogbia persons living in the United Kingdom. This resulted in an almost 100% first-time turn out and the subsequent regular monthly meetings ever since.

(ii) BRIEF BACKGROUND TO THE OGBIA COMMUNITY OF THE RIVERS STATE

(a) The people of Ogbia (an Ijaw clan) inhabit the south-central part of the riverine area of the Rivers State of Nigeria (see appendix 2). The Ogbia community is without doubt the Mother of the Nigerian Oil industry as it was the community that turned Nigeria into an oil-producing country. The very first oil in commercial quantity was lifted from Oloibiri (then headquarters of Ogbia County Council) on 5 August 1956. The first shipment of this crude oil (six thousand barrels) left Nigeria in February 1958 on export to the United Kingdom.

(b) At local government level, the area falls under the Ogbia Local Government, with its headquarters at Ogbia Town, near Oloibiri. The community is made up of about sixty-two towns and villages, all united together by the common affinities of the Ogbia language, culture and traditions.

ARTICLE 1 — NAME OF THE ORGANISATION

The organisation shall be known and called “The Ogbia Community (UK)”, hereafter called “the Community”, “the Organisation”, “OCOM” or “OCOM-UK”.

ARTICLE 2 — OBJECTS

OCOM-UK is established to promote any charitable purpose for the benefit of persons of Ogbia origin and/or Ogbia affinity, the objects of the organisation being:

- (a) To unite all persons of Ogbia origin, their offspring and relations in the UK and Ireland and to contribute, wherever possible, towards the welfare and social well-being of all people of Ogbia, both at home and abroad.
- (b) To promote any charitable and lawful course earmarked at improving the conditions of life of the said persons by way of the relief of poverty, the advancement of education and general awareness, the provision of infrastructures and basic facilities that may facilitate the development of the Ogbia people and land.
- (c) To promote the cultural, historical and economic development of the Ogbia community in particular and the Ijaw people as a whole.
- (d) To promote peace, harmony, unity and co-operation among the Ogbia people and to encourage peaceful co-existence with one another and with our neighbours.
- (e) To work in unity with other organisations and individuals working for the common interest of the Ogbia people, the Riverine people, the Ijaw communities and all mankind.
- (f) To stand by and support one another in every way possible, both during happy and difficult times.
- (g) To project, promote and uphold a positive and responsible image for the Ogbia community and Nigeria in particular and our local UK communities in general, at all times.

ARTICLE 3 — POWERS OF THE ORGANISATION

In furtherance of the said objects but not otherwise, the OCOM-UK may:

- (a) Employ and pay any person or persons to supervise, organise and carry on the work of the organisation and make all reasonable and necessary provision for the payment of pensions and superannuation to or on behalf of employees and their widows and other dependants.
- (b) Provide facilities for the teaching and promotion of the Ogbia language and culture and other African values for both children and adults.
- (c) Bring together in conference representatives of voluntary organisations, Government departments, statutory authorities and individuals.
- (d) Promote and carry out or assist in promoting and carrying out research, surveys and investigations and publish the results thereof.
- (e) Arrange and provide for or join in arranging and providing for the holding of exhibitions, meetings, lectures, classes, seminars and training courses.
- (f) Collect and disseminate information on matters affecting the said objects and exchange such information with other bodies having similar objects whether in this country or overseas.
- (g) Undertake, execute, manage or assist any charitable trust which may lawfully be undertaken, managed or assisted by OCOM-UK.
- (h) Cause to write, print or reproduced and circulate, gratuitously or otherwise, such papers, books, periodicals, pamphlets or other documents or films or recorded tapes (whether audio or visual or both) as shall further the said objects.
- (i) Purchase, take on lease or in exchange, hire or otherwise acquire any property or business and any rights and privileges necessary for the promotion of the said objects and construct, maintain and alter any buildings or erections necessary for the work of the organisation.
- (j) Make regulations for any property or business which may be so acquired.
- (k) Subject to such consents as may be required by law, sell, let, mortgage, dispose of or turn to account all or any of the property or assets of OCOM-UK.
- (l) Subject to such consents as may be required by law, borrow or raise money for the said objects and accept gifts on terms or security as shall be deemed to be necessary.
- (m) Raise funds and invite and receive contributions from any person(s) and/or organisation whatsoever by way of subscription and otherwise, provided that OCOM-UK shall not undertake permanent trading activities in raising funds for the said objects.
- (n) Invest the moneys of OCOM-UK not immediately required for the said objects as may be thought fit, subject nevertheless to such conditions (if any) as may for the time being be required by law.
- (o) Do all such other lawful things as are necessary for the attainment of the said objects.

ARTICLE 4 — MEMBERSHIP, RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES

Membership

4.1 Full membership of OCOM-UK shall be open to the persons listed in (a) to (e) below who are interested in furthering the objects of the organisation and who pay their monthly/annual subscriptions as laid down from time to time by the House:

- (a) Persons of Ogbia origin who are resident in the United Kingdom.
- (b) Descendants of persons of Ogbia origin resident in the United Kingdom.

(c) Close Relations (ie, wives, husbands, partners etc) of persons of Ogbia origin resident in the United Kingdom.

(d) Honorary members may be appointed and be entitled to vote at the discretion of the House.

4.2 The House shall have the right:

(a) To consider, approve or reject applications for membership, and

(b) In the interest of OCOM-UK and for good and sufficient reasons, to terminate the membership of any individual PROVIDED THAT the individual member concerned shall have the right to be heard by the House before a final decision is made.

Rights and Privileges

4.4 All members shall be equal in the eyes of the Constitution. Accordingly, every member shall enjoy the same rights and privileges as any other member and, by virtue of his/her membership of OCOM-UK, is subject to the same obligations and responsibilities as any other member. The rights and privileges of full membership shall include:

(a) To use all facilities belonging to OCOM-UK in accordance with the regulations as specified from time to time by the House.

(b) To take full and active part in OCOM-UK meetings and activities; to seek office in OCOM and to participate fully in the general business of OCOM - subject to the various governing rules, standing orders and regulations laid down from time to time by the House.

(c) To represent OCOM in any intra vires activity, if so selected by the House or an appropriate organ of the OCOM.

(d) To attend and bring guests to functions and social activities organised by the House or an appropriate organ of OCOM.

(e) To be included on OCOM-UK mailing list and be entitled to receive all circular and other materials, as the case may be, from the OCOM Secretariat.

(f) To expect the support of the Ogbia Community at all times, whether in times of joy and happiness or in times of difficulties (see Clause 4.5).

{This expectation shall be construed within the context of the prevailing limitations of the OCOM-UK at the time and in the full knowledge that every individual member has a moral obligation to give his/her reasonable support voluntarily to the community when circumstances so demand and when called upon to do so by the House}.

Specific Instances of possible Community Support

4.5 OCOM-UK fully recognises that virtually all current members are living thousands of miles away from our indigenous community and close relatives. It is equally recognised that a community organisation such as ours can play a very significant and effective role in supporting its members in various aspects and circumstances. Accordingly, OCOM will strive to support its members at all times within the constraints of its limited resources. The Community shall act befittingly on the occurrence of any of the following specific events and any other event, as may be decided by the House:

(a) Joyous Occasions

Subject to the invitation of the Celebrant or Host, Occasions such as marriage, christening, birthday celebration and other anniversaries etc, of a member and their family, shall receive the full support of all members of the Ogbia Community. All members shall be expected to attend the occasion.

(b) Serious illness (e.g., hospitalisation) of a member and/or their family member/s

Where a member (or their family member) is seriously ill, all members of OCOM shall endeavour to give moral support, e.g., by way of phone calls and visits to the person or family. Where the person or family member is hospitalised, every member shall endeavour to visit him/her at the hospital. The OCOM Executive may also arrange a visit by an OCOM delegation (in addition to visits by individual members). Such a visit shall be co-ordinated by

the OCOM Welfare Officer.

(c) Death of a Member or of an immediate family member in the UK.

In the sad event of the death of a member of the Ogbia Community or a member of their immediate family, an emergency meeting of the whole House shall be summoned immediately by the President and or General Secretary. The House shall decide on detail matters necessary to give effect to (i) to (iv) below. The Community shall in such circumstances act in the following manner (subject, at all times, to the accordance of due respect to the contrary wishes of the bereaved family):

(i) All the other OCOM members shall be physically present at the residence of the affected person at the earliest opportunity, no matter the distance of one's station, unless the member cannot be contacted by the Welfare Officer or other Officer of OCOM.

(ii) All members shall endeavour to take turn at the deceased member's residence to help out with any matters that members could help with. This shall last for as long as is necessary.

(iii) OCOM-UK shall give appropriate assistance at the burial ceremony, if this takes place in the UK (subject at all times to the bereaved family's consent).

(iv) Within the constraints of available funds, a sum of money shall be donated by the Community to the bereaved family. The amount to be so donated shall be in line the agreed rules governing the Community's "WELFARE FUND" (see Clause 4.6 below).

{NB: It is emphasised that even though such donations shall be purely voluntary, all members shall be encouraged to support the Community at such difficult times as much as possible, within their means. It is recognised that proposals such as these can be productive only with the full support of every member of the Ogbia Community}.

(v) For the purpose of implementation of this article of the Constitution, the term "immediate family" shall be construed as referring to a member's UK based family members, including spouse or partner, children and parents - provided that they are UK-based.

(vi) Where any of the family members defined in (v) above are or were residence overseas, e.g., Nigeria, then only (i) and (iv) above shall apply, unless the House decides otherwise.

(d) Other Mishaps

Without prejudice to Clause 4.6 below (Community Welfare Fund), in the event of other mishaps not specified above occurring to a member of the Ogbia Community, the member shall receive appropriate moral support from the rest of the Community, provided that the Welfare Officer or another member of the OCOM-UK Executive is duly informed at the time of the event.

4.6 THE OGBIA COMMUNITY (UK) WELFARE FUND

Towards the attainment of all or some of the objects set out in this Article of the Constitution (ie, Article 4), the organisation shall maintain a "Welfare Fund", into which all members shall be encouraged to contribute from time to time. This Fund shall be governed by the following rules:

(Note that these specific rules have already been fully deliberated upon and resolutions agreed by members at meetings of the House)

4.6.1 Aims & Objectives underlying the Fund

(a) To have in place a standing Fund which will be administered separately from the mainstream Community fund and which may be used as a source of financial support to participating members on the occasion or occurrence of a specified event.

(b) To ensure that such a fund carries at all times a minimum float of £500.

(c) To encourage all OCOM-UK members to contribute a minimum sum of £50 each into the fund within 12 months of its being set up (ie, from 1 April 1995).

(d) Without prejudice to Clause 4.6.2 (d) below, to decide on an annual basis whether or not any further contributions into the fund shall be made by participating members.

4.6.2 Basic Rules of the Fund

Separation from main Fund

(a) Fund to be managed separately from the Community's main Fund, albeit, both categories of money shall be held in the same OCOM bank account and governed by same rules regarding signatories to and withdrawals from the account (see clause 9.2 of this Constitution).

Independent Fund Manager

(b) In order to ensure effective segregation from the management of the main fund (administered by the Treasurer), the OCOM Welfare Fund shall be administered by a non-executive member who shall maintain all records of participating members, contributions and pay-outs. He/She shall bear the official title Community's "Welfare Fund Manager". His/her tenure of office shall be at the discretion of the House but must vacate this portfolio upon being elected to hold any executive office of the Community (ie, those specified in Clause 5.1). He/She may be removed as the fund manager by a 75% majority of participating members present and voting at a properly constituted General Meeting of the House. The Fund Manager, not being a formal member of the Executive may nonetheless attend an Executive meeting as a specially Co-opted member if issues relating to the Fund are to be discussed. He/She shall be entitled to similar rights as other Executive members at such meetings.

Payments from the Fund — approval process

(c) For any money to be paid out of the Fund, a relevant proposal/motion shall be made by a participating member, supported by another participating member. A prospective beneficiary of a particular motion shall not move or second any such proposal or motion. Such proposal/motion and support shall then be communicated to all available participating members by either the Fund Manager or any other Executive member. The moving, seconding and communicating to members of such proposal/motion may be made at a formal meeting of the House or Executive or on the telephone, as circumstances warrant. The proposal/motion shall receive the approval of at least a 75% majority of all participating members. Where a participating member has travelled or cannot be contacted after reasonable efforts had been made (including a written note to the known UK address), the decision of the OCOM Executive shall be binding upon that member. The Fund Manager shall maintain proper records of all pay-out decisions, including names of proposer and supporter of motions.

Recoupment of monies paid out

(d) Any amounts paid out of the fund shall be recouped as soon as possible (but within 12 months of the pay-out) by way of additional contributions by all participating members - including the beneficiary of the pay-out that gave rise to the shortfall.

Voluntary/discretionary participation

(e) It shall be emphasised that participation in the fund is purely discretionary and is in no way intended as a condition for membership of the Community organisation. By the same token, it shall be recognised that in fairness to all members, financial assistance from the Welfare fund will only be available to those members who contribute into the fund - ie, participating members. Decisions on financial assistance to members who choose not to participate in the fund are entirely at the discretion of other members voting during monthly meetings.

Qualifying Event/occasions for financial support

(f) Definition of qualifying events or occasions shall be in line with those set out in clause 4.5 of this Constitution. The agreed list may be varied at any time by a 75% majority vote of all participating members.

(g) The exact amount of financial assistance to be given by the Community on the occurrence of any of the defined qualifying events or occasions shall be as follows:

	OCCASION	FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO BE GIVEN (FROM THE WELFARE FUND)
(i)	Wedding	Maximum of £100 to be spent on present(s) from the Community
(ii)	Birth of a Baby	Maximum of £30 to be spent on present(s) from the Community
(iii)	Bereavement	Amount of Financial support to be given would depend upon whether the affected member would be travelling home or not as a direct result of the bereavement: — Maximum of £300 if travelling home — Maximum of £250 if not travelling home
(iv)	All other events such as birthdays, donations to other Communities, etc	No funding from the Community fund. Amount given should be purely at the discretion of members present at the meeting and willing to voluntarily contribute from their pockets. Alternatively, members present and voting at a monthly meeting could decide by a simple majority vote that any expenditure which falls within this category (particularly with regard to donations to other Communities) shall be funded from the main Community Fund.

4.7 The OCOM-UK shall reserve the right to decide that its response to events under this Article of the Constitution (ie, the whole of Article 4) shall be depended upon the affected member's record of support given to the Community in times of need which are duly recognised as such by the House at a General or emergency meeting.

ARTICLE 5 — OFFICERS, DUTIES AND TENURE OF OFFICE

OFFICERS ESTABLISHMENT

5.1 The full establishment of Officers of OCOM-UK shall consist of the following:

- (i) President
- (ii) General Secretary
- (iii) Assistant General Secretary
- (iv) Treasurer
- (v) Welfare Officer/Publicity Officer

5.2 Notwithstanding any other provision within this Constitution, the House shall reserve the right to fill or not to fill a particular post at any point in time and/or to decide that the combined duties of two or more posts be vested in any one individual member for a specified period of time. The period of time shall be stated and minuted at the time of the election to Office.

DUTIES OF OFFICERS

5.3 THE PRESIDENT

5.3.1 The President shall be the head of OCOM, shall direct its affairs and shall preside over all General Meetings, Executive Meetings and Extra-ordinary Meetings of the organisation.

5.3.2 He/She shall have all powers to maintain law and order during all meetings and shall have a casting vote at such meetings.

5.3.3 He/She shall, in consultation with the General Secretary, have the power to summon Emergency Meetings of the whole House, Executive Meetings and Committee Meetings as appropriate.

5.3.4 He/She shall, together with the Secretary, sign all adopted minutes of meetings.

5.3.5 He/She shall, together with the Secretary and or Treasurer sign all cheques, vouchers and withdrawals from the OCOM-UK' Bank or Building society Account(s), as the case may be and any letters of instructions to the Bank/Building Society.

5.3.6 He/She shall perform all other duties pertaining to the office of the President.

5.4 THE GENERAL SECRETARY

5.4.1 The Secretary shall be the head of the OCOM-UK Secretariat and shall be the Custodian of the organisations administrative books and records.

5.4.2 He/She shall be responsible for the day-to-day administration of the OCOM Secretariat, under the direction of the House and the President, and shall deal with all outgoing and incoming correspondence.

5.4.3 He/She shall keep proper and accurate minutes of OCOM's meetings and may delegate some of his duties to his assistant, as he considers necessary.

5.4.4 He/She, together with the President shall sign the adopted minutes at each meeting.

5.4.5 He/She, together with the President and/or the Treasurer shall countersign all OCOM's cheques, vouchers and withdrawals from the organisation's Accounts and co-sign all letters of instructions to the Bank/Building Society.

5.4.6 For the purpose of carrying out the duties of his/her office, he/she shall operate an Imprest Account of £50 and shall make appropriate returns for all his/her expenditure on each occasion the imprest is replenished.

5.4.7 He/She shall maintain, at all times, an up to date list of all Ogbia persons residing in the UK.

5.4.8 He/She shall maintain an inventory of all assets belonging to the OCOM-UK.

5.4.9 He/She shall act on the general direction of the House of OCOM-UK and shall exercise some measure of discretionary powers and rights in dealing with certain correspondence, in the interest of the Ogbia Community. He/She shall subsequently inform the House, at the earliest opportunity, of any such action.

5.4.10 In the event of a resignation, dismissal or non re-election to office following an election, the General Secretary shall immediately hand over to the President or his nominee or the House, all records, files and other property of the Community in his possession.

5.5 THE ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY (AGS)

5.5.1 The AGS shall assist the General Secretary in his/her duties and shall deputise for the latter in his/her absence. He/She shall also perform such duties as may be delegated or assigned to him/her either by the General Secretary or the House.

5.5.2 In the event of the resignation, dismissal by way of a general vote of no confidence, departure or absence from the UK, of the General Secretary, the AGS shall act respectively, assuming the full powers of the General Secretary, subject to the confirmation of his position by the House at the very next General or Extraordinary Meeting.

5.6 THE TREASURER

5.6.1 The Treasurer shall be responsible for the safe custody of all the organisation's monies and shall maintain proper records of all receipts and payments.

5.6.2 He/She shall operate the OCOM-UK Account and have custody of the organisation's cheque book or passbook.

5.6.3 He/She shall ensure that all monies collected by him/her, are duly paid into the OCOM Account within three (3) working days of collection. If for any reasons he/she is unable to meet this deadline on any occasion, both the President and the General Secretary must be informed accordingly.

5.6.4 In the course of the performance of the duties of his/her office, he/she shall have the right to demand payment of subscriptions or any other pledges from any member, and if necessary, to follow up any defaulting cases.

5.6.5 He/She must ensure that any OCOM monies collected are banked intact, except for the deduction of any expenditure so approved by the House at meetings and duly minuted as such.

5.6.6 He/She shall keep proper books of account (Cash Book) and proper inventory of OCOM Assets. He/She shall liaise closely with the General Secretary in producing the organisation's Annual Financial Statements and Reports.

5.6.7 He/She shall be primarily responsible for preparing and reporting to the House OCOM's Annual Financial Statements (ie, Income and Expenditure Account and Balance Sheet). In doing this he/she shall liaise with the Treasurer.

5.6.8 In conjunction with the General Secretary, He/She shall answer questions and furnish appropriate information on OCOM-UK's finances to the House or to any individual member during meetings.

5.6.9 He/She shall pay only those expenditure claims submitted on approved claims form or voucher and duly authorised by the House at meetings or by at least two other members of the Executive, including the President or his/her nominee (who must also be an Executive member).

5.6.10 He/She shall sign for all monies collected for banking and if so required by any member or outside persons, he/she shall issue an official receipt for any such monies collected on behalf of OCOM.

5.6.11 When handing over to a successor, he/she shall prepare an up-to-date statement of position statement of the financial affairs of OCOM as at the date of the handing over.

5.6.12 He/She shall produce for scrutiny all financial records in his/her custody when requested to do so by the House or its accredited Auditor.

5.6.13 In the event of the resignations or dismissal, the Treasurer shall immediately hand over to the President or his nominee or the House, all records, files and other property of the Community in his possession.

5.7 WELFARE OFFICER/PUBLICITY OFFICER

5.7.1 The Welfare/Publicity Officer shall be responsible for monitoring the welfare of all persons of Ogbia origin wherever they may be resident within the UK. He/She shall also be responsible for the publicity of all activities of OCOM-UK. His/Her primary objective in this regard shall be to publicise and project a positive image for the organisation.

5.7.2 He/She shall act promptly and at his/her own initiative in emergency cases and later seek ratification from the House.

5.7.3 He/She shall be the first point of contact with regard to any matters concerning the welfare of all Ogbia persons in the UK and, in particular, any matters requiring Community action under Article 4 above.

5.7.4 He/She shall be responsible for notifying every other member of any ill-health, birth and death affecting members. He/She shall arrange and co-ordinate visits to hospitals, homes of members and send appropriate cards when necessary.

5.7.5 He/She shall cater as best he/she can for individual members who are in distress and may also intervene on behalf of the Community in other social and welfare issues affecting Ogbia individuals in the UK.

5.7.6 In the event of the Welfare/Publicity Officer himself/herself being the affected party, either the President or the General Secretary or (in their absence) another member nominated by the President shall carry out the functions of this Officer for that occasion only.

5.7.7 In carrying out his/her duties the Welfare/Publicity Officer shall have the right to expect the full co-operation and support of the rest of the membership at all times. This may entail the need for some other members to accompany him/her on visits and passing on information to other members. The Welfare Officer should however be the "driving force" behind all such initiatives and shall always be the central contact point on all social and welfare matters of the Community.

5.7.8 He/She shall organise and co-ordinate all OCOM's social activities and publicity materials as and when necessary.

5.7.9 He/She shall explore and present to the House for ratification effective means of publicising the OCOM-UK and its activities both in the UK and abroad, particularly in Nigeria.

TENURE OF OFFICE OF ALL ELECTED OFFICERS

5.8 At the Annual General meeting hereinafter mentioned, the House of OCOM-UK shall elect to Office the Officers listed in Article 5.1 above and without prejudice to Article 5.2.

5.8.1 All elected Officers shall hold office, in the first instance, for a period of twelve calendar months, ie, until the conclusion of the Annual General Meeting of OCOM next after their election. Every Officer shall submit themselves for re-election after 12 months in Office, though, He/She shall reserve the right to decline standing again for re-election to that office.

5.8.2 Every Officer shall be eligible for re-election PROVIDED THAT no Officer shall hold the same office for more than three consecutive years. After the expiration of three years, there shall be a gap of at least 12 months before an out-going Officer becomes eligible for re-election to that same Office again.

5.8.3 Notwithstanding Article 5.8.2 above, an Officer shall be eligible for election to any other Office (other than that for which He/She had already served for three consecutive terms).

5.8.4 In order to facilitate the hand-over process from one Executive to a succeeding Executive, the election of Executive Officers shall coincide with the end of the organisation's Financial Years. Accordingly, the March General Meeting of the OCOM-UK shall be deemed to be the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the year, during which the out-going Executive shall submit their Annual Report (including the annual Financial Statements) to the House.

5.9 Unless otherwise agreed by a 75% majority vote of the House, Clause 5.8 above shall not apply to the post of the Community's "Welfare Fund Manager". The tenure of office for this post shall be in line with Clause 4.6.2 (b) of this Constitution.

ARTICLE 6 — MEETINGS OF THE COMMUNITY

6.1 Meeting Intervals

6.1.1 The House of the OCOM-UK shall meet at regular intervals during the year to discuss the general business of the Community and once a year to elect a new Executive Committee.

6.1.2 The frequency of meetings during the year shall be stipulated by the House at the Annual General Meeting to elect a new Executive Committee and the resolution so arrived at shall apply until the following AGM. Currently, the meeting intervals is as follows:

Year: 1995/96 (ie, April 1995 to March 1996)

Intervals: 1st Saturday of every month

6.3 Place of Meetings

The House shall decide on a regular place for meetings albeit members shall be encouraged, and indeed, have the right, to invite the Community to hold its meeting at their residence in a particular month or for a period of time. Such requests shall be made to the House at any meeting and shall not be refused without compelling reasons to justify a contrary decision.

6.4 Time and Duration of meetings

6.4.1 The times and duration of meetings shall be at the discretion of the House, but in any case shall not exceed a maximum of 4 hours under normal circumstances.

6.4.2 Notwithstanding Clause 6.4.1, the President or Chairperson at any meeting, with the approval of a simple majority, may extend the period for a particular meeting in order to enable important or crucial items of the day's business to be adequately dealt with before adjournment.

6.5 The House and its meetings

6.5.1 The term "House" shall be taken to mean a formally constituted Quorum of any meeting of OCOM as stipulated under this Constitution. Meetings of the "House", whether monthly, bi-monthly, yearly etc, shall constitute a "General Meeting of the House".

6.5.2 The House shall be responsible for formulating policy and the general management of the affairs of the organisation.

6.5.3 Meetings of the House shall be attended by all members of the Ogbia Community residing permanently or temporarily in the United Kingdom, whether formally registered or not.

6.5.4 Any first-time attendant shall have the right to formally register as a member of OCOM-UK. He/She shall equally reserve the right not to register as a member.

6.5.5 Where an Ogbia person residing temporarily or permanently in the UK opts not to register with the community organisation, or where after several correspondence from the Secretariat, has failed to demonstrate any interest in the affairs of the Community, the House shall reserve the right to exclude such individual from the affairs of the OCOM from thenceforth.

6.5.6 Decisions taken by the House at meetings shall be binding on all members. No decision taken at a Meeting of the House shall be rescinded or amended at the same meeting. No decisions involving serious issues of Finance or Policy shall be rescinded at any meeting unless by a two-third majority vote of eligible members present at the OCOM meeting in which the question of rescission is being considered.

6.5.7 The House shall have the power to ratify or veto any proposals and decisions of any committee or affiliate organisations.

6.5.8 The proceedings or decisions of the House shall not be invalidated by any failure to elect or any defect in the election, appointment, co-option or qualification of any member.

6.6 Emergency Meetings

When occasions demand, the President or Vice President shall, in consultation with the General Secretary, and with the approval of a simple majority of all members of the Executive Committee have the power to summon Emergency Meetings of the whole House, Executive Meetings and Committee Meetings, as the case may be.

6.7 Executive Committee

6.7.1 The Executive Committee shall consist of all elected Officers of OCOM-UK and shall be chaired by the President or General Secretary, in the absence of the latter, or another nominee of the Executive Committee, as considered appropriate for the occasion.

6.7.2 The Executive Committee shall be responsible for implementing the policy decisions of the House. The Secretariat of OCOM shall constitute part of the Executive Committee.

6.7.3 The Executive Committee shall meet at regular intervals as necessary for the purpose of furthering the business of the House or taking decisions on specific issues on behalf of the House.

6.7.4 Any casual vacancy in the Committee shall be filled by the House at a General meeting.

6.7.5 The proceedings or decisions of the Executive Committee shall not be invalidated by any failure to elect or any defect in the election, appointment, co-option or qualification of any member.

6.8 Other Committees and sub-committees

The House may appoint such special or standing committees or sub-committees as may be deemed necessary by the House and shall determine their terms of reference, powers, duration and composition. All acts and proceedings of such special or standing committees or sub-committees shall be reported back to the House as soon as possible.

ARTICLE 7 — STANDING ORDERS

7.1 The House shall have the power to adopt and issue Standing Orders and/or Rules and Regulations for the organisation. Such Standing Orders and/or Rules and regulations shall come into operation immediately PROVIDED ALWAYS that they shall be subject to periodic review by the House in General Meeting and shall not be inconsistent with the provisions of this Constitution.

RULES OF PROCEEDINGS AT ALL MEETINGS

7.2 Quorum and absence of Quorum

7.2.1 The quorum at a meeting of the OCOM-UK or of its Executive Committee and any other Committee appointed under Articles 6.7 or 6.8 hereof shall be one-third of the total registered membership of the organisation (including the Chair and Secretary or their assistants) of the Executive or of the Committee, as the case may be.

7.2.2 At any meeting, if after two hours (2hrs) of the scheduled time for the meeting, a quorum is absent, the meeting shall be cancelled at the discretion of the Chair or the Secretary, in the absence of the former.

7.3 Chairperson of Meetings

The President (or in his/her absence, the General Secretary) shall preside/chair all meetings of the House, except otherwise decided by the House.

7.4 Every speaker shall direct their speech through the Chair. No member shall, during the proceedings of a meeting, direct his/her speech, anger or point fingers at another member, except with the clear permission of the Chair.

7.5 In the interest of peace and orderliness and the interest of the Ogbia community in general, the President shall reserve the right to ask any individual to leave the meeting and exclude him/her from any further proceedings of the day's business.

7.6 Presidential Sanction

If during the course of a meeting of the House or any Committee, a member refuses to obey the legitimate and constitutional instructions of the Chair of that meeting, the offending member shall be liable to a fine of up to £25, to be paid into the organisation's funds within three months of the fine. Such fines must receive the approval of a simple majority of those present at that meeting. This amount of fine shall be subject to periodic review by the House as circumstances warrant.

7.7 Voting at Meetings

Save as otherwise herein provided, all questions arising at any meeting shall be decided by a simple majority of those present and entitled to vote thereat. No person shall exercise more than one vote, but in the event of an equality of votes, the Chairperson of the meeting shall have a second or casting vote, in order to break the deadlock.

7.8 Minutes

Minutes shall be kept by the House, the Executive Committee and all other Committees, and the appropriate Secretary shall enter therein a record of all the proceedings and resolutions.

ARTICLE 8 — RULES AND REGULATIONS

8.1 The House shall be the supreme governing body of the organisation and may override decisions of any other organ(s) of OCOM-UK.

8.2 The House shall be responsible for convening meetings of the OCOM-UK, and shall meet a minimum of eight (8) times in any one calendar year. One of these meetings shall be the Annual General Meeting (AGM), which must be held within 13 months following the previous AGM.

8.3 The House shall function under the principle of collective responsibility and decisions shall be on the basis of a simple majority of members present and eligible (ie, qualified) to vote.

8.4 All motions shall be proposed and seconded by a voting member and the Chairperson may require any motion or amendment thereto to be in writing, depending upon the circumstances of the motion.

8.5 A proposer of a motion or subsequent speakers, may not speak for more than three minutes, and no person may speak on one motion or amendment more than once, except that a proposer may have a right of reply (also limited to three minutes) before a motion is put - subject to the discretion of the chairperson to allow extension of time.

8.6 At any time when a topic is under discussion, before the meeting, any member shall be competent to move that “a motion be put”. It shall be at the discretion of the Chairperson whether or not the said motion is put to the Meeting. If a closure is put, the proposer shall have an opportunity to exercise his/her right to reply, and the question shall then be put to the Meeting immediately.

8.7 An amendment to a motion may be rejected by the proposer of the substantive motion, or merged with the substantive motion, if accepted.

8.8 “Point of Order” and “Point of Information” shall take precedence over all other forms of motion.

8.8.1 A “Point of Order” may be raised if:

- (a) The speaker is digressing from the subject of the motion.
- (b) The speaker is using “unparliamentary” language.
- (c) There is an infringement of the Standing Order and/or of the Constitution. (The relevant section must be quoted).

8.8.2 A “Point of Information” shall strictly contain additional information relevant to the subject matter under discussion.

8.9 The Chairperson’s decision on a point of order shall be final.

8.10 Voting may be by show of hands, except when a ballot is demanded before the question is put or during an election, when voting must be by secret ballot.

8.11 Only registered members can vote and be voted for during elections, and shall be on the basis of one member, one vote.

8.12 A proxy vote shall be allowed if a written message/authorisation has been sent to the effect that another named member should represent the said member in any voting at that meeting.

8.13 Candidates for Presidency shall each address the House for not more than five minutes, and shall answer a maximum of four questions put to them by members.

8.14 An Officer shall be removed from office following a vote of no confidence, moved by a qualified member. A two-thirds majority of the members present and voting shall suffice for this purpose.

8.15 Should the Secretary fail to convene a meeting on request, a meeting convened by other members of the House shall stand, PROVIDED THAT it can be shown that the Secretary had been asked to convene one and had failed to comply within a reasonable period of time.

8.16 All members of OCOM-UK executive are Trustees of the organisation and shall act in that trusteeship/fiduciary capacity at all times in matters affecting the organisation.

8.17 In order to facilitate the hand-over process from one Executive to a succeeding Executive, the election of Executive Officers shall coincide with the end of the organisation's Financial Year, ie, March of every year.

ARTICLE 9 — FINANCE

9.1 Sources of funds

The OCOM-UK shall derive its funds from the following sources:

- (a) Annual or Monthly subscriptions
- (b) Registration Fees, if so decided by the House
- (c) Grants
- (d) Special Levy on individual members, if and when circumstances so warrant.
- (e) Social Activities or Special Fund Raising events.
- (f) Donations
- (g) Any other intra vires means of raising funds approved and duly authorised by the House.

9.1.1 Annual/Monthly Subscription

- (i) Each and every member of the OCOM-UK shall pay an annual or monthly subscription, the exact amount of which shall be decided by the House at a General Meeting and shall be subject to periodic review. The current Minimum Monthly subscription of £5 per member
- (ii) This amount shall be the minimum subscription and members may, in the interest of the organisation, pay more if they so wish and/or pay their subscriptions in advance.
- (iii) The monthly subscription shall become payable from the General Meeting in which the person becomes a registered member. The amount shall be payable to the organisation whether or not a member attends a particular monthly meeting. The Financial Secretary and/or Treasurer of the OCOM-UK shall have the right to demand payment from any defaulting member.

9.1.2 Registration Fees

The House shall reserve the right to decide that a Registration fee be paid by new incoming members of the organisation.

9.1.3 Grants and Donations from individuals or organisations.

Grants and Donations shall be applied according to the approved budget/s and shall be spent in accordance with the terms of the grant or donation, if any.

Cheque Signatories

9.2 The signatories to the OCOM-UK' cheques shall be the President, General Secretary and the Treasurer and they shall act in a trusteeship capacity at all times in matters relating to the organisation's funds. The House shall authorise the President, Secretary and the Treasurer to sign cheques on behalf of the OCOM-UK. All cheques and letters of authorisation to the bank must be signed by not less than two of the three authorised signatories.

9.3 All monies raised by or on behalf of the OCOM-UK shall be applied to further the objects of the OCOM-UK and for no other purpose PROVIDED THAT nothing herein contained shall prevent the payment in good faith of reasonable and proper remuneration to any employee of the OCOM-UK or the payment to members of the House or Committees of reasonable out-of-pocket expenses duly supported by genuine receipts.

9.4 The Treasurer, shall keep proper accounts of the finances of the OCOM-UK.

9.5 The Accounts shall be audited at least once a year by the Auditor(s) appointed at the Annual General Meeting.

9.6 An audited Statement of Accounts for the last financial year shall be presented at (or submitted to) the said AGM.

Authorisation for expenditure

9.7 All expenditure out of the OCOM-UK' funds must be authorised by the House at a General meeting or, in emergency situation, by at least two members of the Executive, including the President.

Bank or Building Society Account

9.8 A bank or Building society account shall be opened in the name of the organisation at an address and branch of the bank as the House shall decide from time to time. The organisation's account is currently held at:

Name of Bank: National Westminster Bank Plc

Branch: Kennington Branch {Sort Code:}

Address: PO Box No 3168, 188, Kennington Park Rd, London SE11 4BX

{Current A/c No. Reserve A/c No.}

9.9 The financial Year of the OCOM-UK shall coincide with the statutory fiscal year in the UK and shall therefore run from the 1st April to 31st March each year. In the interest of clarity and as an example, the OCOM-UK' Financial Year for 1995/96 shall be from 1st April 1995 to 31st March 1996.

ARTICLE 10 — AUDITORS

As appropriate, the House shall appoint a qualified Auditor and may determine their remuneration (if any). The accounts of the OCOM-UK shall be examined at least once a year and the correctness of the Income and Expenditure Account and the Balance Sheet ascertained by the Auditor and reported to the House.

ARTICLE 11 — TRUST PROPERTY

The title to all real or personal property which may be acquired by or on behalf of the OCOM-UK shall be vested in a corporation lawfully entitled to act as Custodian Trustee or in not less than three or more than five individual persons.

ARTICLE 12 — PATRONS

12.1 The OCOM-UK shall have both UK-based and Nigerian-based Patrons.

12.2 Towards this end, the House shall designate appropriate and worthy individuals as Patrons for the OCOM-UK in Honour or recognition of their long standing contributions towards the identity, unity, progress and general development of the Ogbia people in particular, the entire people of the Ijaw tribe and mankind in general, in Nigeria and/or the United Kingdom.

12.3 Patrons shall be appointed by the House in a General Meeting and shall remain in Office at the discretion of the House.

ARTICLE 13 — AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION

13.1 Any alteration or amendment of this Constitution shall receive the assent of not less than two-third of the full membership of the OCOM-UK for the time being, present and voting - at a meeting specially called for the purpose or of which the amendment proposal was duly listed on the agenda for the day - PROVIDED THAT notice of any such amendment shall have been received by the General Secretary in writing not less than 21 clear days before the meeting at which the amendment is to be proposed and debated.

13.2 At least 14 clear days' notice in writing of such a meeting, setting forth the terms of the amendment, shall be sent by the General Secretary to each member of the OCOM-UK PROVIDED THAT no amendment or alteration shall be made which would have the effect of causing the OCOM-UK to cease to be a legal organisation.

13.3 Any Rules and Regulations (but not Standing Orders) may be amended by the House PROVIDED THAT such amendment is supported by a simple majority of the members present and voting. Any proposals for the amendment of Standing Orders shall follow the same procedures as for the amendment of the Constitution.

ARTICLE 14 — DISSOLUTION OF THE COMMUNITY ORGANISATION

14.1 If the House, by a simple majority decide at any time that on the ground of expense or otherwise, it is necessary or advisable to dissolve the community organisation (OCOM-UK), it shall call a meeting of all members of the OCOM-UK who have the power to vote, of which meeting not less than 21 days' notice (stating the terms of the Resolution to be proposed thereat) shall be given.

14.2 If such decision shall be confirmed by a two-thirds majority, of those present and voting at such meeting, then notwithstanding any other provision in this Constitution, the Executive Committee shall have the power to dispose of any assets held by or on behalf of the OCOM-UK.

14.3 Any assets remaining after the satisfaction of any proper debts and liabilities shall be shared equitably among the registered members in proportion to respective number of months of subscription contribution. Alternatively, subject to a two-thirds majority decision at the said meeting (Article 14.1), the net assets may be transferred to such other charitable institution or institutions having objects similar to the objects of the OCOM-UK, as the House may determine.

ARTICLE 15 — SECRETARIAT OF THE OCOM-UK

15.1 The Secretariat of the OCOM-UK shall be in London at an address specified by the House. This address so decided may be subject to change as circumstances warrant and in order to facilitate the administration of the OCOM-UK' affairs.

15.2 The address for Secretariat shall not necessarily be the same as the address for the regular meetings of the organisation.

ARTICLE 16 — NOTICES

Any notice may be served by the General Secretary on any member either personally or on his appointed representative as the case may be, or by sending it through the post in a prepaid letter addressed to such member at his/her last known address in the United Kingdom and any letter so sent shall be deemed to have been received within ten days of posting.

ARTICLE 17 — INTERPRETATION

For the interpretation of this constitution, the Interpretation Act 1978 shall apply as it applies to the interpretation of Acts of Parliament.

GLOSSARY

The following terms/phrases are defined or explained in the main body of the Constitution and accordingly, reference should be made to the appropriate clause(s) as necessary. The relevant clauses are indicated in brackets.

AGM {5.8.4 & 8.2}

General Meetings {6.5.1}

Frequency of Meetings {8.2}

House {6.5.1, 8.1 – 8.3}

Minutes {7.8}

Motions {8.4 – 8.7}

Point of Order {8.8.1}

Point of Information {8.8.2}

Proxy Vote {8.12}

Quorum {7.2}

Vote of No Confidence {8.14}

LIST OF APPENDICES

A. Letter to all Ogbia Sons and Daughters in the UK

B. Map of Ijaw Tribe and Clans (including Ogbia)

Copies of the Constitution distributed to: all Ogbia persons & Relations in the UK:

Chief Okpanra Uriah Dieah

Oxford Olali

Godwin Micah

Ms Belemo Alagoa

Enato Osain

Tnemo Ndaliki

Dr Enapu Owede

Dr Bams Abila

Kinobo Lawrence Christian

Ms Juliet Pog-Osia

Mrs Adegadiza Justicia Ajulo

Mrs Stella Ugwumadu

Nats Damni

Ms Christine Abah

Harcourt Tony Otokito

*OF THE OGBIA COMMUNITY-UK
End of Constitution — original wording reproduced in full.*