



NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S WELCOME ADDRESS



Mr. Chairman, Ndi Eze, Chapter Presidents, Distinguished guests, Umu Nnem Ndi Mbano, permit me to welcome you in the dialect of our people, Unu abiaruole! Unu anwuchule!!!

At last, we made it!!! Determined to overcome our challenges, determined to change the world around us, determined to confront the present, we braved the odds to chart a path for our future. This convention is the only in person convention in our first term of 3 years, but in this convention, in the words of the scripture, “the Lord shall restore to us the years the locust has eaten.”

Right after taking office in 2019, we were confronted with what seemed insurmountable odds. We made ambitious promises, not knowing what was ahead of us, to expand our chapters, complete our surgical building at Mbano, equip and commission it, revive our youth program and increase our medical mission capacity. The pandemic came like a vicious flood, followed by unprecedented deaths of our members. In the history of MNA from 2000 to 2019, a span of 19 years we have not paid up-to 7 death benefits, but between 2020-2021, in just one year, we have paid 12 death benefits—a situation that could destabilize any organization, yet we remain strong, we accomplished all our goals in one term. The challenges became opportunities for leadership, and Umu Mbano were not deterred, with our faith in God, we kept our promises.

So, this year's convention marks a significant milestone in the history of this organization. We have sustained the efforts of previous administrations and added value to what we received.

1. Against the odds of the pandemic, we have added four new chapters and currently working on the fifth.
2. Against the odds of the pandemic, in for the first time we held a zoom convention to include all Umu Mbano worldwide, extending hands of brotherhood and sisterhood for the development of our homeland.
3. Against all odds of the pandemic, we raised more than 200 thousand dollars to complete and equip one of the best surgical theaters East of the Niger, with state-of-the-art equipment, all on voluntary donations.
4. Against the odds of the pandemic, we added a borehole and a 30 KVA generator to sustain the new facility we built at joint hospital Mbano.
5. Against all odds of the pandemic, we undertook the largest medical mission in the history of MNA. Even as we experienced lockdown, and were forced to work only three and half days, we provided several levels of care ranging from dental, ophthalmology, surgery,

pediatrics, and internal medicine. In this mission we treated 6328 patients and performed 117 surgeries. Despite all premonitions, we had the largest medical mission contingent,

6. Against all odds of the pandemic, for the first time we honored our graduating students in our zoom convention. A feat we will repeat in an in-person appreciation at this convention.
7. Even at this convention, for the first time every attendee has a bag of goodies to show for participating. The Lizard that fell from a tree looked left and right and said, if no one congratulates him, he will congratulate himself. Indeed, Umu Mbanò, we have done well.

It will be ungrateful on our part to claim these feats without recognizing the efforts of those that came before us who laid the foundation upon which we excelled.

Our organization started 22 years ago with a group of dedicated men and women who felt the need to create an identity for their folks in a country that usually absorbs its immigrant population without any meaningful anchor to their heritage. To those founding men and women who held the first meeting in Atlanta that gave birth to MNA under the tutelage of Mazi Emmanuel Egbuziem, your labors of love shall never be forgotten.

The determination of subsequent leaderships, the resilience of Chief Louis Anumudu, the foresightedness of late Attorney Chris Obasi, have built a monument in the hearts and minds of our people. Our surgical theater building is an enduring landmark. As “Nwa Lọrọ Uwa”, our brother, Chris Emedom would say in the Nwa Mbanò Music, *ihe dịka unu akọkwalam*.

As we mark the transition or continuation of this administration, we pledge to deepen our achievements and create new frontiers through partnerships with local and international bodies on shared values and objectives.

To our chapters, you are the strength behind our National Body and the success we have achieved together, we shall continue to find ways to increase our local chapter membership.

Any organization that forgets its youth is bound to go into extinction. We shall double our efforts in expanding our youth programs by creating a platform where they can use the current tools of technology like social media to maximize our potential and engage globally; we have proven that we cannot be limited by time and space. To this end, I shall appoint a committee for social engagement made up of our youth to tap into this burgeoning resource.

While the medical mission has given us the greatest visibility, we have realized that almost 90% of our people have eye problems. We are currently looking into partnership with International Ophthalmology organizations to address this concern. So, Umu Nnem, for those that are seeking opportunity to have their name on the wall of fame, here it has come. Equipping an eye center at our present building will be a dream come true and an enduring blessing to Mbanò.

While it is important to develop our homeland in Mbanjo, we must not forget that “ebe onye bi, ka ọ na wachi”. Therefore, substantial efforts must be made to create welcoming programs for our children; we must open an account for our youth, nurture a community that will bring them together and recognize their accomplishments. In that vein we hope to recognize annually our sons and daughters who graduate from Colleges and Universities. This simple recognition will foster a sense of belonging and inclusiveness for our youth.

To our ancestral homeland-Mbanjo, not much has changed to attract needed development. We thank Ndi Eze who rallied round us during the commissioning of the Ultra-Modern Surgical theater. Please continue to engage our brothers and sisters who are still on the sideline, to please join us because the work is much but the laborers are few. We shall continue to seek avenues to attract investors if the enabling environment exists. The peace of our homeland cannot be overemphasized.

We thank our Senator, Sir Frank Ibezim, whose magnanimity helped cushion the cost of our medical mission this year. We equally thank Hon. Princess Miriam Onuoha for her assistance and continued partnership. I thank our convention planning committee, particularly the National Planning Committee Chairman, Sir Felix Osuji and Lady Ngozi Nnorom, the national Vice Chairperson. Special appreciation goes to the New York Chapter, our host and most especially the New York Chapter President, Chief Richard Ukwuozor and the indefatigable High Chief Jerry Iwuagwu, the New York chapter committee chairman; we remain grateful for your dedication. To all the committees of MNA, I thank you for your vision, dedication, and sacrifice; together we have made a difference.

Finally, I thank my family, my beautiful wife, Esther and our children: Obinna and Kelechi whose accommodation and equal commitment have enabled me to serve our community. I also thank the families of all the members of the former and incoming Executive for allowing their husbands and wives to volunteer for service to our homeland.

As you sit in our midst today, please help us in any way you can to uplift the underserved in our community. As a charity organization, your reward is both here on earth and in heaven.

Above all, relax and enjoy the hospitality of Umu Mbanjo.
Together we have built a stronger union. Thank you and God Bless You.