

GaDangme Europe action plans revealed at Barcelona Conference

The President of GaDangme Europe (GDEu - an Association of natives from the Greater Accra Region, Ghana, living in various countries in Europe), Emmanuel Nii Okoso Tetteh Mensah, has told members of the Association they cannot change the past but can use lessons drawn from it to shape the future of the Association.

He was speaking at the 7th Annual Conference of the GDEu hosted in the Spanish city Barcelona under the theme: 'A Time to Transform the Challenges of Facing the GaDangme into Reality'.

Delegates from 8 countries - Spain (host nation), England, France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Switzerland and Sweden – attended the one-day Conference. Also present were a delegation of 'Bokemei' Foundation (an NGO based in Holland) headed by its President, Alhaji Annetey Abbey.

Nii Tetteh Mensah who addressed the delegates in a 30-minute speech revealed all action plans of the GDEu in the coming years. He said since election of the new Executive Committee of the Association which was sworn into office on March 13, 2010 in Hamburg it has been blighted by challenges but members of the Committee are willing to serve the GaDangme cause both day and night and is hopeful there is a bright light at the end of the tunnel. He mentioned in his address pivotal structures and administrative functions the Executives has put in place which includes: setting up of Trustees and Advisory Boards, election of the Representative Council (RC) leaders, closer collaboration with 'Bokemei' Foundation and the election of new General and Vice Secretaries. Explaining the action for the reappointment of new Secretaries following the election in Hamburg, he indicated that the two ex-members who were on the Executive Board were not removed from office or sacked but they suspended themselves voluntarily which was accepted in good faith and a re-election has to be carried out at the last meeting in Belgium (October 2010). Among the various projects that has been undertaken by the GDEu since the election of its new Executives are: donation of computers and dongles to enable internet access for the Accra Mental Hospital in addition to clothes provided for the patients, a contribution of 2,000 Ghana cedis towards GaDangme students' Association of the Legon University of Ghana Annual Conference in April this year and the Association vacation/summer outreach work in GaDangme rural areas. Also included in the list mentioned are: participation in Obonu FM (a local Radio Station based at Tema) programmes on topical issues and again donation of external drives for the storage of programmes, pledge to donate money and computers for the Radio Station's 10 years anniversary, annual sponsorship of Dodowa School's projects and donation of medical supplies to hospitals and polyclinics in the Greater Accra Region namely: Abokobi Polyclinic, Danfa Polyclinic, Pantang Mental Hospital, Asylum Down Psychiatric Hospital (Accra), Atua Hospital (Somanya), Ningo Hospital, Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital-Emergency Ward (adults), Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital -Children Emergency Ward. "Our hope of turning future projects into reality will come from us (GDEu members). There is work to be done and plenty of it and I am asking you all for your contribution," the GDEu President told the delegates at the Conference. He further outlined projects which the GDEu has planned under which he mentioned setting up of an Investment Fund and Fund Raising activities teams, Investment generating ventures (establishment of Social Enterprises) together with 'Bokemei' Foundation, sanitation in the Greater Accra Region, market gardening with the growing of vegetables on medium scale for a start - lettuce, sweet pepper, carrots for the local market where GDEu will provide high yielding seeds, applying for charity status in the UK, initiatives in apprenticeship, voluntary and employment opportunities with 'BOKEMEI' FOUNDATION which will include vocational training like fashion and hair designing, catering services, tailoring apprenticeship schemes – auto mechanics, joinery, plumbing, electricals and funding for these schemes. The extensive list of projects according to Nii Tetteh Mensah will also include Education where it will collaborate with 'Bokemei' Foundation who are already operating in the Greater Accra Region through financial expertise, equipment, promotion and teaching of the GaDangme languages in all GaDangme areas. There will be provision of books and establishment of a central library to serve a number of communities. Mobilising retired personnel's to supervise local projects is also on the card of the GDEu. In the concluding part of his address, the GDEu President talked about lobbying to help the GaDangme cause. He said: "We have to form a group for lobbying. The Jews, although very small in numbers like us, are very good at lobbying. It is an art we could develop to help our cause. We don't have to be party activists or carrying membership card of any political party to lobby them. We can contribute through writing on current topics in Ghana newspapers. We have to lobby on some of the following issues:

(1) Lobbying the Ministry of Education/GaDangme members of Parliament/ private Educational Institutions to get

our message of teaching of GaDangme schools across GaDangme lands.

(2) The Methodology and formal process of naming and renaming of street in Accra and the whole nation.

(3) Accra Airport – greetings on arrival, GaDangme greetings of ‘Atuu’ or similar phrase in GaDangme language as appropriate.

(4) We must foster the development and promotion of all local Ghanaian languages and to quote from the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Ghana: ‘Cultural objectives SECTION 39 – sub section (3) The STATE SHALL FOSTER THE DEVELOPMENT OF GHANAIAIAN LANGUAGES AND PRIDE IN GHANAIAIAN CULTURE’. There was no mention of the development of a DOMINANT GHANAIAIAN LANGUAGE. Example world wide – if you go to Oldham in Manchester or in Southall in London or China town in San Francisco were the population and schools are overwhelming Asian and Chinese, speaking in those schools English is taught, not the local language.

We must be promoting and respecting local Ghanaian cultures which should help foster long lasting understanding and the preservation of peace and not forcing down our throats other cultures.”

All these GDEu Development Plans, he continued, cannot be carried out at the same time and would be put in order of priority and done in phases between 1 to 10 years. “Rome was not built in a day and we must not lose sight of our vision and mission,” he told the participants.

Other speakers at the Conference were Nii Yartey (member of the GDEu Representative Council - RC), Amartey Amarteifio and Naa Manye Aforkor Omaeduro (Katamanso Tayaa Manye) – all from the UK, Lesley Naa Riwar (from Switzerland), Senya Naa Marnakai Bortorbli (I) – Queen mother of Prampram based in Barcelona, Lea Kloosterman (PRO of ‘Bokemei’ who is the wife of the Organization’s President – Alhaji Annetey Abbey), Bob Lamptey (Financial Secretary of the GDEu) and Nii-Bi Oforiquaye who together with Dede Akrong (both from Ghana – Obonu FM) covered the programme LIVE on the Station.

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Photo by: Alex Adjei