

***LENIFRA Treasurer hosts banquet for Nigerian diplomats***

Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2009, Beirut

Reported by Elie Nabhan

The Treasurer of the Lebanese Nigerian Friendship Association, Mr. George Nabhan, hosted a banquet at the Diwan al Sultan restaurant in downtown Ashrafieh in honor of the departing Chargé d’Affaires at the Nigerian Embassy in Beirut, Mr. Anthony Bosah. The occasion was also an opportunity to welcome Mrs. A. A. Sonaïke Ayodeji, the newly appointed Chargé d’Affaires at the Embassy pending the appointment of a new Nigerian Ambassador to Lebanon. Mrs. Ayodeji was accompanied by her husband, retired Ambassador Okun Ayodeji.



At the high table (from left-right) Mr. George Nabhan, Mrs. Sonaïke Ayodeji and Chief Maurice Zard (Oct 2009).

Dignitaries attending the event included Mr. and Mrs. Haitham Jomaa, the Director of the Directorate of Emigrants at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas Karalambos, Counsel of the Republic of Cyprus in Beirut, special guest Chief S.P. Ajibade, former Attorney General in Ibadan, Nigeria, Honorary Chief William Zard Abou Jaoude, Chief Maurice Zard from Ibadan, Nigeria, Chief Henry Allam and wife Margo from Ibadan, Nigeria, businessmen of the Lebanese-Nigerian Community, and diplomats and staff members of the Nigerian Embassy in Lebanon.

LENIFRA, which was founded by former Nigerian Ambassador H. E. Hameed Opeloyeru, during the time of Mr. Bosah, was well represented at the event. These

included, along with Mr. Nabhan, LENIFRA's Chairman, Mr. Essam Makarem, LENIFRA's Vice-Chairman, Mr. Hani Safieddinne and former LENIFRA chairman, Chief William Zard Abou-Jaoude.

The Lebanese Emigration Research Center, which is the only academic institution involved with LENIFRA, and under whose aegis many social, cultural and academic events have been held, was represented at the event by LERC Director, Ms. Guita Hourani, and LERC staff member, Mr. Elie Nabhan.



Souvenir picture with LENIFRA and guests (from left-right): Chief W. Zard-Abou Jaoude, Mr. A. Bosah, Chief S.P. Ajibade, Mr. E. Makarem, Mrs. Ayodeji, Mr. H. Jomaa, Mr. H. Safieddinne, Mr. G. Nabhan and Mr. J. Taktouk with Chief M. Zard (sitting) Oct 2009.

In his welcoming speech on behalf of Mr. George Nabhan, Mr. Elie Nabhan mentioned the professionalism and friendliness of Mr. Bosah, who had worked tirelessly to bring closer together the governments and people of Lebanon and Nigeria.

Mr. Bosah was instrumental in organizing the Lebanon Week in 2008, the visit of the Nigerian Trade Delegation to Lebanon intended to help the Nigerian business and executive communities interact with their Lebanese counterparts, with LERC as an active participant.

On behalf of all those present and of the Nigerian Lebanese community, Mr. Nabhan extended a warm welcome to Mrs. Ayodeji and wished her a pleasant and fruitful stay in Lebanon.

Clearly touched by the warmth and sincerity of the occasion, Mr. Bosah explained that he always dreaded the time when he had to bid farewell to friends and associates. However, this time he said that he did not feel so bad because he felt that Lebanon and the friends he made would stay with him and that he would stay with them and that this was not a farewell; rather it was an occasion to say that old friends will stay in touch until they meet again.

In her reply Mrs. Ayodeji eloquently stated her intent to carry on the good work of Mr. Bosah and to work tirelessly to build upon the solid foundation of cooperation laid by the previous administrators at the Embassy.

The gracious host Mr. George Nabhan then offered a toast in honor of both Lebanon and Nigeria.