



# GOVERNMENT OF IMO STATE

Office of the Wife of the Governor  
GOVERNMENT HOUSE  
P.M.B 1183 Owerri,  
Imo State

**ADDRESS ENTITLED PROTOCOL & ETIQUETTE DELIVERED BY THE WIFE OF THE EXECUTIVE GOVERNOR OF IMO STATE, HER EXCELLENCY CHIEF BARR. CHIOMA UZODIMMA AT NIGERIA GOVERNORS' SPOUSES SUMMIT HELD ON MAY 18, 2023 IN ABUJA**

PROTOCOL,

Let me begin by saying how honoured I am to be here today to be part of these proceedings in honour of the outstanding Governors' Spouses from all over the Federation, who have supported us over the past four years.

It also gives me great pleasure to welcome in a new team of upbeat leaders whose leadership will guide us into a new era full of limitless opportunities.

Without further ado, let me take this opportunity to thank our departing Chairs/Members for their commitment, impeccable delivery of service and outstanding accomplishments over the course of their terms while welcoming the incoming Governors spouses.

Today, I will educate us on Protocol and Etiquette as Governors' spouses with reference to the NIGWF handbook; Sections three and six.

## PROTOCOL

- The protocol order of precedence is important. You should learn the order of protocol and use it either in full or in an abridged way
- Make sure your protocol staff who are political appointees, understand protocol arrangements. They might need to defer to the civil servants on these issues.
- At public functions, you sit at your spouse's left.
- In public, when your spouse enters a room, you should stand as a mark of respect. The same applies to all Governors.

- When your spouse stands to deliver a speech, you stand as well, and you stand when he has finished. Note that others will take their cue from you.
- You stand when the President and First Lady of the country enter a room and when he/she rises to deliver a speech and finishes.
- You stand when the Vice-President/Wife of the Vice-President enter a room and when he/she rises to deliver a speech and finishes.
- When entering a room or alighting from an aircraft, your spouse precedes you. The only time you walk ahead of him is when he invites you to do so, or when you are going for a meal. This is because the principle of 'Ladies First' applies in meal settings.

## **ETIQUETTE**

### **COMPORIMENT IN PRIVATE**

- How we behave in private is important, stories get around. We should treat domestic staff well and do not earn a reputation for being mean and unfair.
- Most VIPs have to manage relationships with family members – children, siblings, parents and members of the extended family. You and your husband have to establish ground rules so that none of these categories of close relations will cause a scandal. If something untoward happens, the media might not know their names, but they will mention yours and your husband's.
- The position you and your husband are in might put a strain on your relationship. Long hours, frequent travel, a persistent stream of people who need one thing or the other will wear out even the most patient of political spouses. All relationships go through periods of stress, and if you are in the public eye, even more so. Never allow third parties to exacerbate the situation and resist the temptation to allow proxy wars on your behalf. Remember that unscrupulous people thrive when there is a crack, they use it as an opportunity to further their own agenda.

In cases where there is more than one Governors' Wife, it is advisable that you ensure that these roles are discussed privately and resolved. Address concerns privately with The Principal and the co-wife/wives concerned without allowing third parties to meddle.

### **COMPORIMENT IN PUBLIC**

- Be punctual. Aim to be no more than 15 minutes late for an official event. You have more leeway with social functions.
- Always sit upright and don't slouch. Try and stay alert even though you might be tired. You don't want a photograph of you sleeping in public.

- Even though public events can be tiresome, we still need to put our best foot forward. Try to stay engaged and interested
- Do not complain loudly in public
- Never comment about someone's weight
- Avoid side talk or distractions when a speech is being made
- Never engage in fighting or loud arguments.
- Master how to exit and enter a vehicle gracefully and how to sit upright and not slouch. Try not to sit with your legs apart, cross your legs at the ankles.
- When you enter an event, smile and wave at people who are cheering for you. If you are met by women dancing, join them for a few seconds if you can.
- Many things and people test our patience in public. Learn how to take deep breaths and manage the pressure.
- Avoid loud phone conversations
- Put your phone in silent mode
- If you need to make or take a call during an event (it should be about something urgent) be discreet about it.

## DINING

- Pay attention to the appropriate use of cutlery, crockery and glasses, and understand table settings. For example, your side plate is always on your left and your glasses are on your right.
  - Choose very little portions from a buffet, you will be surprised at how quickly food becomes a large, embarrassing heap.
  - Avoid food you cannot eat conveniently with a fork and knife, such as chicken wings, chicken legs, lobster in shells and other dishes which are best enjoyed when you are in the privacy of your home.
  - Try not to chew gum in public. You can do this in your office or car.
  - Don't try to engage someone who is eating in a conversation. If people try to talk to you, tell them to give you a few minutes.
  - Do not drink from a bottle when glasses are provided.
- In the event that no glasses are available, and you have no choice but to drink from the bottle, make sure you take the rest of the bottle away with you.

## PRESENTATION SKILLS

- Master the basics of public speaking- not everyone can be an orator but you can learn how to give a brief speech.
- If a speech is prepared for you, read through and make sure you are happy with it, then practice reading it before you go public. Never read a speech in public that you have not gone through ahead of time.

- Body language is critical – think about the messages you convey with your body in public.
- Always assess your audience. Even if you have a prepared speech, if you realize that most of the audience might not understand you, dump the speech and address them in a language they can understand.
- How long you speak for depends on the occasion. A Keynote Address where you are the main speaker should not be longer than 25 - 30 minutes, a short speech should be no more than 10-15 minutes and a goodwill message three minutes.

## **WORKING WITH THE MEDIA**

- You should have a well experienced and professional person as your Media Aide.
- Be active on social media and use it to engage with your fans and urban constituents.
- The print/electronic media will always want to talk to you. You don't have to respond to all invitations. Be strategic and choose wisely.
- If there is a TV crew attached to your office, make yourself available to them when you attend events so that they can file their stories on time.
- Invest in a professional photo shoot, and ask for a range of photographs you can use for different media engagements.
- Make sure media houses have approved personal photographs of you so that they do not resort to using whatever photographs they can lay their hands on when they want to run a story concerning you.
- If you are asked for a print interview, ask them to send the questions to you so you can take your time to answer. This will ensure your interview is error free and your words are not lost in the transcribing.
- When you are speaking in public, allow your video and camera team to get clear shots of you, without security standing right behind you. They can stand to the side.
- Organize an informal gathering for media personnel once a year to thank them for their support.
- Plan media outreach around a particular event, for example, the launch of a project, a milestone, so that you have something to anchor your appearances/interviews on.
- Be careful when media people are around and avoid gaffes such as outbursts and disruptive behaviour.

## **RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER FIRST LADIES**

- All relationships with other spouses should be anchored on mutual respect and solidarity.

- Just as there are unwritten protocols concerning relationships amongst Governors, the same apply to relationships amongst their spouses. If you are visiting a State that is not a neighbouring one or a regular place (Lagos for example) it is polite to inform your colleague that you will be in the State.
- If you receive a call or text from a colleague, respond immediately or as soon as you can, do not ignore it.
- If you receive news of a visiting colleague, do whatever you can to make her feel welcome and comfortable in your State. Even if you are unable to accompany her to the functions she wants to attend, ensure that you support her with whatever might be required – protocol, security, entertainment, anything she needs. This is of course not mandatory, but it is the polite thing to do.

## **PRESENTATION OF GIFTS**

- You will have cause to present gifts to a wide range of stakeholders on a regular basis. There are many options to choose from, but try and include products that are unique to your State. This not only promotes your State to others, it provides entrepreneurship opportunities for women and young people.
- The presentation of a gift from a VIP is often as important as the gift itself. A nicely packaged gift sends the message that a lot of thought and care has gone into the choice and presentation. Have branded gift boxes made to enable you present your gifts in an elegant manner.
- You should also have customized items such as gift bags with your official photograph, branded wrapping paper and envelopes of different sizes.
- When you are attending a social function in any part of the country or outside, do not spray money in public. This is against the policies laid down by the Central Bank of Nigeria. Hand over any cash gifts to celebrants or entertainers in an envelope.

## **HEALTHY LIVING**

- Take responsibility for your health and that of your family • Eat well and wisely. Prioritize regular medical checks (Mammogram, Pap Smear, Blood Sugar, Colon screening).
- Always take your prescribed medication, and ensure you have some in your handbag as required.
- Remember, there is always time for the things that matter to you.
- Listen to your body and take a break if you feel unwell. You do not want to collapse in public.

## **STRESS MANAGEMENT**

Regardless of your background or experience, this role will probably be one of the most stressful you have undertaken. There will be tremendous pressure on you and it will be normal to feel overwhelmed.

- Manage the pressures of office by identifying things that relax you such as Television, Reading, Meditation, Prayer, Gardening, Exercise, Games, whatever relaxes you. Never feel guilty about your choices.
- Make a list of tasks for each day and tick them off as you go along. This will give you a sense of accomplishment. Whatever you don't finish can get listed the next day till it is done.
- Watch what you eat and drink.
- Develop an exercise plan that works for you, try and stick to it.
- Stay away from reading or reacting to negative news about you or your husband on social media
- Remember you only have to try your best; you don't have to be perfect.

## **ANGER MANAGEMENT**

You will get angry in this position. We live in times when, sadly, people of all ages and backgrounds ignore boundaries and say or do inappropriate things, mostly for attention. Many people, including those close to you will test your patience to the limit. You cannot avoid this, but you can learn to moderate your reaction and control your response when you are provoked, especially in public. You can try the following based on the context:

- Take deep breaths and count to ten before responding to a provocation.
- Change the topic of conversation and refuse to be drawn back.
- At an appropriate time and place after you have calmed down, express your anger and state your needs. Bottling up feelings of resentment is unhealthy and could lead to an unexpected explosion.
- Ensure that people on your team understand Anger and Stress Management issues. You don't want your staff terrorizing people on your behalf.

## **PERSONAL STYLE**

- Style is about what works for you.
- Be your own critic – be honest with yourself.
- Learn about appropriate outfits for different events as a Public Servant and Political Spouse. Do not overdress when you are visiting local communities. Do not listen to those who will tell you an outfit cannot be worn twice. This is not

true. What you can do is wear it outside your State or use with different accessories.

## **PUTTING YOUR WARDROBE TOGETHER**

As the First Lady of your State, you will be expected to lead by example. You do not have to be a Fashionista, and it is alright to be conservative with your sense of fashion. However, many women will follow your example, so it is important that you understand what is appropriate for different assignments.

### **Casual**

➤ Items such as Jeans, T. Shirts, Sportswear. Use for informal events such as visiting friends, sports, beach, places where casual wear is required. Shoes here can be trainers, slippers or sandals.

### **Smart Casual**

➤ Every day wear such as Dresses, Kaftans, skirts, blouses, trouser suits, blazers. for office, meetings, mosque, church, semi-formal gatherings. Shoes can be pumps, high heels or sandals.

Kaftans, Abaya. Material can be Ankara/lace/Taffeta/Silk/Adire. Use for formal office meetings, cocktails, formal gatherings. Shoes can be pumps, high heels or sandals. Avoid wearing sequined fabric in daytime unless it is lace. Reserve sequins for evening wear.

Evening (Also known as 'Black Tie' or 'Elegant')

➤ Long evening dress, Ball skirt, Kaftan, Abaya. Required for events such as Banquets, Balls, and formal celebrations taking place in the evening. You need dressy sandals or medium-high heels with a clutch bag.

### **Ceremonial**

➤ For Special occasions such as Weddings, Birthdays, Funerals, good quality outfits with a head tie or hat is required, as well as matching shoes and clutch bag.

➤ There are certain solemn events where formal traditional attire complete with Head Tie and relevant to your cultural heritage is required. Examples of such events are Inauguration Ceremonies, anniversaries in office, Chieftaincy ceremonies and community celebrations. It is not advisable to wear Western outfits for such occasions.

## **MOVING AROUND**

It is a good idea to have a Utility Bag in your official car as you go around. This bag will come in handy should you need certain items that do not fit into your

handbag while you are attending public events. What you decide to include will depend on what your needs are, and experience will tell you what to add as you go along.

Above all, let us keep in mind how crucial humility, honesty, and professionalism are during the transition period. This includes acting morally, keeping information private when necessary, and treating everyone with respect and decency.

I thank you so much for your attention and have a good day.

Her Excellency,

**Chief Barr. (Mrs.) Chioma Uzodimma**

First Lady, Imo State and Founder, GoodHope Flourish Foundation