

Prince Ikenna. Ibe
GOLD Chair

REPORT: IEEE Region 8 2008 Student Branch & GOLD Congress – August 28th to September 1st

Introduction

First held in 1998, the biannual **IEEE Region 8 Student Branch and GOLD** (Graduates Of the Last decade) **Congress** is the biggest event in the world or young engineering professionals and students all aged less than 28 years.

At this congress, around 300 existing **IEEE student branch members** and **young professionals** from the **Middle East, Europe and Africa** gather in one place to learn new useful skills, meet, socialize and share professional experience with each other. The congress was held in Istanbul ('98), Eindhoven ('00), Cairo ('02), Passau ('04), and Paris ('06). This report is a summary of the activities. A more detailed report can be found in the Report submitted by Ms Ona Ata.



Preparation/Selection of Delegates

The selection of the participating schools for this year's SBC commenced early this year and was fully coordinated by the Student Activities Coordinator, John Funso-Adebayo. However, it was not just enough to select schools, those selected had to pass the Region 8 qualification for attendance/sponsorship. These include the following criteria:-

- **Only 1 student** from a branch is eligible for funding.
- **Annual Plan** and **report** should have been sent.
- The branch must have a **web site** on.
- The branch must have **at least 20 members**

A meeting comprising the Nigeria Section Chair, the GOLD chair, the Students Activity coordinator and the Publicity Director was held in Minna earlier in 2008 and decisions were taken concerning the constitution of the Nigerian delegates for the SBC2008. Later, due to the lean resources of the Nigerian section, the chair suggested that either 2 students will have their transportation fully sponsored or 4 students with half transportation sponsorship. The GOLD chair and the Membership director were to be fully sponsored by the section. Four students from the 4 geographical zone of Nigeria were selected for the part sponsorship. Later, 2 more students were able to get region 8 sponsorship but were to pay their own transportation cost. The final list of delegates is as follows:-

#	Name	Member No.	Position/School
GOLD Affinity Group Representatives			
1	Prince Ikenna Ibe	41505440	IEEE Nigeria Section GOLD Chair
2	John Funso-Adebayo	41341824	IEEE Nigeria Section Students' Activities Coordinator
3	Ibeh Chidimma I.	80429489	IEEE Nigeria Section Treasurer
Student Branch Representatives			
4	Okafor Ikenna K.	80703439	South East of Nigeria – Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka(NAU)
5	Mekwunye Anita O.	80646804	South West of Nigeria – Obafemi Awolowo Univesity, Ile Ife (OAU)
6	Dambani Samuel L.	90245570	South South of Nigeria – Rivers State University of Sci. & Tech(RSUST)
7	Olukayode Sule	90416982	North of Nigeria - Federal University of Technology, Minna (FUTMINNA)
8	Chukwukaelo Ogadinma C.	41634801	Federal University of Technology, Owerri (FUTO)
9	Ibifubara Alamina	90262565	Rivers State University of Science & Technology (RSUST)

Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc.

Prince Ikenna. Ibe
GOLD Chair

10*	Ata Ona N.	90367306	University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN)
-----	------------	----------	-------------------------------------

Ogadinma and Alamina were self sponsored delegates, while Ona only required the assistance of the Nigeria Section to pay for her registration since she was already in London. The membership director, Jonathan was not able to be part of the delegates.

VISA:- The biggest challenge that faced the team was UK VISA. Only Chidimma Ibeh had UK VISA. However Chidimma could not join the delegation due to work pressures at her place of employment.

Seven of the delegates applied for visa as a team, while Sule applied alone. ALL the delegates were denied visa to the UK by the British High Commission. The embassy gave various flimsy reasons for the denial ranging from insufficient funds in the IEEE Nigeria section account to unemployment, and use of photocopied “fake” documents.

It is worth of note that 5 of the students and the GOLD chair had to travel to Abuja to submit the visa application which took over one week and returned back to Abuja for another over one week stay to collect the result of the visa applications. This meant that delegates had pay for the visa (16,750 naira), pay for transport to & from Abuja, in the case of the GOLD chair (air flight), as well as hotel cost. Special thanks should go to Funso-Adebayo who provided hotel accommodation for over one week. A lot of efforts were made by the team to get the British High Commission to reverse their decisions. This included the help of Engr. Massari and the Nigerian University Commission who gave letters to the embassy on behalf of the delegates. Unfortunately, the visa section of the embassy denied seeing the letters and supporting documents. Ultimately, the visa refusal was not overturned for everyone until the congress was over. However, the embassy overturned the visa denial for the GOLD chair on August 27th 2008.



Delegates with Mr. Amatsu of JICA

While waiting for the UK visa, the delegates paid courtesy visits to Mr. Jimmy Atte, Asst. Director, NTA and the Japanese International Corporation Agency (JICA)

From Lagos to Heathrow

The GOLD chair left Abuja on August 28th for Warri by road. From Warri, he took an Arik airline flight to Lagos and was handed a British Airways return ticket to London at the Murtala Mohammed Airport, thanks to the business connection of the IEEE Nigeria section Treasurer, Chidimma Ibeh who was able to get Travel Solutions (travel agency) to release the ticket without payment. She did this at the risk of her job to ensure that Nigeria had representation at the congress.

The GOLD chair left Nigeria that night and arrived Heathrow Airport in London on August 29th morning.

Arrival at Queen Mary University of London (QMUL)

The GOLD chair rented a car from Enterprise Car rental and drove to Queen Mary university of London, thanks to the Tom Tom GPS.

Upon arrival, the GOLD chair was well received and there was a great sigh of relief from some of the organizers to see another Nigerian delegate. (Ona Ata was already registered). Accommodation was provided at the Students village, St. Frances House, room 35C. The room was shared with a delegate from Cyprus. The accommodation was great with phone and internet access.

Prince Ikenna. Ibe
GOLD Chair

Congress Activities

The meetings were clustered. There were separate programs for the students and the GOLD. Ona Ata attended most of the student activities while the GOLD chair attended the GOLD meetings. The GOLD chair was able to record videos of many of the proceedings and hopes to compile DVD for



A GOLD section program



GOLD presentation

general view soon. Ona Ata attended the SBC opening session. The GOLD chair was only able to join the congress

from later part of the 29th of August. The program includes the following:-

- Student Branch and GOLD talks
- IEEE and WiE talks and Panel discussion
- SB Activities talk and Awards / Panel
- Workshops
- Open Panel Discussion

Gala Dinner

A special Gala Dinner ended the August 29th day's activities. The program started with an objective 6-question quiz, then the dinner followed by musical presentations. There was also raffle draws.



Gala Night

Multicultural Night

This was a very special night. Nigeria was not adequately represented as planned as a result of the visa denial. Samuel

Cultural Night



Cultural Night – Ona with Eva & co



Prince Ikenna. Ibe
GOLD Chair

Box 4802, Port Harcourt,
Nigeria
Tel +234 803 318 2773
Fax +44 870139003
Email ieeegoldnig@gmail.com,
ibe@ieee.org

Dambani had the materials for the cultural night. The GOLD chair and Ona did their best to improvise and setup a table for Nigeria. A PowerPoint show was displayed on a laptop playing the Nigerian National anthem and showing clips of various areas of Nigeria. Photos from the last Section meeting in Port Harcourt were displayed. The GOLD chair and Ona were both dressed in Nigerian native attires.

Sightseeing

Different groups went on different routes. Ona and I chose the Greenwich Observatory and River Cruise along the Thames. It was a delightful experience to stand on the 0° 0' 0" point of the world. On the boat cruise, we were able to see the London eye, Big Ben clock Tower, London Bridge, Tower Bridge, etc. Later we walked to 10 Downing Street, St James's Park and Trafalgar square.



About to board the boat for the ride on River Thames



At the gate of 10 Downing Street

Closing

The congress ended formally on August 31st after the open panel discussion. During the panel discussion, questions previously submitted were answered by the IEEE executive team which included the president, president-elect, Laura Durrett, MGA director, Region 8 director, etc. The closing ceremony included the introduction of the planning committee and a farewell speech by Martins, Marko and Eva.



Group photograph at the end of the Gala Night

Career Horizons

There was a job fair on September 1st. Several companies were present, including Toshiba. Later, there was a career panel discussion.

Return to Nigeria

My flight back to Nigeria was booked for September 8th. I remained at QMUL for two extra nights, and then drove to Sheffield, Doncaster and Manchester. I returned to London on the 8th of September to catch the flight back to Nigeria. It was a safe flight by God's grace.