

## FOTE Campaign response to baseless claims by Candidate Ferdinand Akoh

Fellow SOBANS,

**The Fote campaign welcomes the candidacy of SOBAN Ferdinand Akoh for the office of President.** We welcome this challenge. SOBAN Ferdinand Akoh is a fine gentleman who cares about SOBA America and Sasse college. We thank Mr. Ferdinand Akoh for his aspiration to serve Soba America as the next President. His story about his humble beginning in Sasse rings true for many SOBANS and SOBANS-to-be. It's a matter of course that Soba 84 class has risen to a place of prominence in the world of Soba. This is a class to reckon with. As leader of his class of 1984, he has done well in getting his class active in terms of attendance at SOBA America conventions. We applaud him for that.

Dear SOBANS, as you know, the Presidency of SOBA America is not a fantasy or an opportunity to add an accolade to one's name. It is a call to duty, service, and sacrifice. Throughout the campaign, we will draw a clear contrast between our candidate and the other candidates. We will make our case to the SOBA America Nation as to why Dr. Bertrand Fote is the best candidate to lead SOBA America moving forward.

Today, we need to set the record straight and debunk some of the inaccurate claims that candidate Ferdinand Akoh has made in his announcement of his candidacy.. **We understand that when a candidate has no record to run on, no record of service to SOBA America, no record of active participation or involvement in SOBA America issues, no proposal for any solutions at the SOBA America conventions, the only option is to run as a protest candidate and throw out multiple words to breed fear in the electorate. We get it. However, it is our duty to SOBANS to point out inaccuracies and falsehoods so SOBANS have the facts.** We welcome a campaign of ideas for the future, but we will strongly rebuff any attempt to mischaracterize the record of the Itoe administration or the image of SOBA America. Here are some of the misleading statements made.

**1. Elitism:** Candidate Ferdinand Akoh suggests that SOBA America is an elitist organization with "superdelegates." That, fellow SOBANS, is a myth. We challenge candidate Akoh to name the superdelegates who have more than one vote. **The Itoe administration has made great strides in including SOBANS of all generations – young and old – and has achieved record numbers of registered SOBANS throughout its tenure. This is largely due to the influx of younger SOBANS in SOBA America.** Dr. Fote's vision is to continue and build on this, with specific plans directed towards younger SOBANS. These will be shared as we continue to unveil our vision.

**2. Presidential "Benefits:"** We welcome Candidate Akoh's pledge to "forfeit all benefits (travel and boarding expenses) accorded to me as President of SOBA America." **However, it is important for SOBANS to know that our constitution has no such "benefits" allocated to the President. Perhaps candidate Akoh should look at the**

**constitution/by-laws which is in the membership portal of SOBA America before making future baseless claims.** All travel and donations that President Itoe and Vice-President Fote made to Sasse College and other places on behalf of SOBA America was entirely paid for by themselves. That is sacrifice that comes with leadership, and they gladly donated their time and money to represent SOBA America and make a difference in the lives of many students in SJC Sasse. That, fellow SOBANS, is what servant leadership is all about. Some members of the NLT like President Itoe travel about 15 or more times a year in the US to chair SOBA chapter events, class group events and members events. Mind you this does not include hotel fares and car rentals. **Such assertions by President Akoh clearly demonstrates he is out of touch with the functioning of SOBA America, and further underscores why it is important for candidates running for the highest office to rise through the local chapter ranks and/or national ranks before running for President of SOBA America.**

**3. Convention revenue sharing:** Once again, we welcome a discussion of ideas. **However, suggesting that there was a “change of the rules in the middle of the game” is misleading.** As part of our administration’s efforts to ensure that Sasse Alumni association is in compliance with applicable US law governing 501(c)3 organizations, fundraising done on behalf Sasse Alumni association is channeled to Sasse Alumni Association for philanthropic activities. That is the law and the right thing to do. **We urge candidate Akoh to review IRS regulations governing contributions to non-profit organizations that have a 501(c)3 status. Compliance with the law as a primary reason why the Itoe administration created SOBA America, a profit arm to handle membership and Sasse Alumni Association (USA and soon Canada) to handle charitable activities of our association.** Our administration has clear guidelines in the Policies and Procedures manual that every convention host chapter has access to and is advised of. Once again, we understand that candidate Akoh’s ignorance of our by-laws, policies and procedures is a direct result of his non-involvement in SOBA America until the moment he started considering a run for office. We get it. The current 70%/30% profit sharing for all other convention revenue (not funds raised for charitable projects) was voted upon by the general assembly many years ago, long before the current administration took office. **We certainly welcome a conversation to review this ratio.**

**4. Office of alumni affairs:** **We are happy that candidate Akoh supports this initiative of the Itoe administration for which groundwork has started and which Dr. Fote is poised to follow through. The delay in getting this office operational has to do with the current crises in Cameroon.** Candidate Akoh should refer to our convention minutes to see what this office will serve for and evidence of its approval by the General Assembly. Perhaps if he was paying attention during the Boston convention and was not there simply for a photo-op to boost his eventual candidacy for President, he would have known that this proposal was presented by President Itoe to the general assembly and endorsed by the general assembly. We look forward to his support on this and other initiatives that the Fote administration will pursue.

**5. Financial transparency:** We appreciate the fact that candidate Akoh, now for the first time, recognizes that SOBA America has had some challenges with our financial structure. **Even though SOBAN Akoh has attended several SOBA America national conventions, he has never uttered a word during deliberations on issues, let alone offered a solution, like any concerned SOBAN would, on this or any other issue.** The Itoe administration, on the other hand, has long recognized this as the one blemish in the administration and has taken concrete steps to begin addressing this issue. **While a lot of progress has been done over the past few years, we still have a long way to go. The administration proposed the creation of an advisory team which was approved by the general assembly in the last convention. It has tasked a team of SOBAN CPAs to look at the Ayah report and recommend a blueprint to address our financial reporting structure. This new system is poised to go into effect by the end of January 2019 once complete.** Dr. Fote has already shared a summary of his vision to assure financial accountability and transparency moving forward, including routine auditing. More details of the plan shall be forthcoming. SOBANS will see a plan that will ensure that SOBA America shall not suffer further financial woes due to a lack of oversight and supervision of the Financial Team by an independent body.

**6. SOBA UK issue:** We are happy that candidate Akoh shares the administration's view that a lasting solution to the UK crisis is important. We welcome any efforts to help mediate a solution to the crisis, just like our administration has tried. **However, we strongly reject any suggestion of collusion by anyone in our administration as alleged by candidate Akoh. We, quite frankly, find it deplorable and unfortunate that a candidate for the highest office of SOBA America would take advantage of a situation that causes much pain to SOBANS across the globe and make baseless claims simply to score political points.** We are better than that. SOBA America is better than that and the electorate will see right through such schemes. If candidate Akoh had paid more attention during our Boston Convention, he would have realized that President Itoe presented a way forward to address concerns of SOBANS in the diaspora vis-à-vis our role in decision making as it pertains to issues which can affect Sobans in the diaspora-**SOBA Supreme Governing council. This council will be made of all regional SOBA Presidents in the diaspora and our SOBA General President.** Please refer to our Boston convention minutes for more details or stay tuned for it in our subsequent releases. VP Fote is poised to continue work on this initiative.

Once again, the Fote Campaign welcomes the candidacy of SOBAN Ferdinand Akoh. SOBAN Akoh is a fine man who loves SOBA America. We are blessed to have three candidates who love SOBA America vying for the honor and privilege to lead our association. **We look forward to a campaign of ideas and vision for SOBA, backed by proven leadership, dedication and service to SOBA America. In the end, we trust that SOBANS will see beyond the empty rhetoric and find that Dr. Bertrand Fote is the only candidate with the vision, proven and tested leadership, dedication and service to SOBA America, that is critical for leadership of SOBA America. Fellow SOBANS, the stakes are high. The future of SOBA America is on the ballot. The**

**legacy of SOBA America is on the ballot. This is not about loyalty to a candidate – it is about loyalty to SOBA America and what SOBA America represents. Ask yourself – is SOBA America better off today than it was four years ago? If you find, as we do, that the answer is YES, then you have only one option to keep your conscience clear and stay on the right side of history – VOTE FOR DR. FOTE AS THE NEXT PRESIDENT OF SOBA AMERICA.**

Tony Tambi Mbuagbaw – Class of 88

On Behalf of The Fote For SOBA President Campaign