

Refusal of Visa to 11-year old winner of Ondo mountain climbing fiesta & officials: Ondo excoriates Spanish Embassy

The Ondo State Government has expressed dismay over the blanket refusal of entry Visa into Madrid by the Consular General of the Spanish Embassy in Nigeria to its officials for no justifiable reasons.

The Officials of the State Government who included the ***State Commissioner for Culture and Tourism, Chief Festus Adetola Wewe, the Chief Press Secretary to Ondo State Governor, Mr. Olabisi Kolawole Edwards, the Chairman of Idanre Local Government Area of the State, Mr. Sunday Taiwo Ayodele*** who were to accompany the **11-year old Winner** of the **2009 MARE International Mountain Climbing Expedition** organised by the Ondo State Government, Master Akinwunmi Sunday Edward, who beat other professional Mountain Climbers from around the world to clinch the star prize on Idanre hills last year.

In requesting for the entry Visas for the boy and those who were to accompany him, the State Governor, Dr Olusegun Mimiko had directed the Secretary to the State Government, Dr Aderotimi Adelola to write to the Consular General of the Spanish Embassy at his Kofu Abayomi, Ikoyi, Lagos Office intimating him with the intention for the trip and the need for the State Government to redeem its pledge to the young lad by sponsoring him to a country where there are mountain climbing. He thus requested for an entry visa for the team in view of the fact that the **2010 MARE Mountain Mountain Climbing Expedition** was around the corner. Also, the teams were to meet with some professional mountain climbers in Spain who would be part of this year's expedition.

The team had on November 10, gone to the Embassy and submitted their papers, paid all the required fees and were asked to come back on Tuesday, November 23, only to be refused entry visas.

But the State Government in a release issued by the Information Commissioner, Mr. Ranti Akerele in Akure on Thursday, regretted the development insisting that the refusal of the request for entry permit was a rude shock and a setback for **2010 MARE Expedition** noting that this was despite the media blight already given to the intended trip of the Young lad to Spain. This, he noted, had been widely reported by both the Electronics and Print Media worldwide and after following due process, the Spanish Consular could refuse them entry visas on the flimsy excuse that they may not be returning back to Nigeria and that they appear not to have sufficient means of subsistence if allowed to enter Madrid, their destination in Spain.

"In our opinion, this is a mundane, lame, absurd and laughable excuse adduced by the Spanish Embassy that officials of a State Government who, the State had expressly stated in its letter that it would be sponsoring would either bolt away or have no means of sponsoring their trip!

"Again, it is an affront to aver that these State officials who have subsisting and valid Visas to other very advanced nations and who have equally travelled to several countries and have

returned home would now abscond in Madrid! This is no doubt, unacceptable and definitely not a nice way to carry out bilateral relation between two sovereign nations and we take serious exceptions to this."

While expressing readiness to report the matter to the Presidency and the Spanish Government, the Ondo State Government noted that the development underscored the ignominy with which foreign embassies in Nigeria treat our nationals simply because they wanted to travel abroad saying that if this could be done to people of substance, then it would be unimaginable to rue the plight of innocent Nigerians in the hands of these embassies, a development which the State Government described as unacceptable and reprehensible and ought to be stopped forthwith.

"We are hoping the Consular General of Spain in Nigeria would make amends for this error of judgment made by his officials as we want to believe that he was not aware of this slight of sort on the integrity of Ondo State and by extension, our great nation, Nigeria in the interest of our two nations and in conformity with our fundamental human rights as expressly stated and sanctions by several statutes internationally," Akerele Stated.

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Kolawole Olabisi,

Chief Press Secretary to the Governor of Ondo State, Governor's Office. Akure, Ondo State.