The World Conference of Mayors

The World Conference of Mayors, Inc. conducted its 2019 Collaboration conference, January 30th to February 3rd in Orlando and Eatonville, Florida. The primary objective of The World Conference of Mayors, Inc. is to stimulate positive and constructive relations between mayors internationally, based on interlocking interests and concerns. Through a network of international municipal associations, mayors, and units of local governments, The World Conference of Mayors, Inc. plans, designs and manages an international, intergovernmental communications system, promoting trust, trade, tourism, technology, treasury, training, and twin city programs and services between mayors and cities of the world.

The conference theme was “Building Bridges, Not Walls.” As BIG National President, I attended the conference, along with the Chair of the National Board of Directors, Honorable Darlene H. Young. Honorable Young also serves on the Board of Directors for The World Conference of Mayors. The Conference Coordinator was The Honorable Johnny Ford, Former Mayor of Tuskegee, Alabama; Former Alabama State Legislator; Co-Founder of the National Policy Alliance; and Founder of The World Conference of Mayors. According to Honorable Ford, the conference focus was on building bridges, not walls, between the cities and local governments in the U.S., Africa, and the rest of the world. The conference focus was accomplished via the various keynote speakers, workshops, face-to-face exchanges, best practices, and panel discussions.

The Conference hosts were: The Honorable Eddie Cole, Mayor, Town of Eatonville, Florida; ZORA! Festival 2019, “A Global Celebration;” The Honorable Samuel B. Ings, Mayor Pro Tem and District 6 Commissioner, City of Orlando, Florida; and The Honorable Jerry Demings, Mayor, Orange County, Florida. A highlight from the conference was the MOU signing of the new historic organization, “United Cities and Local Governments of the World.” Blacks In Government was part of this signing ceremony.

Her Excellency, Ambassador Arikana Chihombori Quao, African Union Mission Chair, was one of the keynote speakers. Her presentation focused on promoting Africa in the Americas and mobilizing the African diaspora (meaning all people of African descent living outside of Africa). Involvement in the development of Africa was noted as critical for the continent to move forward.

As one of the keynote speakers, here are some excerpts from my presentation,

*The World Conference of Mayors represents a powerful network of national and international municipal associations, mayors, and units of local government. According to the data, you are responsible for over 50% of the world’s population who choose to live in cities. Thank you for the difference you make in the lives of so many locally, nationally, and globally. I commend the leadership of your founder and conference convener, the Honorable, Mr. Johnny Ford. He understood the need to conceptualize our very distinctive American motto: out of many we are*
one. He connects with others in a way that empowers them to do more and to be more. This conference focused on city-to-city cooperation, learning and knowledge sharing, and harnessing local and regional governments providing them with a structured seat at the table of international policymaking. Just like Blacks In Government, the World Conference of Mayors, is committed to collaborate, stimulate, and support our members as we seek those positive and constructive relationships which provide economic prosperity and equality without regard to race, creed, gender, or political or personal agendas. Blacks In Government will continue to do as the World Conference of Mayor does—to partner with others to get the job done for our citizens. Your collaborations with others such as The Historic Black Towns and Settlement Alliance, Inc. (HBTSA); National Policy Alliance (NPA); and the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLGA) mirrors BIGs commitment to its strategic alliances. Our alliances include The Tom Joyner Foundation; our outreach initiative with the Department of Defense; and our desire to maintain those continuing partnerships with the NPA; National Coalition for Equity in Public Service (NCEPS); and National Forum of Black Public Administrators, just to name a few. As you continue to be proactive in setting the agenda for a transformed global society, continue to think BIG! World Conference of Mayors as you build mutually beneficial partnerships based on the exchange of knowledge, assistance and best practices collaborating with other associations around the world as equals, continue to think BIG! Blacks In Government stands with you, as you build capacity, peer-to-peer; city-to-city; and partner-to-partner!

The World Conference of Mayors answered one of Honorable Ford’s mandate, “We will leave here as one united voice for the cities and local government of the world.”