

# ASIS African Security Conference 2017

Several African chapters recently collaborated on a two-day conference and exhibits focused on "Security in a Fast Changing World." Educational topics touched on timely issues facing global security professionals including ransomware, cyber-resilience, terrorism, business continuity, workplace violence, fraud and even maritime security. Learn how this region organized this event, the challenges they faced along the way, and benefit from the lessons learned.

Please enjoy this Q&A with Dame Victoria Ekhomu, ASIS African Advisory Council Chairman, regarding 2017 ASIS African Security Conference, including the successful collaboration of chapters involved and lessons learned to help improve future events.

## *What made you decide to partner with other chapters?*

Since I had organized several ASIS Conferences, I directed the other regional leaders (Senior Regional Vice-President and Regional Vice President) in leading the conference planning. In addition, the Chapter Chairs from Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt and Ghana Chapters joined the leadership team. We then set up a larger committee and held face-to-face meetings and phone conference calls to engage our busy team members that were further away. The association of so many groups made it possible to partner with various chapters.

We chose to work with the chapters directly because they interact daily with the members and are best able to help identify companies who might wish to sponsor the conference. Maintaining the goals of ASIS as a grassroots association, we tried to keep the members who belong to Chapters as active and involved as possible. Most attend monthly or quarterly meetings and network on a continuous basis, but assisting with the conference's success adds another level to their engagement. As Regional Leaders, we belong to chapters and engage with those in our region by attending meetings when possible to stay in touch with ASIS members, keeping communication open and available.



## *How did you identify session topics and speakers?*

Speakers and topics were identified at our conference planning committee meetings with insight from regional officers and chapter officers. Our goal was to select topics that addressed various security challenges in our region. We selected well-known, respected experts in their fields to speak on the most pressing subject matters. We were selective to ensure that we had quality sessions. Members also became engaged before the conference through several panel sessions—hosting subject matter experts that would later present at the Conference.

## *What strategies were most effective in building awareness about the event?*

We have employed four primary strategies to aid marketing efforts of the 2017 ASIS African Security Conference:

1. Direct marketing to and by ASIS members, through various chapter outreach and through emails to individual members.
2. Advertising efforts in newspapers, newsletters, online, and on all social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp.

3. We hosted a booth at *Securex* to create awareness about ASIS & the ASIS Conference.

4. Lastly, we engaged in post event publicity. The 2017 Conference was covered by various newspapers, television, and radio partners. Photo albums from the event were [displayed across social media](#) to further promote the success of the conference.

***What would you have done differently, and how will it lead to improvements to the event in the future?***

Looking back, we would have started planning earlier and therefore had more time to promote attendance, especially of VIP guests. We planned the conference over the span of a month before the actual event. The event was announced at an early date, but due to extenuating circumstances, our planning efforts were postponed until that small timeframe before. Unfortunately, late notice and negative economic downturn in our regions affected the number of attendees. To combat this problem in the future – we have already booked dates for the next conference in July of 2018.



Communication and attendee recruitment is on the top of our list for 2018. Due to changes in the political climate this year, we were unable to invite many top government officials and VIP guests as desired. But next year, we shall revert to inviting top dignitaries, ASIS Headquarters Executives and Board Members to our Conference. Furthermore, communications lacked with potential exhibitors, top dignitaries, and other potential partnering associations. We will maximize our communications going forward to attract more members and VIP guests. We plan on utilizing radio jingles to effectively create awareness to the public and broaden the base of those to attend the Exhibits and Seminar. In addition to radio, we hope to make television advertisements and appearances on various networks to discuss our Conference, while addressing other security challenges. Done previously, these efforts will help to put ASIS and this Conference on an international stage.



***How did you raise funds or secure event sponsorships?***

2017 proved difficult to find sponsors, but it challenged us to be very cost effective and lean, since most of the event was initially self-financed. To execute our conference, we used funds from a regional account, generated from chapters and past events. As mentioned earlier, due to economic downturn, we faced challenges in getting our funds from Chapters accounts, especially in times of transition. Despite tight funds in the regional account, we were able to pay for our venues, publicity, and advertising efforts.

In addition, we asked all regional chapter members and vendors for grants or loans. Some provided non-refundable grants, while we asked larger chapters to make loans to the conference efforts. Our

Lagos, Port Harcourt & Abuja Chapters provided generous loans. In addition, the Ghana Chapter was able to support the conference in kind, through highly supportive actions. All loans were able to be immediately refunded upon the completion of the Conference. Typically we would pursue sponsorship from the oil industry, but with the fall in oil price this was not an option for 2017. In the future, we hope to reengage the oil industry as well as major security companies and the industry players, like banks and manufacturing firms, in the future.