

## African Caribbean Community Launch Strategy at Stormont Parliament

14 March 2013

**Belfast, NORTHERN IRELAND:** The African Caribbean Community Support Organisation of Northern Ireland (ACSONI), today launched its Strategic Plan for 2013-2018 at Stormont Parliament. Today also commemorates ACSONI's 10 Year Anniversary as a Registered Charity Community Organisation.

The Strategy focuses on 8 specific objectives to increase Integration, Community Development, Cohesion and Empowerment, with a primary focus upon furthering engagement with all stakeholders and communities in Northern Ireland.

The event was sponsored by the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMdFM) with guest speakers: Jonathan Bell MLA and Jennifer McCann MLA - OFMdFM Junior Ministers; Dr Christopher Stange – ACSONI's Chairperson (Ag.) and Hon. Consul for St. Vincent and the Grenadines to Northern Ireland; Alfred Abolarin – Managing Director, Transformative Dialogue and Training Consultancy (Former ACSONI Manager) and Joe Ricketts – ACSONI's Development Officer.



L-R: Dr Christopher Stange – ACSONI Chair (Ag.) & Hon. Consul for St. Vincent and the Grenadines to Northern Ireland; Jennifer McCann MLA & Jonathan Bell MLA - OFMdFM Junior Ministers; Alfred Abolarin – Former ACSONI Manager

OFMdFM Junior Ministers with ACSONI Management & Staff, Community Leaders and Statutory, Public and Private Sector Representatives

Junior Minister Bell said: "Since its formation in 2003 ACSONI has grown in size, stature and regard until it has become a key member of the minority ethnic community here. As it has grown so has the breadth and scale of its services offered and ambitions. I am impressed with the eight strategic aims you have set out because they promote a fair and equal society which embraces and celebrates Northern Ireland's increasingly inter-cultural identity in the spirit of mutual respect and growth."

Junior Minister McCann said: "Starting a new life in a new country can be a very daunting and challenging experience. People can feel isolated, alienated and vulnerable. ACSONI do so much to address this and play an increasingly important

role in helping to inspire, challenge, help and advocate for their membership. ACSONI has for 10 years represented the pride, drive and talent of the African Caribbean people here and I am confident this strategy will continue that work for the next 5 years and beyond.”

Dr Christopher Stange added: “We are committed to social cohesion and integration, because of the enrichment it provides. An inclusive, integrated, equal and shared society, which is at peace with itself, is what we are determined to achieve. We are working for a shared brighter future no matter of race, ethnicity, creed, that every citizen has equal opportunity and full participation in civic life.”

The African and Caribbean Community is one of the largest ethnic minority communities in Northern Ireland, estimated to be in excess of 8,000 of African heritage and one of the most diverse.

The event concluded with a live musical performance from ACSONI’s Community Got Talent representatives followed by a luncheon and Fairtrade refreshments.



For more information and to view the Strategy please visit our website: [www.acsoni.org](http://www.acsoni.org)

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