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Africa Re Pays Tribute to its Pioneer Managing Director, Sir Edward Mensah (1934 – 2020)

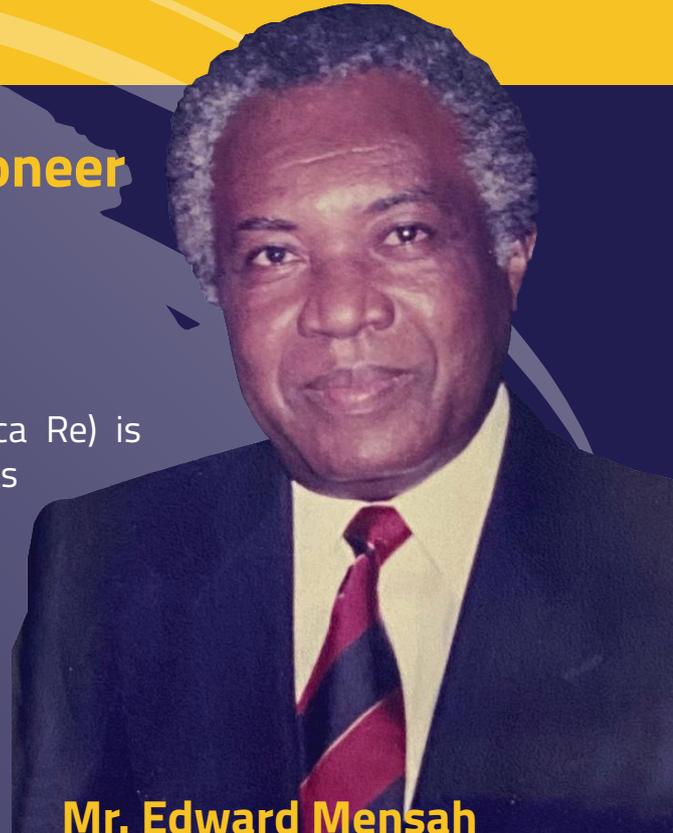
The African Reinsurance Corporation (Africa Re) is deeply saddened to inform you that its pioneer Managing Director, Sir Edward Essilfie Mensah passed away at the ripe age of 85 years in the morning of Monday 27 April 2020 in Accra, Ghana.

As many of you know, Sir Mensah led the visionary team of African professionals who gave meaning to the pan-African dream of a home-grown, world-class continental reinsurer, which became reality in 1976. He served at the helm of this Corporation from 1976 to 1985. A fellow of both the Chartered Insurance Institutes of Ghana and the United Kingdom, this consummate professional was also the pioneer leader of Ghana Re. He was the Chairman of Edward Mensah, Wood and Associates Limited in Ghana at the time of his passing away.

The entire Africa Re family is paying tribute to a visionary leader, a banker, a United Kingdom trained insurance professional who preferred to sacrifice a promising career in the United Kingdom to embark on a journey into the unknown, for the love of his continent, Africa. His generation of pioneering professionals laid the solid foundation of dedication, commitment, selfless services and passion for excellence that still permeates, to date, the conduct of business by the staff of this Corporation, acclaimed globally as a true African success story.

“He was an immaculately dressed insurance professional who personified the “perfect gentleman” and inspired unparalleled confidence in whoever he came in contact with” remembered Mr. Zafu Eyessus, his immediate successor as Managing Director of Africa Re.

Eddie, as fondly remembered by his colleagues, was known for his legendary courage. He succeeded in shaping the pioneer staff of Africa Re into a winning team, where



Mr. Edward Mensah
Pioneer Managing Director
of Africa Re

determination and total dedication to work were the order of the day. He has made successive generations of Africa Re Staff proud to be African and working for a corporation now recognized globally as an African success story.

“As luck would have it, I succeeded him at Africa Re to carry on the legacies of that loveable and exemplary African professional whose formidable professional shoes were not easy to fill” said Mr Zafu Eyessus.

It is worthy of note that Sir Edward Mensah took office in 1976, in an exceptionally difficult context: open hostility from the foreign reinsurers that perceived the infant Africa Re as a competitor; scarcity of skilled manpower; inadequate financial resources and a low level of confidence by the target clientele then dominated largely by foreign ownership and control. He steered the team to boldly and confidently face these challenges to great and enduring success that is proudly celebrated today.



Mr Edward Mensah(middle with a dark tie) surrounded by the pioneer staff of Africa Re in August 1984.

“In short, Edward Mensah is one of the first economic freedom fighters in Africa. He displayed, as well, courtesy and thoughtfulness towards anyone who interacted with him. What a man of class!” said Mr Bakary Kamara, a former GMD/CEO of Africa Re and his close collaborator.

Today, Africa Re has regional offices and subsidiaries in every subregion on the continent. But it all started from a small room in Accra, Ghana, in a property owned by Mrs Mensah, spouse of the visionary leader. This shows the extent of the personal sacrifice made by the

man to whom we are paying tribute. ***“The odds heavily weighed against the Corporation’s financial survival”*** he said when recalling, recently, the enormous challenges faced by the Corporation at inception, including the lack of confidence by western professionals in the ability of the corporation to survive, in spite of the fact that it was being steered by Edward Mensah who was one of the rare insurance professionals one could find in the continent at that time.

“His favorite subject, on which he could dwell for hours, was Africa Re. He was proud of it and felt so pleased to see that his successors were able to brilliantly pursue the work of the pioneers” said Bene Lawson, an erstwhile Regional Director of Africa Re.

Africa Re is today a commercial success, duly recognized by African and international analysts. The Corporation, ranked among the top 40 reinsurance groups in the world by S&P, is the largest and best rated reinsurance company based on the African continent (“A” by A.M. Best, “A-” by Standard & Poor’s) and in the Middle East. Africa Re offers world-class reinsurance covers and security that are unrivalled by any indigenous reinsurer on the continent. As we celebrate this enviable success, we, in Africa Re, are also paying tribute to the man who took up the difficult task of translating the dream of the founding fathers into reality and thus spared a whole industry the myriad of mockeries and recrimination it would have been subjected to, had the project failed to materialize.

Mr Mensah was ***“a true pan Africanist, an exemplary professional and a gentleman to the core”***, said Mr Ken Aghoghovbia, Deputy Managing Director while reflecting on the rich relationship he had with the leader.

Commenting on the passing of Mr Mensah, the current Group Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Dr Corneille Karekezi, said: ***“Africa Re Group Management and Staff are deeply saddened by this loss and we are mourning the demise of a great son of Africa and a fine gentleman. I want to let Mr Mensah’s family and friends know that his legacy in Africa Re will never die because of the perpetuation of the good example he gave to all of us through his selfless contribution to Africa Re during the critical time of its inception. Keeping that legacy of dedication, professionalism and integrity I think that is the best way to pay him our distinguished tribute”***.

In ***“Wisdom of our Fathers”*** by Tim Russert, it is said: ***“You never really know how your words and actions will affect your children. What will they say about you when you are gone? What moment will they remember? What will they tell their children about you?”*** In Africa Re, Edward Mensah will be remembered for laying the foundation of this pan-African institution.

Adieu, Sir Edward Essilfie Mensah. Your legacy will continue to thrive for many generations to come.