

**SPEECH BY: ADVOCATE BRENDA MADUMISE AT ICACD WHICH WAS HELD IN KUMASI, GHANA (22 APRIL 2008)**

I will like to first of all thank the organizers of the International Conference on African Culture and Development for the invitation to be here today and to express by sincere gratitude to have been selected as one of the primary speakers. I am deeply humbled by this kind gesture.

The theme of the conference: “Cultural Dynamics”: Greasing the Wheels of Africa’s Development is not only relevant for these times but gravely poignant as well.

Africa has always looked for ways to foster economic growth and development; Over the years, Arts and Culture have not played a centrifugal role in the conceptualization and formulation of policies geared at economic development and growth. The Lagos Plan of Action of the early 80’s, the Africa Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Policies of the 90’s and the New Partnership for African Development of the early 2000’s are bereft of the import of arts and culture to the economic development of the continent.

Even while some African leaders were beckoning the vaunted African renaissance, little attention, if any, was paid to the role of arts and culture on the continent. The proponent of the African renaissance did not look to the global history of the renaissance period at which time, arts, culture and literature flourished and the intellectual classes led this new birth, this new awakening, which allowed various and diverse forms of creativity, in making people to think anew and to think differently, this period which unleashed a new kind of freedom that encouraged the people to see things differently in order that they can muster and harness the new sense of creativity in improving the material circumstances of their communities.

Why is this the case and how do we change this mindset?

No doubt, Africa history and how African perceived themselves is a good starting point. Why we always acknowledge the greatness of African culture, Africa has not sought to be guided by its culture and traditions. Instead, Africa continues to look westward for guidance and direction in terms of how its people are economically emancipated. No wonder then, the continent continues to lag behind in every human development indices – its people are among the poorest in the world, they have less access to education and health and the vast majority of its people live in abject poverty.

Let us take for example languages in Africa. At the annual meetings of African leaders during the convocation of the African Union, not a single African language is spoken. The languages employed include English, French and Portuguese. After more than fifty years of independence the continent has not agreed yet on a lingua franca.

Very few African countries refer to the African languages as official languages. Our healers are witch doctors, our dresses are costumes, and our religions are pagan. This is the dismal state of how we as African see ourselves.

The respected Nigerian Intellectual and economist, Adedeji Adebayo has requested that we “return to the source”, the period prior to western intervention and subversion of Africa culture and tradition. We need to rediscover those values that animated African societies when its people were dignified, when the continent was able to take care of its own without the intervention of the West. When wars did not last for more than 30 years and millions were killed and or displaced. The period, during which the hospitality of the Africa people was even acknowledged by those who came to rape and loot the continent, is documented by some of our historians including the like of Chiek Anti Diop.

But it would be disingenuous to suggest that African culture and traditions do not have their shortcomings. The subservient role of women in many of our societies is a case in point. The lack of popular participation in decision-making is another.

This conference has given us the opportunity to begin the debate about the role of culture in African development. I hope we will seize this occasion and begin the process of impressing upon the Africa mind, the centrality of culture to the development of the people.

In 2009, in my own country, South Africa, the Fourth World Summit on Arts and Culture will be held. The Summit is co-hosted with the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA). This will serve as another forum for the pursuant of this debate.

IFACCA is the global network of national arts funding agencies founded in 2000 after a process of consultation to assess its feasibility and structure. Its inaugural conference was held in Canada.

IFACCA is to pull diverse experiences and innovative approaches to art support; foster cultural information and cooperation network; undertake specific collaborative actions resulting in direct concrete benefits for individual artist and art groups around the world.

Given that IFACCA is being hosted in Africa next year,2009, it is hoped that Africans can engage with the rest of the world by sharing their experiences, best practices and explore opportunities in creating new collaborations and connections.

To be effective at the 2009 Summit, Africans need to assist, where possible, in setting up national arts council in our respective countries as well as cultural agencies. We would also have to be cleared about how we engaged with IFACCA, if in fact we wish to do so.

Currently IFACCA is setting up a European Chapter, is looking at the creation of an Asian Chapter, and an Asia Pacific Chapter. It has been struggling to penetrate the

Americas. Should we be looking at an African Chapter, the decision to do so cannot be reached lightly. We will have to take stock of our current challenges around the setting up of arts funding bodies; the role of the private sector in the promotion and the development of arts.

I hope that the deliberations at this conference will take into consideration the opportunities that IFACCA offers and begin to robustly engage the process especially as IFACCA 4<sup>th</sup> World Summit on Arts and Culture will be held in South Africa from 28 September – 1<sup>st</sup> of October 2009.

As we say in South, looking forward to seeing you in Jozi. Thank you very much for your attention.