



**Goodwill Message by Mr. Abdourahamane Diallo, Representative of
UNESCO to Ghana,
at the Sod-Cutting Ceremony of the Pan African Heritage World
Museum**

Date: May 5, 2021
Venue: Pomadze Hills, 2 km from Winneba Junction toward Cape Coast
Time: 10:30 AM

Protocol

Your Excellency, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, **President of the Republic of Ghana**

Hon. Dr. Mohammed Awal, **Minister of Tourism Art & Culture,**

Hon. Kojo Yankah, **Executive Chairman, PAHW,**

Ehunabobrim Nana Prah Agyensaim VI, **Omanhene of Assin Owirenkyi Traditional Area,**

Hon. Justina Assan, **Central Regional Minister,**

Prof. Kofi Asare Opoku, **Chairman Advisory Board, PAHW**

Ms. Brenda Joyce, **Executive Council Member, PAHW,**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and privilege for me to attend this sod-cutting ceremony of the Pan African Heritage World Museum, and I would like to begin by extending my heart-felt congratulations to Hon. Kojo Yankah and all others involved for pioneering this historical moment. I would also like to recognize that the presence of Your Excellency, Mr. President, demonstrates the great importance Your Excellency attaches to this monumental heritage museum project as well as Ghana's firm position at the forefront of the Pan-Africanist agenda.

As African Union is celebrating this year the theme, “**Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for building the Africa we want**”, this ceremony is of particular importance as we celebrate also today African World heritage Day celebrated every May 5th.

Museums are more than places where objects are exhibited and conserved. Along with the dramatic rise in cultural tourism in recent decades, the number of museums around the world has increased from 22,000 in 1975 to 95,000 today- *Africa region hosts less than 1000 museums*. UNESCO supports developing countries using museums’ potential to foster social cohesion, notably among local communities and disadvantaged groups. UNESCO intervenes to secure and rehabilitate museums. UNESCO also carries out capacity building for museum specialists in the conservation of collections and inventorying and documentation to contribute to the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural objects.

By housing the history, Culture, Arts, Sciences of Africa, Pan African Heritage World Museum will serve as a reminder of the rich and diverse shared heritage of African people in the continent and across the diaspora. While the Forts Castles – Components of the listed UNESCO World Heritage site- just a few kilometres away represent the emotive chapter of humanity of European-African encounters and the starting point of the African Diaspora, the Pan African Heritage World Museum will add the missing pages to the world history books and share the multifaceted stories of the mighty heroes and civilizations of Africa with the world. It will allow us, especially our Youth, to learn about and honour our past as well as remedy the general ignorance on Africa’s history.

In 1964, UNESCO first launched the universal project “General History of Africa (GHA)”, in support of the then newly independent African countries’ willingness to take back ownership over the narration of their history, and re-affirmation of their cultural identities to reinforce the common aspiration to achieve African unity. The tireless work

continues today and this month, UNESCO will organize a conference with the objective to promote the integration of the project's pedagogical materials into national curricula in several African countries, including Ghana.

Moreover, it is commendable that the museum has the ambition to showcase artefacts that were looted and illegally removed from Africa, particularly during the colonial era. The thousands of artefacts in question have become the subject of a decades-long debate on the return and restitution of cultural and historical property to their countries of origin in Africa. This year, UNESCO is supporting African member states through capacity building to implement the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. The objective is to help strengthen government and non-government stakeholders to combat the illicit traffic of cultural property, as well as to engage with current holders of illegally exchanged cultural artefacts for the return and restitution of such artefacts to their conditions of and situations of origin. In this regard, the documentary 'You Hide Me' produced by Nii Kwate Owoo which shows some of these artefacts in the British Museum is of particular interest.

Considering its dedication to this issue, I am confident the Pan African Heritage World Museum will be a key actor in these efforts and will voice Ghana's position on this important theme.

I am also delighted to know that the Pan African Heritage World Museum will allow a space for an African herbal plant village and another for concerts, festivals, film screenings, exhibitions and other forms of entertainment. Because cultural heritage is not limited to monuments and collections of objects. It also includes traditions or living expressions. One cannot tell the story of who we are as Africans without music, dance, fashion, dramas, foods, traditional medicine and other expressions that have been used in the continent for generations to educate and entertain people. The intangible cultural

heritage plays a crucial role to pass on knowledge, social values and collective memory and, ultimately, keep African cultures alive. UNESCO is actively working to strengthen the capacities of Ghana to safeguard its living heritage in accordance with the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the safeguarding of cultural intangible heritage. Kente weaving, High Life, Adinkras symbols are among the elements that may be protected under the representative list of intangible Cultural Heritage. I applaud the Pan African Heritage World Museum for creating spaces for this heritage to flourish.

As we all know, today is African World Heritage Day celebrated every May5th. This day is an opportunity for people around the world to celebrate the African Continent's unique cultural and natural heritage and this adds to the many activities lined up as part of the celebrations. Ghana hosts two prestigious sites in the name of the *Forts and Castles, Volta, Greater Accra, Central and Western Regions* and the *Asante Traditional Buildings*. 6 sites have been identified under the tentative list with the potential to be listed. (*Kakum National Park, Mole National Park , Navrongo Catholic Cathedral, Nzulezu Stilt Settlement Tenzug - Tallensi settlements , Trade Pilgrimage Routes of North-Western Ghana*).

I cannot think of a better way to commemorate the day, than to be here with you and not only celebrate the richness of our heritage, but also vow to safeguard it for future generations.

I am certain I will leave this ceremony with renewed inspiration to continue telling the African story. Before I do so, I would like to thank you for granting the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, (Our common Organization) the opportunity to once again express its utmost support to this initiative and I look forward to being back here again with you all in the end of 2022 for the official grand opening of the doors to this museum.

Thank you for your attention,