

**SPEECH BY THE AMBASSADOR OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA TO
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, H.E. OMBENI SEFUE, AT A FUNDRAISING
LUNCHEON FOR BOOKS FOR AFRICA, TOWN & COUNTRY CLUB IN ST. PAUL,
MINNESOTA, APRIL 29, 2009**

Mr. Patrick Plonski
Executive Director, Books For Africa;

Chair and Members of the Board for Books For Africa;

Books For Africa Donors and Partners;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am honored and pleased to be with you at this luncheon to raise funds for what to me is among the most worthy causes one can associate with – books and education for African children.

I thank you all for coming, and for showing your support for what we, in Tanzania and other African countries, are doing with Books For Africa to roll back what has rightly been called a book famine on the African continent.

I thank you all for making it possible for Books For Africa to partner with us in Tanzania in putting books in the hands of as many African children, and as in many schools and public libraries, as possible.

Why do we need this help? The first reason is that, as everyone across the world knows, education is the empowering tool for a better life—for individuals, for communities, and for nations.

The second reason is that Tanzania is still a poor country with a GDP of only \$17 billion, not enough to bail out any significant company here! We, therefore, cannot fully

fund our basic social services, including education. Currently, the government spends over 16 per cent of its budget on education. Yet, many schools do not have proper libraries. We can only afford an average text book student ratio of 1:3, let alone books for supplementary reading. And this at a time when the government has embarked upon an unprecedented expansion of education at all levels, from basic education through secondary education and tertiary education.

To give you a sense of the challenges such an expansion presents us with, consider the following:

1. The number of government secondary schools has increased by 267 per cent, from 824 to 3,039 over the last five years, and private secondary schools increased by 63.9 per cent, over the same period.
2. The number of students in all secondary schools increased from 432,599 to 1,222,403 in those five years, an increase of 183 per cent.

One of these challenges is books. Most of these schools do not have access to the internet, and have to rely entirely on books to get the knowledge they need beyond what the teachers deliver to them in class. There is no doubt that Books For Africa is one of our most important partners in this challenge. They have done a great job, but clearly much more work lies ahead.

I thank all of you who support the work of Books For Africa, and I urge you to keep on providing this valuable support. My government and the beneficiaries in Tanzania appreciate the books that fill a critical gap in the delivery of curriculum and general knowledge to our young people, and in the case of the books that end up in public libraries, for the general population.

In recognition of the important work that Books For Africa is doing to provide books throughout Africa, I am pleased to announce that I will be serving as Honorary Chair of the new Summit Giving Society for donors making an annual gift of at least \$5,000. Since \$5,000 can provide over 11,600 books, these gifts will have a huge impact on many lives. To honor your support for African education, I will be pleased to invite all society members to join me at a reception at the Tanzanian embassy later this year.

Thank you again for all that you have done to support Books For Africa, and encourage you all to ensure you join our newly formed Summit Giving Society.

I know times are difficult, but as a proverb in Tanzania has it: "Giving is a matter of the heart, not of the pocket". As shallow as our pockets have become in these challenging times, I ask you to listen more to your hearts.

I thank you for your kind attention.