

WELCOME REMARKS BY HER EXCELLENCY ALIMA MAHAMA (HAJIA)
ON THE OCCASION OF A RECEPTION BY BOOKS FOR AFRICA AT
THE EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF GHANA IN WASHINGTON, D.C.
ON 28TH OCTOBER, 2021

Mr. Tom Warth, the Founder of Books For Africa,
Madam Joni Sussman, President of the Books For Africa Board,
Dr. Patrick Plonski, Executive Director of Books For Africa,
Distinguished Partners, Sponsors and Donors of Books For Africa,
Board and Staff Members of Books For Africa,
Her Excellency Hilda Suka-Mafudze, Ambassador of the African Union to the USA,
Colleague Ambassadors and other members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Ladies and Gentlemen

I consider it a true honour to welcome you all to the Embassy of the Republic of Ghana for this reception by Books For Africa. I must state that this event is the first public engagement hosted by the Embassy since the lifting of the COVID-19 restrictions in Washington, D.C. and I am absolutely delighted that it is in respect of a worthy course - to honour the partners, supporters and donors of Books For Africa. Therefore, as it is commonly said to welcome guests in the southern parts of Ghana, I bid you all a very warm **AKWAABA!!**

The choice to have the reception at this Embassy was first mentioned to me by my friend and colleague, Her Excellency Hilda Suka-Mafudze, and I agreed to it because I was delighted to have the opportunity to meet with the team behind Books For Africa, but most importantly I considered it a privilege for the Embassy of Ghana to be associated with the noble work that Books For Africa is doing on our continent.

Since its inception some 33 years ago, Books For Africa has donated over 50 million books to Africa and I would like to extend the boundless gratitude of all my colleague Ambassadors to Books For Africa for this thoughtful and life-changing gesture. I understand that Ghana has also received over 4.5 million books and that it is the second largest recipient from Books For Africa for which the Government and People of Ghana remain grateful. I was also pleased to learn that Books For Africa is quite happy with its work in Ghana because the country is well organized in arranging book shipments. I specifically wish to extend the sincere appreciation of the Government

of Ghana to Books For Africa for shipping the personal library of the illustrious son of Ghana Mr. Kofi Annan, Former Secretary General of the United Nations, from Geneva to his alma mater, the Mfantsipim School in Cape Coast, Ghana.

It would be out place to give the Welcome Remarks at a function about books and not give a quote about books, so here goes – Mary Schmich, an American journalist once said that “reading is a discount ticket to everywhere”. Indeed, I support this statement and I feel it is very appropriate for the work that Books For Africa does, in the sense that most of the children in the communities to whom it has provided books may not have the opportunity to travel the world. However, through the power of books and reading, these children may, in their small communities, villages or towns, be able to see the world.

I would like to end my remarks by acknowledging the steadfast commitment and tireless work of the founder of Books for Africa, Mr. Tom Warth, whose vision of providing books for the children of Africa was spawn from what I believe to be a very good heart, some 33 years ago and has brought us here today. I also wish to commend the dedication of the Board and Staff of Books For Africa for making a huge impact in the lives of many children and young adults in Africa by introducing them to diverse books – the spark that lights the world.

To the gallant and outstanding partners, sponsors, supporters and donors of Books For Africa, I wish to say **AYEKOO** (which means well done), for it takes a special kind of empathy and courage to give to someone you have not seen or may never see. In the words of Kofi Annan, “Literacy is a bridge from misery to hope” and by providing books for Africa that is exactly what you are doing – being a bridge from misery to hope!

Once again, I welcome you all to the Embassy of the Republic of Ghana and wish you an enjoyable evening.