

**REMARKS OF H.E HILDA SUKA-MAFUDZE
AFRICAN UNION AMABSSADOR TO THE UNITED STATED AT THE
GRAND OPENING OF BOOKS FOR AFRICA WAREHOUSE
JUNE 26, 2021**

Ms. Jonis Sussman, President of the Board of Books For Africa

Mr. Tom Warth, Founder of Books For Africa

Mr. Patrick Plonski, Executive Director of Books For Africa

Mr. Tom Elstand, Books for Africa Board Member and Thomson Reuters Representative,

Mr. David Kuniansky, Co-Owner of the Books For Africa Warehouse Facility

Distinguished Guests, Brothers and Sisters of the African Diaspora

All Protocol Observed as we say in Africa

I am honored and pleased to be here at the grand opening of this Books For Africa warehouse, from which millions of more books will be going to children, students, public libraries and universities in Africa. I am pleased that my second official trip outside of Washington, DC is here to Atlanta and is here to the Books For Africa to celebrate the grand opening of this impressive facility.

Allow me to seize this opportunity want to congratulate Books for Africa and each one of you and pay vibrant tribute to the noble

mission of the Organization and its unwavering commitment to education and strong belief in Africa.

The gift a books is a gift of hope and “no **development tool is more effective than education and literacy. When people are able to access education they can break free from the cycle of poverty**” as the late former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said when he addressed Books for Africa in 2018. I want in particular to commend the founder OF Books For Africa Mr. Tom Warth, and Mr. Patrick Plonski, distinguished members of the Board and partners of Books For Africa for your leadership, dedication and service in this exalting journey.

Books For Africa has now sent over 51 million books over the past 33 years to Africa. Every single one of the 55 countries in Africa has been a beneficiary of this program. As the African Union representative to the United States, I am here to say thank you on behalf of ALL of Africa!

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Books of Africa stands as a shining example of the greatest qualities of this nation: its steadfast generosity, and its valuable contribution to the development of Africa.

Africa is grateful for the strong support that our continent has enjoyed over the years whether in Washington, DC or in the states and cities of the United States. I strongly believe that all the stars are aligned today to take U.S-Africa Relations to a higher and strategic level of engagement for the best interest of both sides. Books For Africa is an important lever in this regard that needs all our support and encouragement.

I was pleased to learn that the community of Atlanta has been so supportive of the work of Books For Africa, with 10,000 – 15,000 volunteers annually sorting books for delivery to Africa. This is not only testimony to the great civic spirit here in Atlanta, but testimony to the support of Africa here in Atlanta and the willingness to help African countries to reach their fullest potential and bridge the knowledge gap. There is a huge need for Books in the Continent!

We all know that Africa has not been able to fully seize the opportunities of the previous industrial revolutions, however the current moment, the Fourth Industrial Revolution, offers the continent a leap frogging opportunity to build an integrated and inclusive digital society and enhance the socio-economic transformation of the continent. The digital tools that Books for Africa is offering to our Continent are a valuable contribution to this noble mission.

I see that we have a full container of books here – over 22,000 books which is over 20 tons of books – scheduled to go to Nigeria in the days ahead. Thank you for sending this latest container of books, and thank you to UPS for your support in paying the shipping costs for this container of books;

I would also like to thank Thomson Reuters for their generous support in agreeing to fund the delivery of another 40-foot sea container of books to my home country of Zimbabwe in honor of my visit to this exciting event here today. This delivery of over 22,000 books will also include a law library donated by Thomson Reuters. I very much appreciate the support of Thomson Reuters in advancing the cause of education in Zimbabwe, and across our beloved Continent.

I am so pleased that in addition to all of the English-language books being shipped to Africa, Books For Africa is also sending books in a variety of other languages spoken across the African continent including French, Arabic, Portuguese, Spanish, and also local languages such as Kiswahili and Somali. This dedication to providing books in local languages will help children to learn to read better, and ensure that the kind of books that are needed most are provided;

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Ladies and Gentlemen:

The African Union, its members states, citizens, members of the Diaspora and friends of Africa we have celebrated on May 25 the establishment of our Organization under the theme of **“Arts, Culture and Heritage : Levers for Building the Africa We Want”**.

The choice of the theme of this year reflects the African Union recognition of the instrumental role that arts, culture and heritage can play as catalysts for the sustainable socio-economic development and integration of the continent and the achievement of the objectives of the African Union Agenda 2063. Aspiration 5 of Agenda 2063 reaffirms Africa’s **“strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics” as critical factors for Africa’s re-emergence on the global stage**. These values are of African renaissance, Pan-Africanism and solidarity. These values are key in building today the Africa We all want.

I strongly believe that our partnership with Books For Africa is an important instrument to achieve this objective.

Finally, let me close by saying that the African Union is pleased to partner with Books For Africa in whatever way we can to advance

education and literacy across Africa. We have already collaborated in a number of areas – seeking additional financial resources to fund the delivery of more books, and securing BFA books for use in the African Union headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. We are also continuing to explore other options, such as the custom printing of books in local languages for delivery to children across Africa. By working together, more can be achieved.

We welcome and appreciate this opportunity to partner together to help ensure that more children as well as adults have access to information and the latest and most up to date information. We all know that knowledge is power. We appreciate the power of education as a means for Africa to achieve its fullest potential!

Africa has a unique opportunity to leverage the full potential of its human resources. Let's reinforce our partnership and capitalize on the longstanding and deep historic and cultural relations between our Nations, leverage Africa's unique advantages including its diversity and widespread Diaspora, as well as U.S thriving knowledge economy, to build together more sustainable partnerships for the best interest of our people.

We are committed at the African Union to revitalize the progress achieved in recent years in the areas of education, health and poverty eradication which has been halted or reversed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am confident that with your support and commitment to this noble cause Books For Africa will continue to make a great impact in the continent. You are an eloquent example of an effective instrument of soft public Diplomacy that contributes in enhancing the longstanding historic and cultural ties between our peoples and nations.

Thank you once again for this wonderful opportunity to celebrate this event

May God Bless Each One of You