

**REMARK BY H.E. FREDERIC E.
HEGBE, AMBASSADOR OF THE
REPUBLIC OF TOGO TO THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,
AT THE BOOK FOR AFRICA
SUMMIT SOCIETY RECEPTION**

Washington, D.C June 15, 2022

Good Evening

Excellencies Ambassadors,

Honorable Tom Warth, Founder of Books For Africa

Honorable Patrick Plonski, PhD, Executive Director of Books For Africa

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Distinguished guests,

All protocols have been observed,

I am delighted to be able to offer you all a warm welcome to my home to celebrate the Books for Africa Summit Society. I would like to begin by welcoming Your Excellencies representing several African countries and the honored guests who have traveled a long way to attend this reception today.

I would also like to congratulate the Books For Africa team for hosting this reception to honor the Books for Africa Summit Society donors who have given time and resources to help children around the world gain access to education.

As the Ambassador of the Republic of Togo to the United States and a former teacher, I believe that education is key to the advancement of children in Africa and to the development of strong civil societies and economies across continents.

Education is meant to be an equality builder and the best social elevator. For people born into poor homes, the only hope for improving their lives is through literacy, in order to compete in the job market and to inspire innovative entrepreneurship. How does one become competitive in the labor market or creative in business pursuits? Through knowledge, through learning, through ingenuity. One of the best ways to learn and to spark imagination is to read books!

Even though technology has brought many changes in the way we read, it has only enhanced our ability to connect to different sources of knowledge through reading. It is often said that "today's readers are tomorrow's leaders." This is absolutely true. Books give us a lot of knowledge and information that we can use for our academic and professional success.

Through reading, a person will be able to discover new ideas, new concepts, meet new places and new people that time, money or reality sometimes prohibit. It develops communication tools and expands knowledge, understanding and awareness of the world around us.

It should be noted that literacy exposes our minds to the different cultures and languages of the world. It helps us assimilate the best that the different regions of the world, such as Asia and the Middle East, America, Europe and Africa, have to offer. Because our minds are exposed to such a wealth of ideas through reading, it helps us communicate with a depth of thought and a broad mix of emotional colors.

There may be different books and different reasons to read them, but the end result of reading is a well-rounded, informed personality and a creative mind with many great ideas. Books enable us to live a happy and fulfilling life and succeed in our chosen fields. Today's multi-millionaires like Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, Elon Musk and many others are the result of reading every day. So everyone needs to recognize the importance of reading and start reading today if you are not yet a reader. Of course, in order to read books, one must first have access to them.

Books For Africa, a non-governmental organization has made its mission to collect, sort and ship books, computers, tablets and library materials to all countries in Africa. It provides sea containers of books to rural school libraries, orphanages, adult literacy programs and community resource centers. Books For Africa strives to help create a culture of literacy and provide the tools of empowerment to the next generation of parents, teachers and leaders in Africa.

Working with global donors, publishers and African partners, Books For Africa remains the largest shipper of donated school and library books on the African continent. Since 1988, It has shipped more than 54 million books in 55 countries on the African continent. Last year alone, Books For Africa shipped 3.1 million books, valued at more than \$26.2 million, and 224 computers and e-readers containing more than 885,000 digital books, to 28 African countries.

Although Books For Africa has made tremendous progress in its mission, the book famine in Africa remains a reality. Where books are available, there are still very few. Empty library shelves are a constant reminder of Africa's desperate need for printed materials. If we are to see the day when African schoolchildren

have the books they need to learn the skills to support themselves and others, Books For Africa must continue to send millions of books.

That is why this year's reception is exceptional and serves as a gesture of appreciation to honor the major donors to the Books for Africa Summit Society who have given resources to this cause. On behalf of the Togolese government, and Togolese citizens, I would like to thank the honorable donors for their gifts and thank Books for Africa for choosing our beautiful country, Togo, for this experience.