

Africa Day 2016

"The Migrant's Responsibility towards Development Here and There"

Biel, Switzerland, 28. May 2016



On May 28th, 2016, Africa Day was held in Biel/Bienne and around 35 people attended the event. The topic was based on, "The migrant's responsibility towards development here and there". Armando Okito and Johnson Belangenyi, two Ambassadors for Peace, were the main organizers, with the support of different organizations (Association Culturelle des Africains de Suisse, Universal Peace Federation, Swiss-Exile Foundation, Mubyeyi Foundation, Youth for Human Rights, Swiss African Forum and Women's Federation for World Peace).

The event opened with a rhythmic beat of a djembe in the neighborhood followed by speeches from the organizers and an introduction on Africa Day from Chantal Chételat Komagata, the Secretary General of UPF Switzerland. She had been organizing this event since 2010 in different locations in Biel and last year in Bern, involving more and more organizations. This year she was glad that several African organizations had taken the initiative in doing it. Also, it was meant to take place in a large room but ended up being under a roof, with two sides open, just like in Africa.

Then, the debate and discussion took place, with the moderation made by Johnson Belangenyi. Six panelists expressed their viewpoints on the topic

of the event. Noémie Komagata was asked to open the debate and explain from a medical student's viewpoint what the expectations are for migrants in her country. She said that she also experienced migration from Japan and the main points for people coming from elsewhere is gratitude even in the midst of missing one's country and having to integrate, sharing the skills acquired here with people at home and sharing their spirituality and values with people here. Roda Molimbi Nzambe had been able to establish some industries in his country and thus give 150 people work and means to live a good life. Marie Mubyeyi explained her plans for her hometown in Uganda; she is writing a book about her experiences in order to prevent others to have to make the same mistakes. Gerry Abrahamse explained about himself being a migrant from South Africa and how his family had to flee to Zambia after the killing of many innocent children. Armando Okito stressed the necessity to educate and to make people at home aware of the fact that the money doesn't just flow here; many expect to receive from their relative in Switzerland and miss taking responsibility for their own lives. Koffi Owoussi is lending his house to orphans in Togo and paying for their studies at university, asking the older ones to support the younger ones, so

his project can be sustainable and educational in the fact of living for the sake of others.

The debate and discussion was then open for the audience and several participants shared their sorrow at the many deaths in the Mediterranean and reflected on how to avoid people to escape from their homes to die in the sea or live miserable lives while waiting to be accepted here or sent back home. Some had tried to discourage their folks to come here but were given the answer to come back home if life here was so bad. All expressed the necessity to act there in order to be able to go back home, as there is always a longing for home in their hearts. In response, the speakers on stage gave their concluding insight.

The event ended with delicious homemade African food that some people prepared. Everyone danced and got together to talk and eat while different groups gave out flyers and information about their projects.

Africa Day was declared on May 25th, 1963, to commemorate the founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), presently recognized as the African Union (AU). On that day, leaders of 30 of the 32 independent African countries signed a founding charter in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.[1] "The African Union, comprised of 53 member states, has brought together the continent of Africa to collectively address the challenges it has faced, such as armed conflict, climate change and poverty." [2] Since its founding, people are celebrating this day annually in different places in the world.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Africa_Day#cite_note-1

<http://www.africaday.info/about.html>

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