

UPF Copenhagen, Denmark's Can African Culture Lead the Way to World Peace

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May 25, 2019



Copenhagen, Denmark -- More than 150 guests attended an Africa Day 2019 program held at the UN City campuses.

UPF-Denmark organized the May 25 symposium on the topic "Can the African Culture Lead the Way to Peace in the World?"

The three-hour program consisted of four presentations and four groups of entertainers, with a half-hour break during which the guests could network and enjoy homemade African snacks.

In his welcoming remarks, Thorkil Christensen, UPF-Denmark co-chair, said: "Besides its struggle for freedom and battle to leave the troubled past behind, Africa is a continent with innovative ideas and a culture that goes beyond Africa. On this Africa Day we wish that Africa will seek a universal peace and not just copy the materialistic and individualistic-oriented world, which often leads to narrow-minded and nationalistic opinions, a trend which we especially see in the rich part of the world. One of UPF's core values, 'to live for the sake of others,' naturally solves conflicts and leads to unity. The more we spread this tradition, 'to live for the sake of others,' the greater likelihood of it being accepted in all walks of life as a central value. We hope we can be inspired by the warm and joyful heart of the African people as well as the insights and wisdom of our speakers today and that we can feel closer as one big family that exceeds all limits."



H.E. Maria-Goretti Blandine Dicko/Agaleoue Adoua, ambassador of Burkina Faso, represented all the African ambassadors in Denmark, who had organized another Africa Day celebration at the same time. She said: "I welcome the vision and theme of UPF and believe Africa will become a pioneer for world peace for different reasons. Africa has a large population of young people who seek true peace. Besides the rich diversity of cultures in Africa, there are also certain similarities as the traditional respect for the aged and the authorities, the kings and chiefs. Tolerance for your neighbor, hospitality and generosity are values that are still being taught in several ways. Félix Houphouët Boigny, the founder of Côte d'Ivoire, said, 'Peace is not a word; it is a behavior.' African leaders, parliamentarians, ombudsmen, mediators,

kings and chiefs are committed to action and have established several forums where they meet, cooperate and seek ideas for peace and security. Religious leaders and interreligious dialogue, as well, play an important role in conflict resolution. Yes, Africa can and will become the locomotive for a sustainable and lasting world peace. The group of African ambassadors accredited to Denmark shares this vision and works for its realization."



The second speaker was Holger Bernt Hansen, professor emeritus, Center of African Studies at Copenhagen University. After becoming a doctor of philosophy, he studied at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda. He has authored several internationally recognized works on the East African country and is probably the most knowledgeable person on Africa across the Nordic region.

He mentioned that among several great challenges in Africa, parallel with Africa's increasing integration into the new world order and major societal changes taking place on the African continent, there is an increasing, large population of young people seeking jobs. No jobs, no peace, he said. A current political issue is: how to make the young people a dividend, an advantage, rather than a risk factor? There is a crucial need for a triad of security, peace and development, he said. It needs to come down to the grass-roots level or street level, to a platform where the African culture is expressed and given a crucial importance, for example, as seen in the uprising in Sudan during the past months, he said. There is an urgent need for leadership and better leaders."

Joanita Zachariassen sang several songs with energy, love and soul. She is an award-winning and well-known artist from Uganda who recently won a talent show on national Danish TV.

She was followed by a stunning African Fusion dance performance by Roots Astray: two sisters, Maja and Esther Lindberg-Nielsen, who have roots in Zambia. Their dances showed stories of struggle, peace and sustainability.

After the break Thorkil Christensen briefly spoke about the Sunhak Peace Prize, its founders and their vision of peace as one worldwide family under God. Then a video presentation of the two African recipients of the 2019 Sunhak Peace Prize was shown.

The third speaker was Clement S. Dachet, the partner coordinator for Christian-Muslim relations and theological information in Mission Africa. He is from Nigeria but moved to Denmark in 2008 where he finished his master's degree in theology. He has also worked for Youth with a Mission in Switzerland. To the topic "Africa Being the Model for Global Peace?" he responded: "Africa is a troubled region plagued by bad governance and wars, casting shadows of gloom to the question of global peace. There is a broken system in the context of humans and nature as well as in our social coexistence with one another. However, in our organization we search for lasting solutions through dialogue between national leaders and religious leaders; pan-African dialogue between Christians and Muslims to bring global issues down to the grass roots; use of diapraxis, which not only brings people to talk together but to engage with one another; support of economic opportunities for young people; support of active, productive and ongoing diapraxis which already exists rather than bringing up new ideas. Africa has a large population of young people taking initiatives to make a difference." He concluded: "We live in a globalized world. African problems are not only African problems; they are global problems. And African opportunities are global opportunities. Africa wants to be an active player and a model of peace. I believe in the youth of Africa, and I believe in the future of Africa!"

At last, Anders Shagembe Joergensen spoke about "East African Kucheza Music Culture Creating Meaning in Diversity." He traveled to and lived in Tanzania for many years. Since the 1980s he has

studied and gained in-depth knowledge about East African tribal and music culture. While music and rhythms in Tanzania earlier were used in connection with tribal wars and conflicts, the Sukuma tribe has developed a rich, peaceful culture of contests in dance, singing, rhythms and creative expressions, he said. Beginners, experienced, children, old, disabled and equilibrists all are included. All have their place in the whole as well as their "moment of fame" -- a textbook example of how a community comes together in unity and creates a larger entity, he said. It is a culture that not only eliminated violent fights but had a developing influence.



Anders Shagembe Joergensen had brought his African drums and included the whole audience in practicing African beats and rhythms.

The vocal ensemble Baobab Sisters performed South African music. The group has specialized in songs about universal topics like love and sorrow in local languages such as Zulu, Xhosa and Sotho. They tour in Denmark and South Africa and have performed for Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who said about them: "Baobab Sisters made a tremendous contribution to racial harmony and understanding. I hope many others will see just how you can touch the hearts of those of another race and nationality. They are such charming teachers, teaching South Africans about racial harmony and friendship, breaking down walls of misunderstanding and prejudice."

In his final remarks Thorkil Christensen said: "Can we build peace without God? Do we need God's blessing on our work for peace? Where does peace start? It starts in the family, and therefore God's blessing also needs to start with the family. Therefore, UPF invites all participants to join a special Family Blessing next month."

Moto Moto Entertainers from Uganda performed traditional African dances and got all the participants involved in a grand finale of African music and dance.

TV Bella recorded the event and broadcast the whole program on a local TV channel.

