

REMARKS BY DR. ELSIE SIA KANZA, AMBASSADOR OF THE UNITED  
REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
DURING THE CELEBRATION OF THE 35<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF BOOKS  
FOR AFRICA IN MINNESOTA ON 13 SEPTEMBER 2023

*Dr. Patrick Plonski, Executive Director of Books for Africa;*

*Tom Warth, Founder of Books for Africa;*

*Mike Essien, Books for Africa Board President;*

*Books for Africa Board members;*

*Nakara g South Sudan*  
*Ambassadors and Other Members of the Diplomatic Corps present*  
*here;*

*CORRY BOYD* *Representative from the Office of the Governor and other government*  
*officials present;*

*Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.*

Good evening!

I am greatly honored to be here with you this beautiful evening to celebrate 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Books for Africa. First and foremost, I would like to congratulate the leadership and entire team of the Books for Africa for such a milestone. 35 years of promoting literacy and enlightening people through the books that you are donating is such a noble endeavor. Congratulations!

*Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,*

At the outset, I want to thank the leadership of Books for Africa for allowing me to be a part of these celebrations. I am happy to celebrate this achievement with you. Also, I would like to thank Books for Africa for the hospitality given to me and my colleague since our arrival in this great city.

***Ladies and Gentlemen,***

Knowledge is power, and books contain this knowledge, this is why books are very important. It is therefore not surprising that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has designated April 23 each year to be the World's Books Day. Also, the Organization has proclaimed September 8 each year to be International Literacy Day. The goal is to promote the culture of reading for a better world.

Moreover, books are important because they are part and parcel of our education systems; and we all know the significant role that education plays in the development of our countries. In Tanzania this has been clear from the time we got our independence in 1961. The founding father of our nation, Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere declared ignorance among the three major enemies of our country. The other two are poverty and disease. Following this declaration, Mwalimu Nyerere vowed that the government would do everything in its power to fight against these enemies. But when you think about the said enemies, you will come to realize that education can fight all three of them, that is how important education is.

In words of the former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela "*Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world*". This is true because education drives development, empowers people, enables greater participation of people in society, improves child and family health and nutrition, reduces poverty, and expands life opportunities, among other things.

***Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,***

Due to the vital role that education plays in the socio-economic development of any nation; the Government of Tanzania has invested heavily in the

education sector. The education sector is among top priorities in our Five-Year National Development Plan 2021/22 - 2025/26, that is why we are implementing the free education policy from pre-primary school to high school. This policy has led to the tremendous increase in the enrolment of students which is very positive but also poses several challenges, including a shortage of books. This is the reason why the work done by Books for Africa is very important as it complements our efforts to offer quality education in our schools.

The education agenda is also on top of the African Union's Agenda 2063, namely the Africa We Want, and the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and one of the most important aspects of education is the availability of books. It is in this regard that I am here today to commend Books for Africa for the great work they are doing in Africa and let them know that their work complements our efforts to achieve our socio-economic development objectives, nationally, regionally, and internationally.

***Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;***

Given the challenging nature of this kind of work that Books for Africa does, I am proud of their resilience demonstrated throughout 35 years of their existence. I commend them for remaining steadfast in their agenda to supply books to Africa and hence, help to reduce education costs and create an environment where children can have a better future through a strong educational foundation.

Furthermore, in these 35 years, Books for Africa has been able to adapt to changes that are happening in the world as it also donates digital books. Methods like these are also applauded by UNESCO which in its 2023 Global Education Monitoring Report emphasizes the use of digital technologies to

support education stating that technology facilitates more knowledge to reach more learners.

I am happy that in its 35 years of its existence, Tanzania has been one of the beneficiaries of the good work done by Books for Africa, the partnership which started in 1990s. Up to now, Books for Africa has donated to Tanzania approximately 180,000 books. At this juncture, I am glad to tell you all that, currently Tanzania and Books for Africa are working on a new project namely, "A Million Books for Tanzania" which aims at sending to Tanzania one million books in three years. We are so excited about the project, and we are very grateful to Books for Africa for their continued friendship and partnership.

***Excellencies,***

***Ladies and Gentlemen;***

In concluding my remarks, I want to congratulate Books for Africa, once again for the excellent job they have been doing for the past 35 years and I wish them all the best for the future. I also want to take this opportunity to reiterate Tanzania's support and cooperation to Books for Africa's endeavors.

Keep up the good work as you continue to make a difference in the lives of a lot of people in Africa. The onus is on us now to promote a reading culture to our people as reading opens a lot of possibilities and opportunities for a better and brighter Africa.

**Happy 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!**

**I thank you for your kind attention!**