

MESSAGE OF YAGUINE AND FODE*

Conakry, 29 July 1999

“Excellencies, members and responsible authorities of Europe,

We have the honour and pleasure of writing you this letter to tell you about the purpose of our journey and the sufferings, which we, the children and young people of Africa, experience.

But first may we offer you our most exquisite, adorable and respectful greetings in life. To that effect, be our support and our help. For us in Africa, you are the ones to whom we must turn for help. We beg you to listen to us, for the love of your continent, for the feeling that you have for your people and above all for the attachment and love that you feel for your children, whom you love for life; and also for the love and graciousness of our creator God Almighty, who gave you all the good experiences, wealth and power to develop and organise your continent to be the most beautiful and admirable of them all.

Esteemed members and leaders of Europe, we in Africa appeal to your solidarity and your kindness. Help us, we are suffering terribly in Africa, we have problems and there are gaps in children’s rights.

Among the problems we face are war, disease and malnutrition. As for children’s rights, in Africa and especially in Guinea we have too many schools but not enough education and teaching – except in private schools where you can get a good education and good teaching, but only at great cost. But our parents are poor and they have to feed us. Furthermore, we have no sports schools where we can play soccer, basketball, or tennis.

This is why we, the children and young people in Africa, ask you to embark on a large-scale, efficient organisation for Africa so that our countries can develop.

Hence, if you see that we risk our lives and sacrifice ourselves, it is because there is too much suffering in Africa and because we need you to fight against poverty and to end war there. Nevertheless, we want to study and ask you to help us study to become like you, in Africa.

Finally, we beg you to forgive us for daring to write this letter to you, the great persons to whom we owe respect. Please realise that we have no one else to turn to in order to show how weak we are in Africa.

Written by two Guinean children, **Yaguine Koita and Fodé Tounkara**” (*signatures*)

** This letter was found on the body of Yaguine in an envelope tugged under his shirt. The bodies of Yaguine and Fodé, two Guinean boys of 14 and 15 who were found on 2 August 1999 at the Brussels airport in the landing gear of an airplane returning from Conakry. The authenticity of the letter was confirmed by the discovery of a draft in one of Yaguine’s school books.*