



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE AFRICAN CHILDHOOD
JOURNEE INTERNATIONALE DE L'ENFANCE AFRICAINE
INTERNATIONALER TAG DER AFRIKANISCHEN KINDHEIT
INTERNATIONALE DAG VAN DE AFRIKAANSE JEUGD
DIA INTERNACIONAL DE LA INFANCIA AFRICANA
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Mrs. Hauwa Ibrahim's communication for the International Day of the African Youth. (IDAY)

European Parliament – June 16, 2006.

Thank you very much for your kind invitation to this very important occasion of the international Day for African Youth, I am so delighted to address you through this video media. Your Royal Highness, Princess Mathilda of Belgium, your Excellencies, members of Non Governmental Organizations that signed on this program and here present, gentlemen of the press and ladies of the press, ladies and gentlemen, it is with great pleasure that I address you from Yale University in the United States and say how joyful it is to be able to speak with you on this very important issue of education in Africa, as we celebrate this international IDAY and reflect on education in Africa. Africa is a very important continent, with 53 countries. Africa is relevant in issues of peace, security and sustainable development, in the world at large. Africa is also important when we address issues of good governance, in the continent and beyond. Your Excellency, may I say that I will relate the question of education personally: I became educated by accident, I became a Lawyer, nineteen years ago by accident, and over these nineteen years I practiced law and became an advocate for justice, for Rule of Law, for human dignity, it's all because I have education. One cannot underestimate what education can do to us as people, to us as societies and to our children in Africa and beyond. As we celebrate this world IDAY for African youth we do have to remember other youths across the globe. They share some of our passion for education, for respect of human dignity and for good livelihood. Education gives confidence, education removes barriers.

Education helps us to understand our cultures, our traditions and to be able to see how we can apply these traditions within a global system. It is important that we make education a key cornerstone in all our developing societies and countries. I know how education has lifted a burden off me as an object of obedience into a contributor of peace in my society. I know how education has helped me to understand more my culture and my values and within those dynamics to operate within my society. It is important that we strengthen that within this meeting today and within a global sphere.

The world is rapidly changing, the international community, led by you, your Royal Highness, your Excellencies present here, the European Union, the international developed countries, and we all have our responsibilities to this youth in Africa and beyond. We all can contribute to their tomorrow by making their today possible, by giving them education, giving them the truth of what they need to move on for peace and security, for them to actualize themselves. We should all live beyond policies we should transcend these, we should transcend politics, our race, the color of our skin, our creed, our cultural biases, we must transcend our sexes and languages, our

religions, our national affiliations, our social origins, our statute of birth, and look more into a broader picture of creating opportunities and creating livelihood across the globe.

The UN Millennium Development goal has adequately addressed this issue of education in one of its goals. I encourage you here today that we should applaud the initiative of the UN and try to actualize this millennium goal within the African continent. We should as we try to support this effort and encourage it, encourage donor countries that help to provide funds in these developing countries in Africa to allow the teaching of history in all schools in Africa. The suggestions by some “donor countries” of giving their “donor funding” to Countries in Africa who will not teach its history to pupils in schools, will remove the “yesterday” of this youth, and if they do not have their “yesterday”, they cannot be able to build on their tomorrow. We need them to have their history being taught them in ‘all ways’ possible so that together they can ‘build a path’ to themselves into a greater tomorrow. Yes of course we cannot live on our past, especially our not very comfortable past but we must understand it to be able to build a better future. And I encourage donor countries not to come in any way against the teaching of history in African schools. Let us all, encourage a new vision for grassroots and community involvement in the issues of education. We should carry along the ‘grassroots initiatives’. I found out in so many instances that when I think I know that is really when I really do not know. It is important that the grassroots ideas and what they want is what we are going to give them. So we must include them in the formulating of policies, and whatever effort can be done today at this meeting in encouraging the initiative of the grassroots to come on board in our issues of formulating education policies in their communities and their countries, that must be encouraged. The issue of being disadvantaged or not being accepted in a system because they feel left out, it’s normal. But we must on the other hand try to give them the courage to come out, to say they can do it. And if they can do it, it will be done. And I encourage us today to let them have the power and the initiative to decide that they can do it. And from thereon they’ll be able to do it.

Globalization has created a unique opportunity in communication, in dissemination of scientific and technical knowledge. We must look at globalization from a positive perspective. We must encourage globalization in our communities. But as globalization creeps into our societies we must take the positive part of globalization, match it with our cultural, communities and traditional values, and work within these same globalization dynamics to bring out what is best for our countries and for our societies and for our people.

The international Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the transnational organizations and the multinational organizations that are operating in our countries should take the opportunity and insist to help in this effort of sustainability in education. They should try and help to advocate and help us advocate for free trade, help us to advocate for fair trade and for trade liberalization. When we are able to take our goods and sell it without any barrier within the global World Trade Organization we’ll have enough resources to be able to sustain the structures of education in our system. So it’s important that beyond speaking about it, we must make efforts to change rules and regulations under the World Trade Organization to help to liberalize fair and free trade and to sustain this basis of education in our system, and **we may not need to**

always look for donors mainly to support this effort, while this effort can be sustained and supported internally for a long term to come.

We should try to discourage piecemeal approaches and we should have a complete approach to most of these issues. Your Royal Highness, your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen we should try to encourage good quality investment in these countries. We must improve local agriculture. Every effort to improve local agricultures in these countries should be supported. Direct employment of labor in the countries of operation of these multinational transnational organizations should also be encouraged. A proposal to address more debt burden should be given, all this in an effort to help us in investing more in education and sustaining universal basic education in our systems and communities.

We should insist that governments in these 53 countries in Africa must be more transparent, more accountable for the funds given to them by these donor countries. But this is not only to governments alone, the non governmental organizations must be accountable, they must be transparent, they should fully disclose funds that has been given to them, and what it has been for. There must be full disclosure for all funds given. **Extreme prosperity, extreme poverty, is not good for any globalization system, the system that we are operating, which we hope will move us forward ; for peace and security we cannot afford to have to such ‘extremes’.** All effort must be made to close the gap between extreme poverty and extreme prosperity. We must encourage global security, global peace and global freedom. And to do that, we must sustain the structure of education globally, and especially in Africa that has so far fallen below, and it seems from statistics that Africa is continuously falling below in issues of education, which should not be accepted by the African governments and by the African people. Neither should it be accepted by the international community.

I believe that inherent dignity and equal affirmation of human rights in the members of the human community is a foundation for freedom, peace and world unity. Beyond all our prejudices, I want to call on you all today, irrespective of what we feel we are, who we are, what we do, irrespective of the color of our skins, of our race, of our creed **you must remember that we have a force that powerfully unite us as a people, that is our human dignity and the respect of our human person.** As we reflect today on International Day of African Youth, I urge the Youth in Africa to seize this moment of your Royal Highness’ encouragement of them to stand up to what they can do and what they have and what they can give to the society to stand up to it. Few words **I tell you, African Youth, you can do it, if it can be done, you can do it. And so seize the moment and do it.**

Thank you very much, and may you have a very fruitful meeting. Thank you.

Hauwa Ibrahim.