Experts Meeting on
The Elaboration of the Volume IX
Of the General History of Africa

Addis Ababa
20-22 May 2013

THE GENERAL HISTORY of AFRICA
General Report
By Augustin Holl

Introduction

The meeting’s nine moderators and rapporteurs met from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Wednesday, 22 May 2013, to exchange notes and draw up this general report, which collates their minutes of the various sessions.

The meeting of experts for the preparation of Volume IX of the General History of Africa was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 20 to 22 May 2013. It was attended by some 40 participants from Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe, and was held in eight sessions, including the opening and closing sessions.

The opening ceremony

The meeting commenced on Monday, 20 May 2013, with the screening of the film on the General History of Africa, followed by the opening ceremony, during which participants were addressed by (in order of appearance) Professor Elikia M’Bokolo, President of the Scientific Committee for the General History of Africa, Mr Mulugeta Said, State Minister of Culture and Tourism, Ms Isabel Cristina de Azevedo Hewyvaert, Ambassador of the Federative Republic of Brazil, Mr Getachew Engida, Deputy Director-General of UNESCO and Mr Erastus Mwencha, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union (AU). They all noted the project’s importance to the construction of African unity and integration and their resolve to support it to their utmost. They congratulated UNESCO on the work accomplished to date and wished that it would be completed in the best manner possible.

The meeting was honoured by the presence of Their Excellencies the Ambassadors of Venezuela and of Mexico, of Mr Paul Ikounga, the AU Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology (HRST) and of Abdul-Hakim El Waer, Director of HRST.

Session 1: Introduction to the General History of Africa (GHA)

Session 1 consisted of an introduction to the General History of Africa.

Mr Ali Moussa Iye, Chief of UNESCO’s History and Memory for Dialogue Section, recounted the adventure of the General History of Africa from its first phase starting in 1964 and ending in 1999, the challenge of the second phase starting in 2009 and concerning its pedagogical use, and lastly the objectives of Volume IX, launched at the current meeting of experts.

For his part, Professor Doulaye Konaté, President of the Association of African Historians (AHA), spoke of the ambitious task of reviewing the content of the collection’s eight volumes undertaken in 2010 by the team of 16 historians whom he coordinated. He analysed the relevance of the collection, while pointing to inadequacies and omissions that required correction. After the collection had been re-read, a report had been drawn up on each of the eight volumes, as had an overview, which were available online in their entirety on UNESCO’s General History site.
The two introductory statements were followed by a discussion on the theoretical and epistemological guidelines that governed the production of the *General History of Africa*, on issues of renewal and on new interpretations of history.

The speakers considered that some of the initial issues should be updated in the light of Africans’ and the diaspora’s new knowledge and expectations.

In conclusion, during the session, the history of the process of drafting the *General History of Africa* was reviewed and an insight was given into the amendments and updating required in Volume IX.

**Session 2: General thrust of Volume IX**

In Session 2, consideration was given to the general thrust of Volume IX of the *General History of Africa*. Suggestions on the most appropriate format for the volume, dissemination strategies, use of information and communication technologies and the popularization of knowledge were thus reviewed. It was acknowledged that Volume IX would not be the last and would be divided into several parts to cover all of the issues raised.

Furthermore, it was suggested that various media should be used from the outset to reach various audiences (university circles, teachers, young people and the public at large). Participants stressed that the knowledge built up in connection with Volume IX must be public and freely accessible to all.

**Session 3: Updating the *General History of Africa*: recent developments in research**

In Session 3, participants painted a picture of recent developments in research in Africa and in the diaspora. Their review covered a wide range of disciplines – history, archaeology, anthropology, philosophy, economics, law, sociology and the environment, to mention but a few. The purpose was to identify recent developments in those fields and their contribution to a better view and understanding of the history of Africans and people of African descent. The delegates considered the best possible ways of accounting for those developments and the methodologies that should be used in order to update the *General History of Africa*.

With regard to the renewal of concepts, paradigms and approaches, speakers called for a sober and sophisticated portrayal of knowledge in the *General History of Africa* and recommended that there be purely and simply no defensive posturing. The concept of global Africanity was raised and debated. A strong consensus on cross-disciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches was reached. The importance of languages in the production and pedagogical use of the *General History of Africa* was strongly emphasized. Lastly, various viewpoints were expressed on the process of African expansion, presence and influence in the world (Central America, South America, Indian Ocean, India, etc.).

**Session 4: Updating the *General History of Africa*: Milestones and challenges in recent African history**

During this session, discussions focused on the pan-Africanism timeline. Some suggested that the Manchester Congress of 1945 be taken as a starting point for Volume IX. The idea of a modular timeline with a series of significant dates was adopted. The required approach would consist of lengthy multi-tiered sequences. The various topics raised comprised the problem of the non-integration of African values and concepts into the continent’s contemporary political systems, the imposition of non-endogenous development theories and action plans, the concept of the Nation State, the recurrence of conflicts, regional integration, Africa’s place in the world today, new relations with China and the emerging world, identity constructs, the environment, the new scrubble for African lands, the exploitation of natural
resources, the gender issue, health and food security. One delegate, quoting Aimé Césaire’s reply to ethnocentrism of Maurice Thorez, Secretary General of the French Communist Party, summed up the guiding spirit of these exchanges as “Our time has come”.

**Session 5: Revisiting the African diaspora: Definition and challenges**

In Session 5, definitions of the existing diaspora were revisited and the challenges that the diaspora faced in the current world context were discussed. It was acknowledged that the way biblical references were used was problematical and that thought should be given to redefinitions that gave a better reflection of Africans’ own experience of migration and deportation. It was also acknowledged that, owing to the diversity of historical processes and situations, it was preferable to speak of diaspora in the plural, the better to encompass those unique experiences and histories without, for all that, losing sight of the common heritage and conditions. The African diaspora were multiple and had developed along very varied lines.

Approaches must be plural and the forms of identification varied. What guidelines should be assigned to the study of the African diaspora? Should emphasis be placed on struggles for dignity and recognition, freedom and development, the African diaspora’s contributions to the construction of the modern world or their contribution to the emancipation of the continent and to African unity? Questions also focused on the complementary roles that the African diaspora might have played in the new international and regional context. Did the African diaspora currently face specific challenges? Discussion of those topics was particularly lively. Volume IX must hinge on accounts of historical experience with their “back and forth”, their “comings and goings”, their resistance and struggles, their journeys and their many social, cultural, political and religious dynamics.

Given the issues at stake in work on the volume, the participants in Session 5 decided draft an appeal to African Heads of State and Government, calling on them to discharge their responsibility and to support the *General History of Africa* project, which constituted a cornerstone of unity and integration among African countries on the one hand and the continent and its diaspora on the other.

**Session 6: Formulating recommendations for the preparation of Volume IX**

In Session 6, the draft general report, summarizing the debates and the appeal to African Heads of State and Government, drafted by a small committee, were discussed and adopted. The recommendations adopted on Volume IX covered the following points:

- Volume IX should contain a sober and sophisticated portrayal of current research into Africa, Africans, the diaspora and people of African descent;

- the volume should introduce and support the concept of Global Africanity, which provided a coherent and holistic vision of Africa and its links to its diaspora in other regions of the world; it should comprise a map of such worldwide “Africanities”;

- the volume should demonstrate and take account of the linguistic dimension of the African renaissance, not only through the use of African languages for transmission purposes, but also for actual knowledge production, by using concepts, terms and paradigms developed in those languages to explain visions of the world;

- particular attention should be paid in Volume IX to the need for an ecological transition (organic farming) in order to overcome the inherent problems of modern...
development models and lifestyles by building on endogenous African knowledge systems that provide alternatives to the current crisis;

– theories on the controversial settlement and civilization of the Americas should be reviewed, and this should entail a comparison of the various theories.

Closing session

The meeting of experts ended at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, 22 May 2013, with a closing ceremony, during which participants were addressed by the representative of UNESCO, the representative of the African Union Commission and the representative of the Brazilian Government. The recommendations and the appeal were submitted by Professor Elikia Mbokolo, President of the Scientific Committee of the General History of Africa, and were adopted unanimously.
Mr Ali Moussa-lye, Chief of UNESCO’s History and Memory for Dialogue Section, gave a general introduction to the General History of Africa (GHA) project from its inception in 1964 to the latest developments in 2013. He recalled that the project had been requested by the newly-independent African States and had been launched by UNESCO to counter racial prejudice and the age-old narrative developed about Africa as justification for the slave trade, colonization and neo-colonialism. He examined the political, methodological, epistemological, educational and cultural challenges raised by the project from its initial phase (production of the eight volumes) to its second phase (pedagogical use of the volumes). Lastly, he explained the reasons and the developments that had led to the launching of Volume IX and the objectives of that new intellectual and scientific undertaking, namely updating the collection by duly taking new developments in research and major events that had occurred in Africa since the 1990s into account, by revisiting the concept of the African diaspora and by analysing the new challenges facing Africa and its diaspora.

Mr Doulaye Konaté, former Rector of the University of Bamako and President of the Association of African Historians, reviewed the content of the eight volumes of the GHA, which he and 16 specialists had re-read. Recalling the regional and sub-regional approach taken in writing the GHA, he analysed the characteristics and, in particular, the strengths and weaknesses of each volume, highlighting the points and conclusions that must be updated. He stressed that the content review, currently posted on the UNESCO website, was as crucial to the pedagogical use of the GHA volumes as to the preparation of Volume IX.

The ensuing debate revolved around the need to “relate African history” non-defensively and non-reactively. The participants stressed the need to eschew the spirit that had prevailed over the writing of the eight volumes of the GHA, which had been to respond to the denial of history and to counter the “Hegelian” view of history in general and of African history in particular.

The “Global Africa” approach was advocated with reference to a Diopian (Cheikh Anta Diop) viewpoint substantiated, for example, by the African presence in pre-Columbian America. Furthermore, that approach was associated with a broader interpretation of African history, inclusive of cosmologies, migratory movements and Africa’s multi-dimensional contributions to the world, to mention but a few.

An appeal was made for a paradigm renewal open to interdisciplinarity (history, archaeology, languages, literature and the history of art) and to advances in genetics.

The issue of languages, raised very early in the GHA process, was raised again, but its implications for history were not substantively defined. The current response, basically predicated on the need to translate the volumes into other languages, seemed to have been regarded as inadequate.

The need to pursue the decolonization of concepts, paradigms and terms used in respect of Africa in the social and human sciences was reaffirmed, even though the epistemological
break was not confined to such decolonization and required the incorporation of new ways of understanding the world from an African standpoint.

It was pointed out that “gaps” and shortfalls in the GHA, which had been noted in the content review, concerned some regions of Africa and the diaspora, in particular the Indian Ocean diaspora.

A new approach to the diaspora was discussed during the session, although a subsequent session was held on the diaspora only. The various aspects addressed comprised the:

– identification and conceptualization of the diaspora as a historical topic;
– acknowledgement of the diversity of the diaspora;
– complexity of the diaspora in terms of historical sources, itineraries and movement;
– “Africanization” of the fields of work of people of African descent;
– means of transfer and transport used for the displacement and movement of Africans.

In regard to the new standard GHA criteria (African and diasporic), debate focused on the need to include topical issues such as gender, security, development and the environment, but those issues had been considered more exhaustively during the session to which they had been assigned.

The participants discussed the re-evaluation and reassessment of GHA themes or issues that must be recast to reflect current realities. Examples comprised:

– resistance and struggles by Africans and people of African descent against enslavement and colonization and for freedom and decolonization;
– iconic figures, be they individuals (heroes), groups or institutions, and iconic objects and places (Timbuktu);
– Ethiopia’s role in the history of pan-Africanism and of major pan-African congresses.

The perceived iconicity of historical objects was of the utmost importance as a historical milestone and could thus be instrumental to the plotting of timelines.

Those initial brainstorming meetings did not necessarily entail a clash, but rather a pooling, of ideas to sustain debate on Volume IX, but participants felt the need for a historiographical renewal that would entail upstream consideration of epistemological options. That need had arisen from frustrations at the currently evident partiality in the writing of African history – it was therefore necessary to refute the various forms of essentialist bias and to compile incontrovertible proof of the historicity of African societies.

The positing of the issue on such broad foundations was viewed as a force for openness, conducive to a wealth of methodological and thematic options, in writing a history of Africa that surpassed the original concerns of the project’s founders.

The session historicized the GHA process itself and actually gave insights into ways and means by which it could be enriched in the institutional, economic, cultural, identity-related and geopolitical context in which Volume IX would be written.
Report on Sessions 3 and 4: Updating the General History of Africa: Recent developments in research and Milestones and challenges in recent African history

Moderator: Augustin Holl and Doulaye Konaté

Rapporteurs: Issiaka Mandé and Tayeb Chenntouf

The session began with a stimulating review by the Moderator, who called for further progress beyond current concepts, paradigms and approaches. As an illustration, he put the concept of diaspora into perspective by placing it in the context of humanity’s evolution from hominids to *homo sapiens sapiens*. Drawing on scientific discovery, he concluded that Earth had been populated owing to various waves of migration from Africa, which had given rise to Africa’s first diaspora in the rest of the world.

As to issues concerning Africa in the world economy, the participants agreed that Africa had been a major player in globalization since Antiquity, notably through the gold trade in the Mediterranean basin. That place in the world economy had been maintained through mercantilism, the industrial revolutions, the slave trade and colonization owing to the exploitation of Africa’s natural resources, subjugation and unfair trade to which they had led.

Other points discussed included the chronology of Africa’s own history and the milestones that should mark Volume IX, taking into account of the dynamics at work in the continent itself and in the diaspora. Major topics such as the genealogy of the State (and its corollaries, namely inter-State relations, unions of States and regional integration) were discussed. Societal blueprints championed immediately after independence and all forms of racism and discrimination were the subjects of interesting discussions in session 4.

The history of relations among post-colonial African States and the challenges of regional integration and globalization sparked rich and fruitful debates. Thoughts were expressed about the genealogy of the State in Africa and border-related problems such as control over population flows and national identity-building achieved through opposition. States, as a whole, had arrogated to themselves the prerogatives of regulating population movements, thus disregarding their regional and international commitments and African peoples’ aspirations to integration. As a result, confusion and contradiction between the concepts of nationality, citizenship and identity reigned.

Such incompetence on the part of African States and their ambivalence towards African citizenship and the African diaspora had facilitated the former colonizers’ return to manage crises triggered by those failings (e.g. Great Britain in Sierra Leone and France in Côte d’Ivoire and Mali). Such a state of affairs had cast doubt on efforts towards sub regional and regional union and integration and on the conflict-management machinery (Africa being home to 25% of world conflicts).

The participants noted the difficulty encountered in integrating African traditions and values into institutions and political management, observing that the two countries that had done so (Botswana and Mauritius) were among the continent’s most stable, best governed and most prosperous.
In the economic sphere, participants noted the failure of both development theories and economic plans of action throughout the continent. Furthermore, the pan-African ideal seemed to have been foiled by economic realism, which had boosted a preference for national approaches to economic take-off, despite myriad analyses that highlighted the comparative advantages of regional and sub-regional approaches. Against that backdrop, the likelihood of success of the Lagos Plan of Action, the Monrovia Strategy for Economic Development for Africa and the recently established NEPAD was called into question. The seizure of African lands (by foreign investors such as sovereign funds), the exploitation of natural resources without licence payments and investments in the mining zones had raised fresh concerns among African peoples. To achieve sustainable development, in which emphasis was placed on the “green economy”, the promotion of well-being and social equity, and environmental preservation, alternatives inherent in the much neglected traditional knowledge and skills should be explored. Such knowledge was crucial to organic and integrated farming, which had been encouraged since 2005 to ensure Africa’s food security and sovereignty.

Biomedical history and the progress of genetics emerged as topics that should be included in the volume. They were of interest to people of African descent because they transcended international public health traceability issues raised in studying diseases (AIDS and malaria), “traditional” pharmacopeia and medicine.

In regard to the history of the formative dispersion of the African diaspora, the participants asserted the need to map African influences worldwide. It was agreed that such mapping would not be a matter of identifying African cultural or even physical features throughout the world, but above all of analysing means of identification or of attachment to Africa and the complexity of relations in and between communities that were black or of African descent, which raised the question of the ideology of colour once more.

The question of change in African families was considered. Owing to urbanization and the commercialization of the economy, the family had become a new research topic inasmuch as African family dynamics were non-nuclear, which necessitated the development of a more appropriate approach. Such changes affected the socialization of children and called into question the values on which the cohesion of membership of African cultures had previously been based.

The maintenance of ties between Africa and its diaspora must be demonstrated in Volume IX, in which on-going dynamics on the continent and in the diaspora must be studied. The importance of acknowledging orality was highlighted. In that connection, the contribution of African languages not only to the dissemination of knowledge but also to scientific thought and research was noted, particularly in regard to gaining a better understanding of the ancient civilizations that sprang up in Egypt and along the Nile.

The topics that gave rise to controversy and so merited further elucidation included the African presence in the pre-Columbian Americas, reparation for the crimes of the slave trade, slavery and colonization, the chronological milestones to be used in African history and the use of some African philosophical and political concepts such as *Ubuntu*.

Participants counselled a break with the defensive approach taken during the first phase, since Africa had nothing to prove. The goal in the new phase was to commit to paper, soberly and without animosity, Africa’s role and place in world history and in the future of humanity.

The participants agreed to the following points:
Volume IX must restore the African world to its rightful place in the islands, especially those in the Indian Ocean, and must draw on recent archaeological finds (such as slave cemeteries);

the volume must include a study on the impact of information and communication technologies and of film centres such as Nollywood on the transformation of African values, which implicitly reflected the dynamism of Africa’s cultural industries;

the volume must include the issue of present-day African art, potential risks and policies for the reassertion of ownership of modern African creativity;

as to the methodological issue, the volume must draw on progress achieved by subaltern studies and postcolonial studies and must distinguish history from memory and scientific discourse from folklore;

the chronological starting point selected for the volume was 1945, the year in which all pan-African movements were convened in London for a Congress organized by the grassroots. It was also the year in which the dynamism of the African diaspora and Afro-Asian unity made its mark. It was agreed as a general rule, however, that the dates used should be meaningful to the African world in its entirety. The series of dates might rest on developments at memorable points such as 1973-1975 for economic matters, 1990 for the widespread collapse of postcolonial Nation-States or 1994 for the Rwandan genocide, which had shattered conventional stereotypes and discourse. All of the above would require long thematic sequences, highlighting events at various levels (national, regional and continental).
Revisiting the African Diaspora: Definition and Challenges

Moderator: Sir Hilary Beckles (University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, Barbados)
Rapporteur: Giulia Bonacci, Research Institute for Development (IRD)/Centre for Ethiopian Studies (CFEE)

The participants stressed the importance of the historiography of the various African diaspora. As this field of study, which has expanded considerably in the last thirty years, must be benchmarked, a critical approach must be taken to evaluate methods used, progress achieved and inherent constraints. Methodological issues raised time and again included appropriate methods for the portrayal of the various diaspora and the need for historiographical and theoretical work to be intergenerational.

The “diaspora” must now be viewed not in the singular but in the plural and, indeed, the term was yet to be defined. Definitional issues were shown to be cross-cutting during the discussions. The definitions suggested since 1965, including the African Union’s, were hackneyed and must be renewed and discarded, and their conceptual limits must be pushed back. First of all, that entailed disregarding earlier definitions of the diaspora (e.g. the Jewish Diaspora, the labour diaspora, the slave diaspora, etc.) and eschewing the non-continuity paradigm (Africa ends at its shores/a self-contained Africa). Secondly, it was conducive to a narrative featuring a historical continuum and change requiring, for example, the study of knowledge systems that the African slaves brought over and used to tame and civilize the hostile environments of the Americas. Some means must be found of discussing the diaspora generally, rather than uniformly or disjointedly, while striking a balance between their common points and divergences.

Speakers acknowledged that the time had come to critique and rethink the ways in which African societies were considered generally. A complete reversal of views was of the essence if history was to be understood from an African standpoint and the history of Africa firmly linked to the African diaspora. Lack of knowledge in Africa about the history of the diaspora and in the diaspora about the history of Africa was highlighted on several occasions, yet both histories were inseparable, cross-fertilizing and part of a whole. They should be seen as a whole, for dividing lines between cultural sectors, knowledge traditions and available library resources had been removed. The relinking of diverse spaces and diverse historiographies was challenging for researchers, who were required to move between very different regions, and for research teams, who were required to raise large amounts of money. Relinking was symbolically very powerful, too: the gaps wrought by the passing centuries, the slave trade and lack of knowledge could be “repaired” as long as balance could be restored in the production and transmission of knowledge between those spaces.

Furthermore, relinking raised political issues concerning the institutionalization of the diaspora. A shining example was Latin America, where a dozen or so countries had passed laws or taken measures regarding the historical presence, social recognition and political representation of people of African descent. Conversely, it was pointed out that no courses on the African diaspora had been introduced in any African university.

Speakers repeatedly stressed their desire to transcend the diaspora and, in particular, to envision a history of Africa with no continental borders. The intimate ties between the history
of Africa and the history of the African diaspora were highlighted, as was one major conceptual challenge – that of avoiding the risk of glossing over and standardizing the specificities of particular contexts and of distinguishing the specificities of some individual and collective trajectories without infinitely fragmenting humanity’s store of knowledge. The discussions on the diaspora showed that such issues held great potential for the enhancement of identity. The intimate ties and interrelation between the history of Africa and the history of the diaspora were discussed repeatedly under various headings, and the idea of a historical continuum was advocated very strongly. Topics such as the “Back to Africa movement” could be used to portray flows between Africa and the diaspora and could help to structure the historical continuum.

A longstanding paradigm of scientific debates on the diaspora, namely the similarities of and differences between the various African diaspora, was raised several times. A recurrent issue concerned ways and means of viewing the topic generally (Global Africa), while taking the specific features of local situations (on the continent and in the diaspora) into account. No solutions were found, but methods generally used impartially to study historical facts should facilitate linkages between the various levels involved.

Diaspora policy sparked some lively discussions. The diaspora was a political issue and was particular alive in Latin America, where recognition of people of African descent, ushered in by the black movements, had led to laws on history education and political representation. The 2001 World Conference against Racism in Durban had marked a turning point in the politicization and institutionalization of the diaspora: “we went in as Latin Americans and came out as people of African descent”. Nevertheless, the strength of the Latin Americans’ interest in and commitment to the subject was not matched in Africa, where the history of the diaspora was still not taught and was little known. Teachers and students should be encouraged to study the diaspora. Moreover, the African Union’s “diaspora initiative” had not been backed up by strong policies for reciprocal exchanges between Africa and the diaspora.

Differing priorities seemed to have emerged between longstanding specialists, for whom the term “diaspora” perforce covered humanity’s first migratory movements, and specialists in cultural anthropology, who highlighted contemporary changes in relations between Africa and the diaspora. Cubans, who came in their thousands to support the liberation struggles in Africa, were held up as an example.

During the fifth session, many questions were raised, and it became apparent that participants held widely differing views on the nature and forms of the African diaspora and on relations between Africa and the diaspora. Acknowledging that consensus on the definition (what is a diaspora? why a diaspora? where does Africa start and end?) would be achieved only after lengthy discussions, the moderator stressed the need to “destabilize” the concept of diaspora and to find appropriate topics for the discussion on “Global Africa”. It was apparent that the ninth volume should stimulate a strong rethink of those issues in order to contribute not only to the formal introduction of the diaspora into the General History of Africa (GHA) but also to push back the conceptual limits that both underpin and constrain current research work, the practices of teachers and trainers, and humanity’s political and social mark on the world today.

The participants agreed to the following recommendations:

(i) special attention should be given to conceptual and methodological questions;

(ii) a long-term approach, covering the first humans, their great migratory flows and dispersion, and the great pre-colonial migrations, should be adopted;
(iii) one of the greatest challenges in the study of the diaspora consisted in broadening the number of regions to include the Middle East, the Indian Ocean, Asia and Europe in order to rebalance the focus, which was centred all too often on the Atlantic;

(iv) the various levels – community, national, regional, continental, diaspora and global – should be taken into consideration;

(v) topics could be selected and studied in depth to create a narrative, while taking up the challenges raised by the “new” history, to quote the participants. Movement between Africa and the rest of the world, resistance and adaptation, forms of racism and identity, settlement and mobility, diversity and unity can all link the history of Africa and the diaspora together. Pan-Africanism, in its various political, intellectual, social and cultural forms, was seen as the historical movement of choice for portraying the interrelation between Africa and the diaspora;

(vi) a balance should be struck between earlier periods and the plethora characteristic of the past ten years and among the various disciplines (history, sociology, linguistics and cultural anthropology) that that must be brought into play;

(vii) mapping should be used as a conceptual and educational tool to illustrate the African presence in the world, plot routes, chart the “Back to Africa” movements, pinpoint the various slave revolts worldwide and highlight the cultural mark – especially in the form of music – made by people of African descent, in order to portray “Global Africa” in depth;

(viii) to capitalize on the great force of audiovisual techniques, their educational power and ease of dissemination, sound and image should be fully integrated into future endeavours
As President of the Scientific Committee of the project on the Pedagogic Use of the *General History of Africa*, I have the honour to submit a summary of the recommendations that we have adopted. I speak on behalf of the forty or so researchers from Africa and the “diaspora” – in the plural – a term that we discussed a great deal during our three days of meetings here.

It is no accident that this meeting has been held in Addis Ababa and in this month of May 2013. It is, naturally, an opportunity for us to join in the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) for, as you know, the first phase of the *General History of Africa* (GHA) was launched in 1964, only one year after the establishment of the OAU, following a request to UNESCO by the Heads of State and Governments of the newly independent Africa. The anniversary is, therefore, one to be celebrated by historians whose work is intimately linked to the liberation movement and the unification of our continent.

First of all I must congratulate all colleagues who have come here. You have all accepted to leave your beloved research and onerous duties temporarily behind. Several have travelled thousands of kilometres to be here with us.

At meetings such as this one, speakers cannot all speak for as long as they wish and were thus required to keep to the essentials.

Our discussions have nonetheless been exceptionally rich – they were thorough, detailed and lively, frank, very open and, at the same time, fruitful and productive.

First of all, we should like to thank the institutions and governments that have made our meeting possible.

First and foremost is UNESCO. For nearly 50 years, UNESCO constantly assisted and support the hundreds (how many are there? 350? 500?) of historians, anthropologists, linguists sociologists, philosophers and economists – in short, the specialists in the humanities, human sciences and social sciences – whose convergence and cross-fertilization are now known to be crucial to the development of any history worthy of the name.

We should also like to thank the Government of Brazil, represented here by Ms Isabel Cristina de Azevedo Heyvaert and six experts. Brazil has generously decided to support the work of updating Volume IX, thus raising the profile of the decisive role played by the African diaspora.

Lastly, we thank the African Union (AU), which has hosted our meeting here in Addis Ababa, capital of Ethiopia. After all, the African Union has decided to establish a Pan-African University. The university’s five campuses will offer courses on the history of Africa and pan-Africanism, thus laying an intellectual and cultural foundation for the university’s future graduate technicians, academics and inventors. The AU considers, quite rightly, that merely being an expert will not suffice for the Africa of tomorrow – it will be necessary to be both an
expert and pan-African. How can one be pan-African if one knows nothing of the history of Africa and its diaspora, if one knows nothing of the route leading to pan-Africanism and its challenges?

Several objectives had been set for our meeting. In regard to writing Volume IX of the General History of Africa, it was necessary for strictly epistemological reasons to take stock of progress and innovations in scientific research on African societies and the African diaspora. Published in 1999, Volume VIII covers the events and issues until, at best, the 1980s, but more often until the 1970s. We were therefore required to identify, for all of Africa and its relations with the rest of the world, the most important events, threats, opportunities and challenges for the African people since that time. The same was required for the “African diaspora” and people of African descent in the various regions of the world, their tangible and intangible heritage, their struggles and their hopes.

In this preliminary work, the approach that proved invaluable when drafting the previous volumes of the General History of Africa will be maintained and will be used to set the main guiding principles for the preparation and drafting of Volume IX.

The two or more books of Volume IX will therefore address the methodological and theoretical issues and new challenges that have arisen and will thus meet the demands of the people and the expectations of our youth in Africa and the diaspora.

The first book will attempt to address a series of now clearly defined objectives. When updating the factual content, we shall incorporate the main trends and events observed in Africa, whether nationally, regionally, continentally or internationally. The history of pan-Africanism will be revised significantly, drawing on today’s more accurate material and data of clearer relative importance. In this respect, there is fairly wide agreement that the starting point should be 1945 because of its multiple significance and implications for world history, pan-Africanism and the independence struggles of colonized peoples in Africa and elsewhere. We shall take greater account of the enduring interaction between Africa and the African diaspora. This effort has already begun, through the project on the Pedagogical Use of the General History of Africa as a tool for educating new generations of Africans in the spirit of pan-Africanism. Lastly, as we now have a better understanding of past and current changes at work in African societies, we must take on board the new developments and achievements in the social history of Africa, by highlighting the African peoples’ social, political and cultural struggles against foreign domination, in the past and today, and within independent African States, to preserve the values of freedom, equality and solidarity. This option will reveal highly significant new developments in the historiography of the people’s living conditions, health issues and environmental problems.

It goes without saying that this undertaking, as a whole, requires a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach. The various disciplines represented here are proof of this choice.

The second or following books in the volume, depending on the choice finally made, will be devoted to the African diaspora. The very concept of African “diaspora” has stimulated and sparked in-depth and fruitful debates. We have decided to highlight the plurality of these diaspora. This plurality is first of all geographical – the concept of a “Global Africa” proposed by some participants does not exclude the study of the various groups, communities and peoples of African descent found on all continents. Such plurality can also be viewed chronologically, and the timeline is very long indeed, since African “diaspora”, in the plural, were observable long before the slave trades. Although slavery was a crucial moment in the global history of the African diaspora, the process continued after Africans were enslaved, during the colonial period and after independence. It continues even to this day.
The writing of history cannot be reduced to a mere series of successive events. Our approach to the writing of this history rests on a very broad consensus.

As we acknowledge the crucial importance of the African diaspora to our history, we can affirm that:

- there is no pan-Africanism or African renaissance without the African diaspora;
- Africa and its diaspora share a history and a destiny, forged from struggles and ideals, conflicts and progress towards freedom, dignity and solidarity, which must all be studied and taught in Africa and in the diaspora, as is currently the case in Brazil today;
- by encouraging the production of visual, multimedia and cartographical works, in addition to the books, we shall contribute to the sharing, transmission and dissemination of this knowledge to as many people as possible;
- it is crucial to organize research and new work from a pan-African standpoint, hence the need to arrange inter-institutional exchanges of teachers and young researchers and develop shared and combined courses between Africa and the various diaspora, in particular at the Pan-African University.

As this is a history of Africa, our work is guided by the same vision that has inspired the writing of the General History of Africa from the outset.

- We cannot fail to meet the expectations of our youth who are facing economic, political, environmental and identity-related challenges arising from globalization.
- Given the challenges arising from globalization, our youth have a thirst for history that should gladden our hearts. We know that the history of Africa is a “key driver”, to quote Joseph Ki-Zerbo, and that it must be taught more widely in our African States. We welcome the unanimous decision taken by the States in Khartoum in 2006 and enshrined in the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance. The forthcoming textbooks for the project on the Pedagogical Use of the General History of Africa are a response to this decision.

We feel that the history of Africa must be taught even more widely in the diaspora, following the example set by Brazil.

We owe it to ourselves to be frank with everyone for whom this project is important. At the present GHA stage, we are facing a major financial challenge. In the lengthy process of liberation and unification, whenever the human and intellectual capital of the countries of Africa and its diaspora was needed, it never failed us. Our meeting in Addis Ababa shows that our human and intellectual capital remains committed and stands ready to act to produce this history, so sorely needed by Africa and its diaspora.

The work of the specialists who have to come together for the GHA has made a considerable contribution to the foundation of our national States and to the edification of African unity, whose 50th anniversary we are now celebrating.

Let us not mince words. The current phase is crucial, given the many challenges facing the continent. The worthy resolutions adopted at our various summits will all come to naught if no firm commitments of financial support are made by the Member States that have requested UNESCO to promote the educational use of the eight existing volumes.
The progress already achieved has, for several years, been undermined by uncertainties about the financial resources required to complete the project. Our work now faces great difficulties, however, owing to the political changes in Libya, which was one of the main contributors and to which we should like to take this opportunity to express our thanks.

The current phase – updating of GHA Volume IX and writing a history of the African diaspora – has been launched once again, owing to the generous contribution of Brazil, to which are most grateful.

It is clear, however, that we cannot depend on these acts of generosity alone. We must stress that the production of the GHA is, above all, a matter of our States’ dignity and sovereignty.

The experts now meeting at Addis Ababa appeal vigorously to the African States to discharge their responsibility by guaranteeing funding for the Pedagogical Use of the GHA and for the drafting of Volume IX.

Furthermore, it is from the African soil of Addis Ababa – the seat of the AU and capital of Ethiopia, which, from the very beginnings of pan-Africanism, has stood as the symbol of our struggles and achievements – that the experts have decided to address a public appeal to the entire international community to preserve the universality of UNESCO (in regard to all educational, scientific, cultural and communication matters), in strict compliance with its founding principles.