

## **Pan-African Forum for a Culture of Peace “Biennial of Luanda”**

Saturday, November 27, 2021

12:00 - 13:30 (Luanda)

- Mr. Forest Whitaker, actor, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador.
- Mrs. Hanna Serwaa Tetteh, Special Representative of the Secretary-General to the African Union and Head of the United Nations Office to the African Union.

It is an honor for me, as Vice-President of the Republic of Costa Rica and as a woman of African descent, to participate in the opening ceremony of this Pan-African Forum for a Culture of Peace “Biennial of Luanda”, organized by the African Union, UNESCO, and the Government of Angola, which has brought together hundreds of people in person and virtually around the world.

In the Americas and the Caribbean, the region I represent, we are between 134 million to 200 million people of African descent, which is equivalent to one third of the population.

People of African descent in our countries shows that significant gaps of inequality, exclusion and poverty persist, due to a non-inclusive development model, structural racism and a culture of privilege that reproduces inequalities, deprivations and rights violations that have a daily impact, particularly on Afro-descendant youth and women.

Nevertheless African Diaspora culture is a fundamental tool for preventing and eradicating violence and conflict, as this Biennial has made clear. Culture contributes to improving the understanding of our peoples, and fosters the values of peace, tolerance, and global respect.

We cannot imagine the culture of the Americas and the Caribbean without the contribution of the culture of the African Diaspora. It is and has been a tool for the vindication of rights, social dialogue and one of the most important tools for the recognition of peoples.

Those who are and have been for centuries at the bottom of the social pyramid understand that the only way to achieve sustainable human development is by recognizing all identities, leaving behind all discriminations, and utilizing that which unites us as humans. They are the ones who can and have the strength to lead the transformation processes that humanity urges today.

I'm here because, we need urgently to build the necessary bridges between the African communities of the Diaspora and the continent, to move forward, in a decisive manner, assuming our leadership to create new conditions for peace and reconciliation.

We are, who carry in our history, in our skin and in our culture, the heritage of entire generations that have claimed humanity through diverse manifestations, using culture as a tool of vindication, organization and recognition of our ancestral African roots.

We need not only discourse, but also music, dance, literature, painting, architecture, cinema, and any other creative expression that allows us to build bridges between our countries and between our cultures so that we can move towards peace and reconciliation, necessary conditions for the sustainable development that present generations demand and that we must pass on to future generations. We already make an example of that with the Drum Dialogue between Africa and the Diaspora organized by UNFPA.

For us Africans in the Diaspora, culture has always been a tool of struggle and understanding between our peoples. It has been, for centuries, a tool to express our joy and pain, but also to raise our voices for rights, dignity, and justice.

We could make great transformations with the younger generations of all identities, nationalities and race, men and women who gather the best of history to build a new world based on compassion, understanding and diversity. That generation that I call the “shinning generation” which understands the world from the vision and realities of others, which is more compassionate, a generation that does not advance if those who are at its side do not advance.

In this pandemic time, that widen the social and economic gaps, We need to move towards true inclusion, otherwise permanent peace will remain a dream. That´s why I would like to end with a call to action, and with the necessity to build a global alliance focus education, with governments, public and private sector, international organizations as UNESCO, financial sector, academia, young people and communities, we need to use our power positions and the strength of culture, not only to raise our voices, but also to commit the different sectors to act, so that within the framework of the pending agendas for the recovery of damages, they contribute to the financing of a broad and quality educational coverage, with technological tools, connectivity, world-class infrastructure, nutrition, clean water, shoes and decent shoes, especially in Africa and in the Afro-descendant communities, but in all the communities that are behind.

The pandemic brutally expelled from the educational system those who were already in a condition of exclusion, so we face the major challenge of generating the conditions to return to give thousands of students a universal quality education with advanced technologies and that vindicate the cultural identity of each of the children and young people.

As a symbolic contribution, for recognition of people of African descent, Costa Rica has proposed the construction of "The Gate of Reconciliation" for Redemption and Reparations, a route for peace with emblematic and symbolic sites that allow people of African descent to remember their past, as well as to act so that a crime against Africa and its diaspora is never repeated.



200 AÑOS  
INDEPENDENCIA  
COSTA RICA  
1821-2021



COSTA RICA  
GOBIERNO DEL BICENTENARIO  
2018-2022

We will have many points of encounter, exchange of experiences and, above all, the articulation of strategic alliances between African and leaders of African descent from all over the world for the well-being of our peoples.

I know that our path has not been easy, that reaching the places where we have been a history of great deeds and struggles of our ancestors, and that even in the mid-21st century we must face the vestiges of racism and discrimination, but our obligation now is with the next generations, so that it will be less difficult for them than it was for us and our ancestors.

Thank you.