

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Preparatory Committee of the Festival of African Languages (Festila)

International Preparatory Meeting

Kinshasa, July 24-25, 2003

Document no. 11

FINAL REPORT

Rough English translation by Don Osborn (Bisharat.net), not including list of participants and appendices. Originally published at the Bantu-I mailing list at <http://listserv.emich.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0409e&L=bantu-l&D=1&P=90>.

INTRODUCTION

01 The work of the international preparatory meeting of Festila proceeded in Kinshasa from the 24 to July 25, 2003 in the Centre d'Accueil Protestant located on Kalemie Avenue, in the commune of Gombe, in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo.

02 the Intergovernmental Agency of Francophonie, the International Center of Bantu Civilizations [CICIBA], the Preparatory Committee of Festila, as well as national experts and those coming from Senegal, Niger, Mali and Canada took an active part in the work.

03 Agenda

03.1 Thursday July 24, 2003:

03.1.1 Opening ceremony

- Speech of Commissioner-General of Francophonie, Mrs. Isabel Matshik Ruth Tshombe;
- Speech of the Director of the Languages and Writing at the Intergovernmental Agency of Francophonie, Mr. Isidore Ndaywel;

03.1.2 Course of work

- Presentation of the final text of the project, by the Preparatory Committee of Festila;
- Exchanges;
- Examination of the projects of administrative texts of Festila (statutes, rules of procedure...). Adoption.

03.2 Friday July 25, 2003:

- Examination of the project of program of activities of Festila;
- Examination of the statutes; Adoption;
- Presentation and adoption of the final Report
- Closing session
- End of work.

COURSE OF WORK

04 The opening ceremony started Thursday July 24, 2003, at 11:30, with some words by Professor Ndaywel. He was delighted by the this meeting and thanked the Preparatory Committee for the quality of the working papers. He indicated the importance of this project and the choice of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

04.1 First reason evoked: the Democratic Republic of Congo is a space of diversity of the languages. Which is a wealth.

04.2 Second reason: the Democratic Republic of Congo abounds in a very rich expertise of linguists supported by important national institutions.

04.3 Third reason: the Democratic Republic of Congo has great experience of the use of the national languages.

04.4 Finally, he finally wished that the project of Festila will take shape and join the great family of great African festivals such as the Panafrican Festival of Music (FESPAM), the Market of the African Performing Arts (MASA), the Panafrican Festival of Cinema of Ouagadougou (FESPACO), etc.

05 This word was followed immediately by the opening speech made by Mrs. Isabel Matshik Ruth Tshombe, Commissioner-General of Francophonie. She was also delighted by the active co-operation between the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Intergovernmental Agency of Francophonie (AIF). She recognized the determining contribution of the AIF for the success of this meeting. She confirmed the engagement of the Democratic Republic of Congo to be involved in the success of Festila, before opening solemnly opening the work.

The Work Itself

06 The work itself started with a speech of Mr. Corneille Monoko, Coordinator of the Preparatory Committee of Festila, which initially pointed out the background of the idea of Festila: the meeting of Libreville in 1998, various dialogues between the CICIBA, the AIF and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Another dialogue in January 2003 brought together a delegation of the CICIBA and Congolese experts; which allowed the Minister Culture and Arts to make the Ministerial decree n°22/CAB/MIN/MCA/032/D.N/2003 of 26 February 2003 concerning composition of the Preparatory Committee of the Festival of African Languages, abbreviated "FESTILA", which has gotten ready the working papers of this meeting. Then, the Coordinator presented an overview of all the working papers. And finally, the Coordinator suggested beginning the examination of the working papers with the one numbered 6 concerning the project preparations from the first edition of the Festival of African Languages.

07 Succeeding the Coordinator, Professor Ndaywel, who directed the work, concentrated attention on three concerns related to the examination of this project: namely, its relevance, the political will of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and logistics (the cost of the operation). At the same time, he pointed out the history of the festivals in Africa and their different stages (1966 to date): a) World festival of Negro Arts in 1966 in Dakar, Senegal; at the initiative of President Léopold Sédar Senghor; b) the Panafrican cultural Festival in 1969 in Algiers, under the aegis of the Organization of African Unity; c) the World Festival of Arts and Culture in Africa, "FESTAC 77", in 1977 in Lagos, Nigeria.

08 Since then, the African Union has taken the option to support national initiatives with Panafrican vocation and thematic character:

- a) the Panafrican Festival of the Cinema of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso;
- b) the Festival (of Cinema) of Carthage, Tunisia;
- c) the Market of African Performing Arts (MASA), in Abidjan, Ivory Coast;
- d) the International Salon of Crafts of Ouagadougou (SIAO), Burkina Faso;
- e) Dak' Art, in Dakar, Senegal;
- f) the Panafrican Festival of Music (FESPAM) in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo;

g) Biennial of Contemporary Bantu Art, organized by the CICIBA in the Member States.

09 Festila should consequently be seen in this context.

10 Suspended at 13:00, work began again at 15:00 on the same document number 6. The discussions then related to the activities of Festila, namely: expositions, spectacles, symposium, conferences in African languages, contests, workshops, professional meetings,...

Expositions

11 Various speakers expressed concerns relating to the scarcity of publishers specialized in languages of Africa, on the need for reaching general public through expositions; on the mobility of the exposition by means of a caravan [road show?]; without excluding the idea of expositions on fixed sites. The participants also underscored the concern of combining the aspects of profitability of the expositions with the concern of promoting and of popularizing the use of the languages.

Spectacles

12 The question of choice of the groups will have to be settled by the artistic director at the convenient time after the installation of the final structures of Festila.

The symposium

13 Concerning the general theme, the assembly accepted the principle of a theme encompassing and open to all the languages of Africa, including Arabic, Spanish, Portuguese, English, French, the national languages, the transnational languages and others. However, the stress was laid on the need for innovating by adopting a practical approach on the use of the languages, by posing problems such as: "How to communicate in African languages today?" The general topic should consequently take account of the popular masses and be open to the experience of all the countries. The principles of a call for contributions and identification of a greater number of experts were adopted as final solution for reasons of effectiveness. An exhaustive list of experts will have to be prepared by the preparatory committee. A long debate on linguistic policy as one of the priorities concluded this point on the general theme.

Conferences on the languages of Africa

14 On this point, the assembly proposed that the Preparatory Committee also conceive of mobilizing themes to attract the general public. The need was also underscored to solicit partnership of NGOs and for implicating the Ministry for the Culture and Arts, the Ministry for National Education, the Conference of the Ministers for National Education and the Ministry for the Communication and Presse for a better synergy.

Contests

15 With the aim of perennializing Festila and to make it a part of peoples' thinking, the assembly adopted the proposal to create permanent contests radiotelevised on the riddles, the orthography, calculation in languages of Africa, realising even moderate prizes. These contests would proceed through weekly emissions several months before the opening of Festila with possibility of the awarding of the prizes during the festival. A thorough study of the question was requested from the Preparatory Committee. From the point of view of the strategies, the option was raised to create and diversify events heralding Festila, the awarding of distinctions (Prizes) by taking account of financial and budgetary constraints.

Workshops

16 The following options were brought up:

- The workshops would constitute activities independent of the symposium which would be organized under cover of the ministries such as National Education, that of the Culture and Arts, that of the Communication and Press; but they will be animated by well identified cultural operators (various NGOs or institutions).

- Taking into account the laic character of the international institutions such as the Intergovernmental Agency of Francophonie, the International Center of Bantu Civilizations, the assembly proposed either to abstain from the organization of the workshops of choral musics, or open them to any religious tendencies.
- Themes such as Bantuït? Africa - Arab World, interlinguistic alliances between the Latin America and Africa were retained.
- The breakdown [?] of the modules of activities to be submitted to the funders was adopted as managerial strategy, at the time of the research of the financing of these workshops.

Professional meetings

17 The principle of the meeting of the organizers of festivals of tales was accepted.

18 Translation, its difficulties and its negative consequences as a topic of the professional meetings also held the attention of the assembly. The meeting of translators was also agreed to as an activity of Festila with the recommendation to consult the South African expertise on this matter (translation).

19 Before the closure of debate, one carried out the examination of the items on participants and the action plan. The participants were invited to consider the documents on the hotel park, the list of the media and the opening speeches at the time of the second working day.

20 The meeting was adjourned at 18:00. And it should resume again the following day at 9:30 in the same place.

21 Work began again Friday July 25, 2003, at 10:00, with the debates on item 12 of the document n°6 on the participants. On this subject, the option to reduce the number of the participants was raised. However, their profile and the adoption of the more relevant criteria were to be examined later by the Preparatory Committee for a better selection.

22 Item 13 relating to the action plan was examined with the help of the following amendments:

- October 2003: - Launching of the 1st edition and the invitations;
- Call with contribution
- February 2004: Confirmation of the invitations;
- July 2004: 1st edition of Festila.
- The budget was to be broken down under several headings according to modules for reasons of visibility and clarity so that the rolw of the Democratic Republic of Congo in the assumption of responsibility for the event appears clearly.

23 Then, the assembly examined the document number 2 on the project of the statutes: the preamble was enriched on the reference documents to include, in particular the Declaration of UNESCO on cultural diversity, the Declaration and the Action plan of Cotonou, in chronological order.

23.1 The 1st article was amended as follows: "It is created in Kinshasa a national institution with Panafrican vocation called Festival of African Languages, hereinafter referred to as "FESTILA."

23.2 Article 2: A commission was created to enrich the contents of this article by adding amendments on the objectives. After debate on the ad hoc Commission proposal, this article is modified as follows:

23.3 Festila has the role of contributing to the bringing peoples together by the promotion of linguistic and cultural diversity in the African space. To this end, it has the following objectives:

- to promote the languages of Africa through the organization of expositions, spectacles, symposiums, conferences in languages of Africa, contests and professional meetings;
- to safeguard the linguistic heritage in the fields concerned;

- to support the creation of industries of language;
- to constitute a space of linguistic and cultural exchanges;
- to become a framework of reference and collective inspiration.

23.4 Article 3 was also amended.

23.5 It was, for the remainder, decided to add a 3rd body called Technical Committee with a configuration which was accepted by the assembly.

23.6 Concerning the members of the Board of directors mentioned in article 6, it was decided to remove the Secretariat-general of the Ministry for the Culture and Arts, and to add the African Academy of Languages [ACALAN], the Ministry for National Education and that of Finances with the option to leave the opening for the admission of the future funders in the statutes of Festila.

23.7 Article 24 was amended as follows: "The resources are managed by the Commissioner General". The Financial Regulation will settle the other subsidiary questions.

23.8 A commission was created in order to harmonize the sights on the vice-presidency of the Board of directors of Festila. As the result of debates, the vice-presidency was granted to the Intergovernmental Agency of the Francophonie and UNESCO.

23.9 Concerning resources, it was decided that those would come from Congolese government grants, contributions of the funders, and gifts and legacy.

23.10 In connection with the final provisions, the assembly proposed to create new articles on the mode of payment of the litigations, on the fate of the inheritance of Festila in the event of dissolution of Festila.

23.11 As for the revision of the statutes, it is the government of the Democratic Republic of Congo which had from now on the responsibility (Article 25).

23.12 Concerning the third body, that is to say the technical committee, it was accepted as consultative body, of accompaniment of Festila, open to the institutions, NGOs and experts. It will have to be directed by the Commissioner General. However, on this subject, the assembly proposed at the Preparatory Committee to enrich all the provisions of the project by the statutes, particularly with regard to the technical committee and the Board of directors by taking account of the options raised by the assembly.

24 Read, for the Preparatory Committee of Festila, by Me Theodore Nganzi Ndoni, the final report was unanimously adopted, with amendments, by the participants.

Closing session

25 It started with the reading, for the Preparatory Committee of Festila, of the final official statement, by Professor Yoka Lye Mudaba. This was followed reading of the motion of thanks per Mr. Moussa Diaby, expert Malian.

26 Thereafter, Mr. Isidore Ndaywel, President of céans, thanked the participants by confirming that the founding act of Festila was adopted by the preparatory international meeting. It does not belong any more, he recalled, but to the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo to actualize its political will for the success of the first edition. It reiterated the availability of the Intergovernmental Agency of Francophonie by its eventual contribution.

27 Reacting to this speech, Mrs Isabel Machik Ruth Tshombe thanked, in her turn, all the representatives. She recalled that language is the vehicle of the culture par excellence. Africans, by protecting their languages, protected themselves. Consequently, the Democratic Republic of Congo should, she said, implicate itself more in this project to rewrite a new page of its history.

RECOMMENDATIONS

28 The President of céans recapitulated, at the end of the debates, the following recommendations which were adopted:

- The Preparatory Committee is charged to continue its work until the installation of the final institutions of Festila (i.e. the Board of directors and the Commissioner General and the Technical Committee);
- The Preparatory Committee is requested to transmit to the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo all the documents useful for the constitution of Festila, in particular the organizational chart, the rules of procedure, the payment of the contests, the documents on the hotel park and the sites available;
- the Preparatory Committee will have to prepare and forward the budget of the First Edition of the FESTILA 2004 to the funders before October 2003.

Kinshasa, July 25, 2003.

For the Preparatory Committee of Festila
Me Theodore NGANZI NDONI, Rapporteur