

Final report and recommendations

The city of Kaduna (Nigeria) hosted from 21st – 22nd May 2007, a scientific conference entitled: “Mutual perceptions between Africans and Arabs in school curricula”; organised by the Afro-Arab Cultural Institute, in collaboration with Ahmadu Bello University (Arewa House Centre for Historical Documentation and Research). Many African and Arab researchers and Representatives from interested regional and international organizations in addition to a large number of academics and students of Arab studies and researchers from Nigeria took part in the conference works. (See list of participants annex 1)

The opening ceremony was marked by the address of the following personalities:

- His Excellency, the Governor of Kaduna State Alhaji (Dr) Ahmad Muhammad Makarfi
- The Emir of Zazzau, Alhaji (Dr) Shehu Idris, CFR
- Professor S.U. Abdullahi Vice Chancellor of Amadu Bello University
- Dr. Hamid Bobboyi, former Director of Arewa House

Furthermore, address was made by:

- Dr. Abdullah A. Al-Dosary, Director General of the Afro-Arab Cultural Institute
- Dr. Mahmoud Hamman, Director of Arewa House Centre for Historical Documentation and Research

An exhibition of African languages’ manuscripts written in Arabic characters (Ajami), Arabic manuscripts and publications related to African and Arab cultural relationships, was also held on the sidelines of the conference.

The conference works dealt with the following main sub-themes:

- General feature of African and Arab cultural relations
- Image of Arab in African school curricula
- Image of African in Arab school curricula
- Ways of improving mutual negative image between Africans and Arabs.

Those sub-themes were discussed in four plenary sessions during which 19 papers were presented (see details in the programme, annex 2) in addition to ten discussants which have enriched the debates. The participants noted the little role that actual school curricula could play whether in African or Arab

countries to strengthen the interconnection. The papers presented pointed that the image of the other in curricula appears to be sometimes distorted or very weakly presented or incomplete in most of the case.

Conscious of the salient effect of education in shaping negative image and its adjustment, the participants in the conference stressed the need to allow the school greater role in reinforcing African and Arab cultural interconnection and to harness it for educating the future generation so as they can gain deep awareness that can coalesce Arabs and Africans through values, common interests and aspirations. In this respect, the participants have adopted the following recommendations:

1- Call upon the League of Arab States (LAS), the ALECSO and the ISESCO to urge Arab countries regarding to:

- a. Expand the scope of teaching the history and geography of Sub-Saharan Africa in primary school, its kingdoms, prominent personalities and its struggle for independence.
- b. Introduce the works of African scholars and their role in spreading Arabic language, learning and boosting links between Africans and Arabs.
- c. Explore the positive image of the African man and to get school curricula free from negative image ingrained in the mind of students.
- d. Teach African literature whether in Arabic language or other languages in literature classes of secondary schools.
- e. Endeavour to establish departments in Arab universities to teach major African languages.

2- Call upon the African Union (AU) to urge African countries in order to:

- a. Expand the scope of teaching of Arab civilization and to underscore common links between Arabs and Africans as a complementary community in terms of geography, demography and culture.
- b. Remove the negative image on Arabs from school curricula and to emphasize the impact of Arab culture in writing African history,

inter alia, the land and the people across more than one thousand years;

- c. Showcase written African cultural heritage in Arabic scripts amongst others, writings, contracts, treaties, and the various documents so as to explore African unknown history.
 - d. Use curricula as means to present objective view on the aspect of slavery in its historical and social context seen as a phenomenon equally widespread in African and Arab societies in the course of their evolution. The role of Islam should be made conspicuous in terms of enacting emancipation and sealing slavery outlets.
- 3- Call upon the African Union, the League of Arab States, the Alecso and the Isesco and the relevant regional and international organization to:**
- a. Work to sign more agreements on bilateral and multilateral cultural cooperation and to promote the existing structures which favour the increase of granting more scholarships between African and Arab countries, to support school libraries, to establish common cultural centres and to bolster all connection channels amongst others, exhibitions, festivals cultural weeks, screening films, summer camps, and the facilitation of mutual knowledge between African and Arab youth.
 - b. Encourage linguistic partnership over educational systems and to work to disseminate successful experiences whenever that is possible and to accord greater importance to the teaching of Arabic and African languages and the major international languages in accordance with the needs of each country taking into account their cultural particularities.
 - c. Initiate a programme of translation of major literary works in Arabic into the major African languages, and the translation of major African literary works into Arabic and to create common culture which can bolster the interconnection between the two parties.
 - d. Endeavour to establish a Fund which receives aids from the relevant regional and international and private institutions and from private sectors. Resources generated should be allocated to encourage exchange of academics and researchers between

educational institutions and research centres in the Arab and African sphere.

- e. Organise joint meetings of the Ministers of education and the Ministers of culture of African and Arab countries so as to give root to the cultural dimension of the relations between the two parties.

4- Call upon the Afro-Arab Cultural Institute to:

- a. Coordinate with specialized educational and cultural organisations to set up terms of reference highlighting the major links that bind Africans and Arabs together and dealing with mutual negative images contained in non documented local cultures for their dissemination and as source of inspiration in setting up school curricula and newsletters in African and Arab countries.
- b. Initiate conferences and comparative studies dealing with the interference aspects between Arabic and the other African languages and to ensure the benefits of these studies are accrued to school curricula.
- c. Work with the two founding bodies (African Union and the League of Arab States) for the adoption of these recommendations by relevant Ministers' conference and statutory bodies of the two organizations with the view to take appropriate measures for their implementation.
- d. Endeavour to allow the conference and activities organised by the Institute to cover the other Arab countries outside Africa and all geographical and cultural regions of Africa.

Finally, the participants in the conference address their sincere thanks and gratitude to Arewa House Centre/Ahmadu Bello University, His Excellency the Governor of Kaduna state, His Highness the Emir of Zazzau and the Federal government of Nigeria for the facilities provided which bred the success of the conference.

Kaduna on 22nd May 2007

The Participants