



ACALAN

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Commissioner for Social Affairs of the African Union Commission paid the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN) and the Malian authorities a two-day working visit.

The Executive Secretariat of ACALAN and the Malian authorities were honoured to receive H.E. Amira Elfadil, Commissioner for Social Affairs of the African Union Commission on a two-day working visit.

The two-day mission that took place on the 17 and 18 October 2017 was undertaken by the Commissioner for Social Affairs and her delegation to discuss a number of issues with the Malian



authorities including migration and the Host Agreement on ACALAN. It also aimed at helping to raise the visibility of ACALAN and the Centre for Linguistic and Historical Study by Oral Tradition (CELHTO), as well as to create a partnership between the two sister institutions and the Africa -Arab Cultural Institute (AACI). The AACI was jointly established by the African Union and the League of Arab States to facilitate and promote cooperation between the African and Arab peoples

through their respective cultures, whilst providing technical and/or financial assistance to needy member countries for the development of their national culture and the promotion of Africa -Arab cultural exchanges.

Both ACALAN and CELHTO are specialized institutions of the African Union under the umbrella of the Department of Social Affairs of the African Union Commission. ACALAN's mandate is to develop and promote African languages and convivial multilingualism in Africa, as a factor of African integration and development, while CELHTO promotes African cultures in their richness, diversity and convergence, by safeguarding African cultural heritage and contributing to the promotion of African history and languages through the collection, conservation and dissemination of oral traditions. During the visit, Commissioner Elfadil met with the Director General and staff of the Africa-Arab Cultural Institute to discuss the support and assistance of the Department of Social Affairs of the African Union Commission to the Institute, which is under her portfolio.

The Commissioner also visited both the Civil Protection Centre, and the Centre for Migrants of the Ministry of Malians Abroad and African Integration still under construction but at finishing level, to appreciate the two Centres and the facilities available to take care of returning migrants.

As the Minister of Culture was on a mission away from Bamako, Commissioner Elfadil met with Mr Andogoly GUINDO, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry. She also paid H.E. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation a visit, before meeting with ACALAN personnel and subsequently taking part in the closing session of the ACALAN Planning Workshop for the Linguistic Atlas Project for the ECOWAS and SADC regions.

During her visits to the Migration Centres, Commissioner Elfadil highlighted African Union's decision to have five (5) regional centres of migration to receive migrants as a way of combatting emigration in



Africa. She informed the authorities about the Commission's desire to propose that the regional centre for West Africa be in Bamako, Mali, since a lot has been done for the operationalization of the new centre for migrants.

Meeting with the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Culture of Mali, the Commissioner for Social Affairs presented her gratitude to the government of Mali for the role they had played in the establishment and hosting of

ACALAN. She requested for Mali's continued support to ACALAN's activities and referred to the idea of Mali to be nominated a champion for cultural policy and development given its rich heritage and role in cultural protection and preservation.

The Permanent Secretary in his turn thanked the Commissioner for her visit and referred to ACALAN as Mali's baby and hence Mali has the duty to take care of the baby and see that it grows. He highlighted the importance of culture, and that it is "through language that culture is expressed." In order to follow up all ACALAN's issues with the Ministry of Culture the Commissioner proposed that a Focal Point for ACALAN be appointed at the Ministry of Culture to effectively work with ACALAN.

Meeting with H.E. Abdoulaye Diop, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Mali, the Commissioner for Social Affairs was congratulated by the Minister on her appointment as AU Commissioner for Social Affairs and offered his country's support for the successful completion of her tenure in office. He said that the African Union can count on Mali's support in its quest for integration and unity of the continent, adding that culture plays a crucial role in that regard. He said that Africa's biggest industry is culture and that the continent has a comparative advantage in terms of its development endeavour. He thanked the AU for its support in preserving the manuscripts in Timbuktu.

H.E. Commissioner on her turn expressed gratitude to the Government of Mali for hosting ACALAN which was initiated by former President Alpha Oumar Konare. She recalled her objectives in visiting Mali which included to visit the Migration Centres in Bamako, the Africa Arab Cultural Institute, and to participate in ACALAN's Planning Workshop for the Linguistic Atlas for the ECOWAS and SADC regions.

She concluded by requesting the Minister to assist in ensuring that the Host Agreement between Mali and the African Union Commission relating to hosting ACALAN be implemented specifically the



issue of providing offices for ACALAN and rectifying the title deed of the plot of land attributed to ACALAN by the government of Mali to construct its headquarters, as well as other issues like diplomatic immunities for ACALAN's staff amongst others.

Assuring the Commissioner that all issues related to the implementation of the Host Agreement would be looked

into and implemented, he evoked that it was high time that the continent moved on with the issue of free movement of people to guarantee its integration, and welcoming the consideration of the Protocol on the Free Movement of People by the upcoming Specialized Technical Committee meeting in Kigali this October and the Commissioner's visit to the Migration Centres.

Minister Diop also referred to the program on the Cost of Hunger that the Department of Social Affairs had been working on and said that he was head of the office of the World Food Programme in Addis Ababa and was looking forward to receiving the report of the project, which will assist in increased investment on nutrition in the continent.

The Commissioner assured the Minister of the AUC and her personal support on all of this initiatives. He then left to take part in the closing session of the planning workshop for the linguistic atlas for the ECOWAS and SADC Regions. Prior to the closing session, the Commissioner for Social Affairs held a meeting at the Secretariat with all the staff of ACALAN. During the meeting with the staff of ACALAN, the Ag. Executive Secretary presented the Academy, its achievements, challenges and perspectives.

**African Academy of Languages (ACALAN),
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