

## INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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### Teaching of African History *Pathways to Africa's Renaissance and Integration*



[Aspiration 5 of Africa's continental development blueprint Agenda 2063](#) talks of “An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics”. A central tenet of this aspiration is the “entrenchment of Pan Africanism and the common history, destiny, identity, heritage, respect for religious diversity and consciousness of African people’s and her diaspora.” The Teaching of Africa’s History, therefore, offers the necessary paradigm shift where the core theme of the entire education curriculum being a strong affirmation of Africa’s rich, diverse and dynamic history. Teaching Africa’s History will enhance the learning experience for students and reinforce the importance of studying Africa objectively and intellectually at all levels, from the foundational levels through high school and tertiary levels. It will also serve to integrate the destiny of Africa into that of humanity by highlighting its relations with the other continents and the contribution of African cultures to the general progress of humanity.

Against this backdrop, the Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation of the African Union Commission (AUC) in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) hosted the Seminar on “Teaching of African History: Pathways to Africa’s Renaissance and Integration”, in Commemoration of Africa Day, 2024. The main objective of the symposium was to explore ways to foster critical thinking on African history, examine the preconceived notions and historical omissions that all too often accompany

teaching and learning on Africa, while encouraging exploration of Africa's economic future.

During the opening ceremony H.E. Excellency, Prof. Mohamed Belhocine, Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI) emphasized the need to move beyond the colonial narrative that has dominated historical discourse and to highlight the diverse achievements, civilizations, and contributions of African societies throughout history. By acknowledging the complexities and nuances of Africa's past, educators can empower future generations to embrace their cultural heritage and contribute to Africa's renaissance and integration.

The Commissioner noted that teaching of African History has to be reflective with broadened perspectives on the development of Africa, the critical challenges, opportunities and lessons that we must draw from our history, as we strive to address issues such as poverty, inequality, and governance in order to achieve Africa's renaissance and integration. "In the teaching of African History, we need to infuse inspiration and motivation in our pedagogical approaches so that our learners become agents of change on the continent, by being empowered to take on leadership roles and contribute towards Africa's growth, integration, and development," said H.E. Prof. Mohamed Belhocine.

Furthermore, Prof. Mohamed Belhocine underscored the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives, infusing inspiration, and fostering critical thinking among learners to address contemporary challenges and contribute to Africa's development. By engaging sensitively with controversial topics such as racial or ethnic tensions, wars and conflicts, and promoting empathy, inclusivity, and respect, educators can create a learning environment that encourages dialogue, reflection, and growth.

Finally, the Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI) called for a transformative approach to teaching African history that celebrates the continent's achievements, acknowledges its challenges, and empowers learners to become agents of positive change. It is through such efforts that a more inclusive and accurate narrative of Africa's history can be shared and celebrated.

In her welcoming remarks, Dr. Rita Bissoonauth, Director of the UNESCO Liaison Office in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia highlighted the significance of understanding and promoting an authentic African narrative through education. Dr. Rita noted that UNESCO launched the General History of Africa (GHA) in 1964 to rectify erroneous and distorted perceptions of African history. The GHA aims to present the history of the continent from a pan-African perspective, free from falsifications, racial prejudices, and stereotypes resulting from colonization and the slave trade.

"The GHA initiative contributes to educational and cultural transformation as outlined in [Agenda 2063](#), the [Charter for African Cultural Renaissance](#), and the 2030 Agenda. It promotes a new, authentic African narrative by reappropriating African history in the context of the continent's overall history, languages, and heritage," noted Dr. Rita Bissoonauth. She further observed that African Heads of States and Governments had emphasized the importance of integrating the GHA into education systems in Africa during a High level side-event organized by the AU Commission on the sidelines

of the Transforming Education Summit in September 2022, during the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

In conclusion, Dr. Rita Bissoonauth reiterated the technical support of UNESCO in this endeavor and underscored the importance of the General History of Africa in promoting a more accurate and inclusive narrative of the continent's past and fostering a sense of cultural identity and pride among African people.

The Symposium discussed, with participation on eminent panelists, the following topics:

1. Pan-African Reflections on the History and Development of Education in Africa;
2. The teaching of History and development. Building bridges across historical periods and towards the realization of Agenda 2063;
3. The role of Students: Towards a learner centred pedagogy in the teaching of African History;
4. Challenges and opportunities of tackling sensitive issues in teaching of African History: Racial or ethnic tensions, wars, conflicts, and trauma.

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