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Cameroon Commemorates Global Literacy Day with Multilingual Education Emphasis and Innovative Tributes



The 2024 International Literacy Day (ILD) global celebrations took place in Yaoundé, Cameroon, on September 9-10, under the theme "Promoting multilingual education: Literacy for mutual understanding and peace." The event, held under the patronage of Cameroon's Head of State and led by Prime Minister Joseph Dion Ngute and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Director-General Audrey Azoulay, highlighted the critical role of multilingual education in fostering peace.

Prof. Saïdou Madougou, Director of the Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI) Department at the African Union Commission, delivered a keynote address highlighting the African Union's commitment to education as a transformative force for sustainable development. He emphasized the AU's declaration of 2024 as the "[Year of Education](#)" and outlined strategies to foster quality education across the continent.

Prof. Madougou also participated in side events, including the Global Alliance of Literacy within the Framework of Lifelong Learning, where he stressed the importance of multilingual literacy programs that integrate essential skills across all learning areas.

The International Literacy Day celebrations, centered on the theme "Promoting multilingual education: Literacy for mutual understanding and peace," featured a global conference focused on enhancing policies, strengthening lifelong learning systems, and developing effective practices to promote literacy in multilingual contexts. The event's scope extended beyond the main conference, featuring important side meetings. These included the annual gathering of the Global Alliance of Literacy within the Framework of Lifelong Learning (GAL) and sessions of the Action Research on Measuring Literacy and Alternative Education (RAMAED). Additionally, the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities convened, further enriching the discourse on literacy and education.

A highlight of the event was the UNESCO International Literacy Prizes award ceremony, recognizing six exceptional literacy programs from Austria, Egypt, Ghana, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Panama. The UNESCO King Sejong Literacy Prize, sponsored by the Government of the Republic of Korea, honored initiatives from Austria, Ghana, and Panama for their contributions to mother language-based literacy development. Each laureate received US\$ 20,000. The UNESCO Confucius Prize for Literacy, sponsored by the Government of the People's Republic of China, recognized programs from Egypt, Indonesia, and Nigeria for their work in functional literacy using digital tools to support adults in rural areas and out-of-school youth. These laureates each

received US\$ 30,000. All winners were also awarded medals and diplomas for their innovative approaches to promoting literacy in diverse contexts.

As ILD marked its 57th year, the Yaoundé event reinforced the global commitment to literacy as a fundamental human right and a key driver of sustainable development. The celebration provided a platform to spotlight literacy initiatives in Cameroon and across Africa, aligning with continental efforts to improve education quality and access.

This year's commemoration, coinciding with the [African Union's Year of Education](#), underscored the critical importance of literacy in building just, peaceful, and sustainable societies. Top-ranking officials consistently highlighted this alignment in their statements, emphasizing the synergy between International Literacy Day's focus on multilingual education and broader continental educational initiatives. The innovative programs honored at the event exemplified this shared vision, demonstrating the power of multilingual approaches in promoting mutual understanding and peace.

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