

## INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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### The sixth Pan-African Cultural Congress of the African Union: Participation of the Executive Secretariat of ACALAN

The 6<sup>th</sup> Pan-African Cultural Congress (AU/PACC6) took place in Moroni, the Union of Comoros, from 25 to 27 September 2024. In line with the African Union theme of the year for 2024, which is “**Educate and Skill Africa for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**”, the congress was organised under the theme: “**Arts, Culture, Heritage, and Education: Levers for Building the Africa We Want**”.

The triennial congress was attended by Mrs. Angela Martins, the Ag. Director of Social Development, Sports and Culture of the AU Health, Humanitarian and Social Affairs, cultural policy makers and experts, representatives of Member States, civil society organisations, cultural workers, researchers, arts educators, designers, creative workers, producers, entrepreneurs, pan-African cultural institutions, and international organisations, provides a platform for pan-African cultural institutions, cultural workers and artists to reflect on the theme and devise strategies to develop and promote the arts, culture, heritage, and education sectors on the continent.



Dr. Lang Fafa Dampha, ACALAN Executive Secretary participated in session 4 on AU Overarching Policy in the sector: The Role of Pan-African Cultural Institutions, Cultural Workers and Artists in the Advocacy and Implementation of AU Instruments, moderated by Dr Sibongile Masuku, Member of the AU Arts Education Working Group. Presenting the Language Plan of Action for Africa, and new developments such as the Dar es Salaam Framework for Action on Kiswahili as a Working Language of the African Union and Language of Wider Communication in Africa; the African Languages Week; and the Decade of African

Languages alongside the International Decade of Indigenous Languages of the United Nations, Dr. Dampha emphasised the indispensable role of African languages in fostering African integration, development, peace and security.

He referred to Article 29 of the OAU Charter, subsequently Article 25 of the AU Constitutive Act, after the transformation from the OAU to the AU, which states that "...The working languages of the Organisation and all its institutions are, if possible, African languages, ...". Accordingly, the use of African languages in all sectors is possible. However, measures must be taken to concretely materialise it. He considered the creation of the OAU Inter-African Bureau of Languages, (OAU-IBL), in Uganda, in the 1960s, whose responsibility was to assist member states to develop national language policies, as the very first initiative of this endeavour.

Dr. Dampha informed participants that ACALAN launched the African Languages Week in Ouagadougou in July 2021, in line with its adoption by the 3<sup>rd</sup> African Union Specialised Technical

Committee; Youth, Culture and Sports (STC-YCS3), in Algiers, in 2018, through ACALAN's proposal for the African Languages Week. The week is a perpetual meeting that aims to:

- i. Commemorate the relevance of African languages and cultures in Africa and the African diaspora.
- ii. increase awareness and appreciation of African languages by looking at pragmatic ways of empowering and rendering them relevant to the lives of Africans.
- iii. promote the dynamics of African worldviews and philosophies of life, through the empowerment and use of African languages.
- iv. demonstrate the indispensable role of African languages in the integration and sustainable peace and development of Africa.
- v. advocate for the promotion and protection of African languages and their use in all spheres of life, especially as official languages and languages of instruction, while at the same time creating awareness of the need for Member States of the African Union to develop national language policies within the context of the African Union's Language Plan of Action for Africa; and,
- vi. sensitise Africans on the role of African culture, of which African languages are a major component, in establishing the cultures, peace, and promoting sustainable development.

Dr. Dampha says that the Heads of State and Government of the African Union adopted the proposition of ACALAN to implement a decade of African Languages alongside the UN International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022 – 2032, within ACALAN's mandate and programmes, during the Mid-Year Coordination meeting between the African Union, the Regional Economic Communities, and Regional Mechanisms, held from July 13 to 16, 2023 in Nairobi, Kenya. ACALAN has planned to have the Language Plan of Action for Africa revised to consider the transformations for the Plan to be implemented more effectively, he added.

He stressed that most African decision-makers have opted in a self-imposed manner to use the former colonial languages as official languages and languages of instruction and communication, from the time of their independence into the present day. However, African indigenous languages should rightfully play those roles because they are the languages the people know best, and they play a vital role in preserving cultural identity, promoting social cohesion, and empowering local communities.

He urged also Member States to contribute to the implementation of Assembly Decision/AU/Dec796 (XXXIV) for Kiswahili to become an effective working language of the African Union and a language of wider communication in Africa, as well as the implementation of the Language Plan of Action for Africa. He emphasised that the empowerment of African languages and their use is indispensable for Africa's effective integration and sustainable development, peace and security, simply because African languages are the languages the African people know best.

In conclusion, he emphasised that cultural development is inevitably one of the main factors of the sustainable development of a people. The development and effective use of African languages as one of the main pillars of African cultures is thus an indispensable factor of African integration, development, peace and security.



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the 21st Century

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