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SC13705

ASSEMBLY OF THE UNION
Twenty-Fourth Ordinary Session
30 - 31 January 2015
Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA

Assembly/AU/19 (XXIV) Add.8
Original: French

TRANSFORMATION OF THE SCHOOL OF AFRICAN HERITAGE
TO A SCHOOL WITH PAN-AFRICAN VOCATION
(Item Proposed by the Republic of Benin)



**CONCEPT NOTE ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE SCHOOL OF
AFRICAN HERITAGE TO A REGIONAL SCHOOL WITH PAN-AFRICAN
VOCATION**

I- PRESENTATION OF THE SCHOOL OF AFRICAN HERITAGE

1. Presentation of the School of African Heritage (EPA)

1.1. *The School of African Heritage*

Located in Porto-Novo, Republic of Benin, the School of African Heritage (EPA) was established in 1998 thanks to the transfer to Africa of the program "**Preventive Conservation in Museums of Africa**" (PREMA) following an agreement between the National University of Benin, now the University of Abomey-Calavi (UAC) and the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), an intergovernmental organization of the United Nations specialized in vocational training of which Benin is one of 132 member countries.

EPA has enjoyed the status of international organization since 14 May 2010 by virtue of a Headquarters Agreement signed with the Government of Benin. The chair of its Board of Directors is UAC, a position exercised through the Rector, while the Vice-Chair position is assumed by ICCROM, through its Director General. The Director of Cultural Heritage of Benin is a permanent member of EPA Board of Directors.

1.2. *Areas of activity of the School of African Heritage*

The School operates in the 26 French, Portuguese and Spanish-speaking sub-Saharan African countries with a branch in Libreville, Gabon. It also operates within and outside the Continent beyond this traditional area of activity.

In its 15 years of existence, over 3,000 participants (African professionals and policymakers in heritage and related matters) from 40 countries participated in various domains of EPA's activities: *vocational training; cultural sites conservation, rehabilitation and redevelopment; heritage education and awareness-raising; performing arts promotion*. Several EPA trained professionals currently occupy positions of responsibility in the administration of their country. These outcomes have made the School an international cultural hub and an inescapable reference institution in the heritage sector in Africa.

2. Some of the actions undertaken in Benin and in Africa

- **Rehabilitation of Abomey Royal Palaces Site**, classified as World Heritage site, with the support of ICCROM, UNESCO, the Japanese Funds-in-trust deposited with UNESCO and the African World Heritage Fund.
The last activity on this Site, one of the first beneficiaries of EPA actions, dates back to March/June 2013.
- **Rehabilitation in 1999, of the Garden of Plants and Nature in Porto-Novo, Benin, ancient sacred forest of the Kingdom of Hogbonou**
This green space at the very heart of the capital is currently an educational school curricula practice location and a venue for environmental protection awareness-building.

- **Inventory and documentation in Benin museums and the creation of a national database in 2004**, with the support of the French Embassy in Benin.
- **The study conducted from 2001 to 2003 for rehabilitation of the historic heritage of the city of Porto-Novo**, with support from the World Bank and the Government of Benin.
- **The AFRICA 2009 program**, objective of which was to improve national capacities in immovable cultural heritage management and conservation in sub-Saharan Africa, was implemented from 1999 to 2009, as part of a partnership between EPA, African cultural heritage institutions, UNESCO World Heritage Centre, ICCROM and the International Center for Earthen Architecture (*CRATerre- ENSAG*).
- **Rehabilitation of the Slave Route in Ouidah in 2010**, in partnership with the Cultural Heritage Directorate, Benin, with financial support from UNESCO.
- **Redevelopment of two public spaces in the city of Porto-Novo in collaboration with local communities:**
 - development of "**Lokossa**" plaza in Porto Novo in 2011-2012 as part of the "**Public Spaces**" project;
 - development of the "**Agonsa Honto**" plaza in 2012 as part of the "**Urban Management**" project, in partnership with the city of Porto-Novo and with the support of the French Institute in Paris.
- **The three-year program "Cultural Heritage and Local Development"**, implementation of which, from 2010 to 2012, in collaboration with the International Association of Francophone Mayors (AIMF) and some partners of Benin, including Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, France, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal, was intended to build the capacities of the town clerks and technicians of African municipalities in the cultural heritage sector. About 300 local councilors, town clerks and technicians from 6 West African countries, including Benin, benefited from the activities of this program.
- **The program "Museums in the service of Development"**, the objective of which was to enhance the role of culture in human and economic development in sub-Saharan Africa through increased museum attendance and improved museum financial resources was implemented by EPA from 2007 to 2011 with the financial support of French Foreign Ministry.

In this connection:

- 36 museum revitalization projects were funded in 15 sub-Saharan African countries;

- 2 international exhibitions on the Continent's image, focusing on the theme "***A is for Africa***" were staged at the National Museums of Kenya (NMK) for English-speaking audiences and at the National Museum of Burkina Faso for French-speaking audiences.
- **The Special West Africa Program** dubbed "***Strengthening the Network of West African Cultural Institutions (RECAO)***" implemented from 2009 to 2011 by EPA for 8 countries in ECOWAS space, namely: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo, was designed to accompany the capacity building of cultural players and the structuring of artistic and cultural life in West Africa.

II. JUSTIFICATION FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE SCHOOL OF AFRICAN HERITAGE INTO A SCHOOL WITH REGIONAL VOCATION

The School of African Heritage (EPA) is a specialized School created as far back as 1998, to undertake vocational cultural training in Africa. Its nomenclature confers on it an African dimension which it could not acquire nowadays even though it has carried out actions in many African countries.

1. Objective of the Transformation

EPA's institutional evolution may be observed through the progression of activities geared essentially to moveable heritage to activities oriented to immovable heritage. In keeping with this momentum, the institution continues to expand its scope of intervention and to increasingly project itself into the domain of cultural industries, a term that refers to the economic activity sectors driven by the development, production, promotion, distribution or sale of goods and services with cultural content.

Indeed, after 15 years of operation, the School has become a reference, a hub in matters of vocational training and cultural heritage conservation, and is trending towards a new phase of its development with diversified activities. The School now has to cope with increased demand for training and mounting frequent requests for its expertise, particularly in the field of training and cultural heritage management. For example, many countries are seeking to have a maximum of participants in EPA training activities. One case in point is that of Angola, which accounts for 5 of the 13 participants registered for the professional degree program in heritage conservation and development currently underway at EPA.

Also, for the next 5 years (2013-2016), the School has adopted a **strategic plan** which is in line with previous plans **with a view to consolidating its gains while providing an opening on intangible heritage and promoting cultural industries in West and Central Africa** so as to improve the living conditions of the populations concerned.

EPA nourishes the ambition to contribute to the well-being of African populations through the preservation and development of their heritage. The School intends to invest more and develop programs and projects in sectors such as arts and crafts, cultural tourism, performing arts and visual arts.

Most of the School's initiatives have impacted on African communities in general, multidisciplinary players involved not only in the reconstruction of history, but also in the construction of African cities, and on the education of young school pupils in particular, through the integration of heritage matters in educational curricula and other actions.

As a heritage institution in the service of development, the School would provide its input through the following specific goals:

- a) Improving human resources in African cultural institutions and similar organizations (decentralized services in charge of local development, associations, organized communities...);
- b) Developing and strengthening tenders in respect of cultural and creative industries sectors;
- c) Contributing to scaling up the attention to cultural heritage.

This ambition which coincides with the promotion of culture as expressed by the African Union and enshrined in the African Union Commission Strategic Plan 2014-2017 justifies the need for the Union to associate itself with the project to transform EPA into a School with regional vocation.

2. EPA mode of financing

EPA receives no subsidies from any country or organization; rather, it has been entirely self-financing since 2000. Its average annual operating budget stands at **one hundred million (100,000,000) CFA francs, that is about US\$ 200,000**, financed to the tune of **70%** by quotas taken from the activity contracts signed with various partners (UNESCO, African World Heritage Fund, European Union, Governments, Embassies, Foundations etc.). The remaining 30% comes from the interest generated by EPA Fund, a Trust Fund created and managed, since 2001 by the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) to sustainably contribute to the financing of the School's operating costs. **In 2005, the Government of the Republic of Benin contributed to this Fund to the tune of 75,000,000 CFA Francs (US\$ 150,000) or 4.60%; with Angola providing 13,119,140 CFA Francs (US\$ 26,238) or 0.4 %, and Tunisia 10,823,290 CFA Francs (US\$ 21,646) or 0.67%.**

EPA cannot touch the capital of the Fund but uses only the interest this capital generates. It is on this quite restrictive financing mode that EPA has been operating since its inception.

However, the global economic and financial crisis has directly impacted on the Fund, and as such, its contribution to the running of the School has been on the decline.

The same goes for the number of activity contracts signed and financed. This state of affairs consigns the School of African Heritage to continuously seek new funding sources, a situation which could eventually endanger the life of the institution.

For this reason, it has become desirable that the States of the African Union get associated with this Pan-African endeavour and mobilize for expansion of its activities at regional level, thus ensuring its sustainability.

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