

**MY SPEECH AT THE 16TH EDITION OF
THE ABIDJAN INTERNATIONAL BOOK FAIR (SILA 2026)**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be here with you today at the Exhibition Center for the 16th edition of the Abidjan International Book Fair (SILA).

First and foremost, I would like to convey the warm greetings of my dear husband, President Alassane Ouattara, whom you had the pleasure of welcoming here yesterday. As you could see, he is in excellent health.

I would now like to greet my dear sister, Mrs. Maimouna Kone, wife of the Vice President, who is with us this morning.

My warmest greetings also go to my brother, the Grand Chancellor, Mr. Ally Coulibaly, accompanied by his very charming wife, patron of the Book Fair, whom I thank for his constant participation.

I would also like to take this opportunity to greet my dear sister-in-law, Mrs. Sita Ouattara, Mayor of Gbeleban.

I would also like to extend my greetings to all members of the Government who have graced us with their presence at this ceremony, particularly Ms. Françoise Remarck, Minister of Culture and Francophonie. Thank you, dear Françoise, for your unwavering commitment to promoting culture in our country.

I would also like to welcome Minister Amadou Kone, Deputy Mayor of Bouake, the host city of this 16th edition of SILA. The beautiful city of Bouake richly deserves to be honored, and I am delighted that this event extends its reach beyond Abidjan to touch different regions of our country.

I would also like to welcome my dear friend, Ms. Danielle Ben Yhamed, special guest and partner of SILA and a distinguished publisher, who has graciously joined us today. She is accompanied by my nephew Zyad Limam, a distinguished journalist

and editor of Afrique Magazine, whom I also greet. I am delighted to see you all here today.

And my thoughts go out with deep emotion to our friend President Bechir Ben Yhamed, the great founder of the media outlet Jeune Afrique. He is a great figure in the media, and I wanted to tell you that we miss him very much.

I also extend my greetings to all the distinguished guests present today, particularly my dear sisters, the wives of the heads of institutions, ministers, and ambassadors, whom I thank for their constant support.

I would also like to extend my warmest greetings to the Ambassadors, particularly Mr. Maurice Bandaman, Ambassador of Côte d'Ivoire to France and Monaco and this year's featured author. I would also like to greet Ms. Magida Karaki, Ambassador of Lebanon to Côte d'Ivoire, the guest of honor of this 16th edition of SILA.

My greetings now go to Mr. Anges-Felix N'Dakpri, Member of Parliament and General Commissioner of SILA, and to all his team, whom I congratulate on the flawless organization of this important annual event dedicated to books.

I would also like to greet all the writers, publishers, and figures from the literary world gathered here for the occasion.

Ladies and gentlemen, your respective talents and your love for writing and books are the very essence of this fair. And I offer you my heartfelt congratulations.

I would also like to thank our dear friends from the press who are covering this event dedicated to books and literature.

Finally, thank you to all the visitors to this 16th edition of SILA, and especially to our young people who have come out in large numbers this morning, and to whom this edition is dedicated.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the years, the Abidjan International Book Fair has become an unmissable cultural event in our country. I am happy to see that this 16th edition once again

demonstrates the vitality of this event and its growing role in promoting books and reading in Côte d'Ivoire.

The theme chosen for this new edition—"Reading to Build"—is particularly meaningful to me, as it directs our thoughts toward the impact of reading on the future of our youth. Indeed, encouraging our young people to read more means helping them build themselves and develop their critical thinking skills, so that they may contribute to our country's development tomorrow. For a youth that reads is the foundation of a strong and progressive nation.

At this point in my remarks, I would like to address a few words to my dear students present in this room this morning. I urge you to take full advantage of this fair, as many successful authors are here to help you discover the fascinating world of literature.

I encourage you to let your curiosity guide you and reach out to them to learn and understand.

I also encourage you to read to gain new knowledge. And above all, never forget that every book you open is a door that opens onto new opportunities. So don't hold yourself back from learning and understanding, so that you can make the most of every moment of this national event dedicated to reading and books.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am also pleased to see that SILA is expanding beyond Abidjan to reach inland cities, as well as other guest countries. This initiative deserves praise and encouragement, as it not only promotes books on a massive scale but also helps people discover the rich cultural heritage of our regions—in this case, Gbêkê—and other countries such as Lebanon, for the 2026 edition.

Dear organizers, I encourage you to continue this type of partnership, inviting new guests each year, in order to introduce the public to the literary and cultural richness that exists around the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Among the initiatives carried out by the Children of Africa Foundation in the field of education, I would like to highlight our bookmobiles. These are mobile libraries, each containing more than 3,000 books, that travel to the most remote areas of our country to bring books to children who otherwise have no access to them.

To date, this initiative has enabled nearly 500,000 children to access reading materials for free in more than 100 communities visited by ten bookmobiles. Children also have the opportunity to become familiar with computers, thanks to the two internet-connected computers installed in the bookmobiles. We have also set up a video library containing over 100 educational films on animal life, the human body, and history and geography, which the children love to explore.

The Foundation's bookmobiles are true treasure troves of knowledge and learning. The children have a lot of fun there while learning. And I am happy that our bookmobiles are present at SILA, available to all visitors.

In addition to its bookmobiles, the Foundation has also built and equipped numerous multimedia rooms, as well as school and libraries across the country, to instill a taste of reading in our children and young people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I end, I would like once again to extend my sincere congratulations to Minister Françoise Remarck, Minister of Culture and Francophonie of Côte d'Ivoire, who has just concluded a particularly successful MASA and launched a very promising FEMUA.

I hope that this 16th edition of SILA will be just as resoundingly successful. And I hope that this fair will continue to instill in our youth a love of reading and the joy of discovering the world through books.

Thank you.