

OPENING ADDRESS OF THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA SOCIETY FOR EDUCATION THROUGH ARTS (SSASEA) AT THE NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY, POTCHEFSTROOM, SOUTH AFRICA. 2-4 December 2020.

CONFERENCE THEME: **'EMBRACING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE THROUGH THE ARTS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN GENERAL AND IN TIMES OF PANDEMIC DISRUPTION AND UNCERTAINTY'**

CHRISTIANA DELIEWEN AFRIKANER (PhD)

NAMIBIA

'THE BIRTH OF SSASEA'

Thank you Dr. Robert J. Balfour for the warm welcome. Our national and international colleagues, participants, and distinguished guests.

Executive Committee Members (2018–2021)

Chairperson—Dr. Christiana D Afrikaner (Namibia)

Vice-chairperson—Dr. Merna Meyer (South Africa)

Liaison Officer—Mr. Mike. J. Uirab (Namibia)

Treasurer—Dr. Mothusi Phuthego (Botswana)

Vice-treasurer—Dr. Jorge Gumbe (Angola)

Administrative Officers—Mr. Herbert Karapo and Ms. Renathe Thomas (Namibia)

Additional members:

1. Dr. Dziwa Darlington Dziwa (Zimbabwe)

2. Dr. Cheela Chilala (Zambia)

3. Mr. Michael Adeniyi (Nigeria) Sub-Saharan Africa Society for Education through Arts is newborn on the continent of Africa. We experienced the need to bring the sub-Saharan arts community under one roof, and therefore we established SSASEA in Namibia during the InSEA conference in 2018. We agreed on South Africa to host the maiden biennial conference, and the fruits are visible today. Allow me to thank the Vice-chairperson of

SSASEA, Dr. Merna Meyer, who has accomplished her challenge for presenting the first conference. Dr. Meyer is not only hosting the event, but has organized it under challenging circumstances.

It is a proud privilege and an occasion to present at this conference on Arts Education. It is an unforgettable day for us in sub-Saharan Africa to meet, learn, and share our abilities. We will share ideas on employability, leadership development, entrepreneurial skills, environmental awareness, and heritage preservation. As the theme guides us, we strive toward advocating the importance of arts education and arts-based research. Hence, at the end of this conference, we will offer recommendations for policy-related decisions and actions to carry out access to arts education in sub-Saharan Africa. We analyze and re-visit indigenous knowledge systems and its relevance for Social Development Goals, not only during this pandemic defied time but for wide-ranging approaches in the respective countries.

To mention the challenges in arts during this meeting will be like carrying water to the ocean. Our region, as with the rest of the continent, faces various difficulties. We can discuss those obstacles as a region through SSASEA, and that is one of our aims. The newborn Society is yet crawling and needs different available means and skills to achieve the goal. This conference thus is one such opportunity for us to shape and nurture the baby. We strive to figure arts education, not just to recall facts about artists, performances, or research. Still, we emphasize a more process-oriented, inquiry-based approach to learning that allows Africa to be heard. Joining our strength and taking hands will enable us to reach higher heights. We will not solve the global challenge of arts education's negligence in the blink of an eye, but we can overcome it through societies such as SSASEA.

The conference aims to support the implementation and promotion of Arts Education, handicrafts, and culture in the regional education system. In today's diverse culture with competing priorities, arts and crafts contribute to cultural pride awareness and cultural heritage maintenance.

Various researches have documented the positive impact of arts education in enhancing academic performances. As stakeholders during this conference, we must make concerted efforts to set, review, and strengthen policies and guidelines for capacitating arts education in sub-Saharan Africa.

The theme, 'Embracing indigenous knowledge through the arts for sustainable development goals,' guides us on the future of arts and sustainability. The organizers have invited people with good experiences in music, dance, drama, and visual arts as keynote speakers to take us through the topics. Allow me to use this opportunity to thank the distinguished educationists and academics of various sub-themes: Prof Emily Akuno,

Prof Logamurthie Athiemoolam, Dr. Marelize van Heerden and Dr. Martin Braund. Let us take part and apply the skills to enhance our unity and strengthen the targets of SSASEA.

As mentioned earlier, SSASEA is a newbie, and it will be right to give the background information, starting with the aims.

Objectives:

- To establish a sub-Saharan Africa identity with qualities that are associated with sub-Sahara Africa
- Align with the AU, UNESCO, AfrAA, InSEA, Pasmae, WDA, IDEA and other relevant arts organizations
- Provide the space for growth, inclusion, and development
- Synergy for member states
- Promotion of indigenous Arts and Crafts
- Offer opportunities for artists and connoisseurs to appreciate arts-related occasions

Strategic Objectives:

- Identification of Country Representatives to accommodate all Sub-Saharan Africa countries
- The duration of office for the current Executive Committee members is four years. We will hold elections by the end of November 2021 or during the next conference. The participants will decide during the week on the best option.
- Development of membership guidelines
- Outline operational rules
- Draft Constitution and Bylaws
- Registration of the Society as a corporate entity

4. Ms. Angela Martins (Ethiopia)

The combination of the committee members shows the countries which are currently represented on SSASEA. Thus, I plea to every participant to help mobilize representatives from the remaining countries to conclude the SSASEA house.

Sub-Saharan Africa Society for Education through Arts can be seen as the catalyst to reform the arts, but what role do we play to contribute to the change?

- We trust in the arts' power to move beyond aesthetics into work that enables communities and individuals to effect transformation, whether in attitude or action.
- SSASEA will interact in various countries for collaboration to create diverse talent across borders for economic growth
- We believe SSASEA is a communication-media, which allows people from different countries and cultures to interconnect through the arts
- SSASEA believes in overcoming the political barriers across sub-Saharan Africa through the involvement of our artists and art specialists

These are our elusive and random thoughts, which I believe might be discussed during this conference. I put the ball in our participants' court to build on the objectives and strategic matters of SSASEA.

Allow me to wish everyone the best for the conference as we learn from one another and engage in exchanging creative ideas and sharing insights. These initial discussions will spark intersections that will flourish into a transformation throughout the arts.

I want to end this address by thanking the organizers once more for their time, opinions, and generosity. Big gratitude to the North-West University's management and personnel for their support in hosting this historic event. I wish the dean and crew all the best for your future programs. I thank the participants for the presentations, exciting discussions, excellent cooperation, and the friendships we will gain through the week.

Finally, I hope the conference will carry out its aims and have a productive week in 'Potchefstroom, South Africa.'

I declare this conference officially opened. I thank you.