

**“Pan African Conference on Working with Languages in Local Communities”**  
**28th November 2018 at UNON**

Mr. Carlos Alegria, Deputy Director-General, Department for Interpretation (SCIC), European Commission,  
Your Excellencies, Head of the EC Delegation and Representative of Instituto Camões,

Dear Partners,  
Course Directors,  
Participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen

1. Welcome to the Fourth Pan African Conference of the Pan African Masters Consortium in Interpretation and Translation (PAMCIT) and a special welcome to the United Nations headquarters in Africa, UNON.
2. It is a real pleasure for me to place this event within the framework of the UN 2030 development agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals.
3. As I look at the range of participants gathered here today, I can see that the Pan African Conference has succeeded in bringing together stakeholders from the “South” and from the “North”. You are the experts and implementers working daily to build capacity in new disciplines and be informed by age-old knowledge systems that reside in our communities so that together, we can apply tested responses to overcoming our development challenges.
4. PAMCIT is a real international cooperation approach to training language practitioners. Our aim – based on the core values of multilingualism and multilateralism that we, the United Nations and the European Union, share – is to harness the high level of language proficiency that exists across Africa to respond to the strong demand for skilled language professionals worldwide.
5. Since programme inception in the five partner universities, PAMCIT has supported improved access for students to graduate in interpretation and translation studies. Over the past three years of funding operations, facilities have been strengthened, and students working with Arabic, English, French, Portuguese, Spanish, and Swahili have received tuition and mobility grants through this PAMCIT project, co-funded by the European Commission and UNON.
6. You have honoured our invitation to come here to Nairobi as the Consortium widens the theoretical framework for expertise development approaches that are already under implementation: Conference Interpretation and Translation Studies.
7. The PAMCIT project is now turning its attention to Public Service Interpretation Translation and, more specifically, at the decentralised level, to “Working with Languages in Local Communities”, the theme of this Fourth Pan African Conference.
8. The rationale is that a lot of communication happens in cross-cultural settings where people speak and gesture in different languages and need an interpreter or, indeed, a translator, to understand one another.
9. Our aim for this conference is to create more awareness and promote a better understanding of the realities of community interpreting and the linguistic diversity that exists all around us.

10. You are the academics and researchers in the field of interpretation and translation. Present here are also seasoned local and international sign language translators and interpreters. You are also community interpretation trainers and professionals, translation and interpretation students. You are the interpreters of the African voices that only used to be heard when they were channelled through international, European languages like French, English and Portuguese.

11. I would like to suggest a few issues that, perhaps, you are also going to consider today:

- What are the specific pedagogical structures most suitable to catering for future trends in interpretation at diverse levels of African societies?
- How can we learn from the institutional realities and constraints affecting interpreter training courses in Africa?
- Which technological opportunities do remote and virtual methodologies open up for expanding training beyond the resource-intensive, ivory towers of public and private universities, but also what challenges need to be overcome?
- What new insights do we bring to the development of interpreter and translator training in African languages?
- How can we expand our cooperation frameworks for sustainable training programme development in any of the defined areas of competency that are deemed priorities by experts such as yourselves?

12. No doubt this conference will provide us with some answers and certainly, with food for more thought.

13. I have no doubt that the messages of this conference – through the various levels of analysis that are proposed – shall give expression to directors, trainers and students present here - and following us online through the modern technology facilities that have been made available. Our interns – working with us here at UNON – shall be following the live tweets and messages as they come in. Perhaps you may even have questions from outside these walls as you proceed.

14. If I may end with a few words taken from one of the statements made by Mr. Antonio Guterres at the Paris Peace Forum just over two weeks ago, *“we need an inclusive multilateralism that is closely related to civil society”*. I know that your contributions at this Pan African Conference reflect research and thoughtful enquiry into how we can overcome some of the challenges that we face in advancing international cooperation through seamless, two-way communication in a multiplicity of languages, spoken and non-spoken.

15. A lot hangs on the results of this conference to so many people, and I wish you a very fruitful meeting today.

Thank you.