



Speech by IFLA President Glòria Pérez-Salmerón 2nd Meeting of African Ministers Responsible for Public Libraries

Durban, South Africa, 6 July 2018

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, friends,

I wanted to start by offering my thanks.

The job of IFLA – and of course my job as IFLA President – is to support the global library field.

To organise, to improve, to unite our voices.

To build a movement.

IFLA's job – my job – has been an easy one over these two days.

Thanks to your presence, your engagement.

I wanted to thank in particular the honourable Minister from South Africa for hosting our meeting.

And of course John, Helena, and the rest of the team from AfLIA who have made this all happen.

In five years, you have done so much.

And of course to Rocky and the team at the National Library of South Africa.

On your 200th Anniversary, you've of course had a little longer!

Your contribution is no less important.

Happy birthday to you all.

Let me underline.

This is a unique situation.

I cannot imagine anywhere else in the world where so many ministers would come together to talk libraries.

It is evidence of the leadership of South Africa.

Minister, I thank you for this.

And it is evidence of your collective commitment.

This is so important.

Because you are the key people for our institutions.

The decision-makers. The deal-breakers.

The key people for libraries.

And you have recognised that libraries are key for you.

The institutions that deliver on your goals.

Promoting literacy and a love of reading.

Raising awareness of African writing, not just that from the global north.

Supporting research and home-grown, African research.

Driving sustainable development through equitable access to information.

And it is a win-win situation.

Because what you invest in libraries, you receive many times in return.

Because when you support your libraries, you support your communities.

Because when you pass the right laws.

Making copyright balanced. Making education inclusive. Making public libraries accessible.

You pass laws which strengthen your people.

Because when you put libraries on the agenda of the African Union.

Of the United Nations.

You show your commitment to learning, livelihoods and progress worldwide.

In your words over the last two days, I have heard this message again and again.

Loud and clear.

Libraries are the motors of change.

This has been my slogan as IFLA President.

As I move into the second year of my presidency of IFLA, I am calling on libraries around the world to move up a gear.

To build a better world.

At this unique meeting, I can see that Africa's libraries and their ministers are already doing this.

More ministers, from more countries have attended than ever before.

And through your communiqué, you have taken a step forwards.

You have confirmed, and reinforced the momentum.

You have shown your colleagues, and your citizens, that you are committed to libraries.

You have set an example to the world.

You have also committed to meeting again next year.

So that gives us twelve months or so to act.

And you have given me confidence that we will see action.

At the local level.

At the national level.

At the continental level.

And at the United Nations and the World Intellectual Property Organisation.

As Gerald Leitner said at the beginning, the information divide is a development divide.

But Africa, with a strong library field, can lead.

You can show that neither is inevitable.

I want the story of Africa.

The story of Africa's libraries.

The story that we will tell in the future.

To be a story of bridging the divide.

Of inclusion, of participation, of empowerment, of success.

I believe it will be. That you can get there.

Travel well down this road.

Because as the Spanish poet Antonio Machado once wrote:

“Caminante no hay camino.

Se hace camino al andar”

In English - traveller, there is no path. The path is made by walking.

In your travels, IFLA will be with you.

Thank you.