

WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE ASN OF THE BAHAI OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF
CONGO ON THE OCCASION OF THE INAUGURATION CEREMONY OF THE HOUSE OF
WORSHIP

Honourable Members of Parliament and Senators,

Their Excellencies,

Their Eminences,

Dear Baha'i friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Distinguished guests, in your capacity as such

With all due respect to protocol

Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the national institution of the Democratic Republic of Congo and all, we would like to thank all the Authorities and all the guests who have deigned to respond to our invitation and this despite your daily occupations.

The Democratic Republic of Congo is the largest country in Central Africa with an area of 2,345,410 km² and borders nine different countries.

It stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the Eastern Plateau and corresponds to most of the Congo River Basin, which covers more than one million square kilometers. The north of the country is one of the largest domains of equatorial forest in the world; the east of the country is the domain of mountains, hills, large lakes but also volcanoes. The south and the center, rich in savannah trees, form a high plateau of various minerals.

The general climate of the country is hot and humid, but this varies from province to province. The difference is due to the fact that the equator crosses the entire Congolese territory. The existence of such a climate produces a dense vegetation and governs the provinces plus the city of Kinshasa, 33 cities, 145 territories, 259 chiefdoms, 478 sectors, 137 urban communes, 220 rural communes, 5087 groups, 2187 neighborhoods, 78855 villages populated by nearly 100,000,000 inhabitants divided into 250 ethnic groups and 450 tribes. A linguistic and cultural richness, about 226 spoken languages, to which is added a fauna and a flora so rich and so diverse.

This rich natural diversity is reflected in the state of the Baha'i faith in the country. Under the leadership of the Spiritual Assembly, 10 Regional Baha'i Councils accompany 10 Training Institutes, a primary capacity-building device for believers, to water 2526 clusters, 926 of which are at the first milestone and 776 at the frontiers of learning, nurtured by some 800 Local Spiritual Assemblies to meet the needs of nearly 700,000 souls across the country. A structure that allows for the circulation of various resources from top to bottom and from bottom to top to ensure and accompany development at the grassroots.

Distinguished guests

We welcome the presence of a former member of the Universal House of Justice, who previously served as a Continental Counselor in our country and who is accompanied by his wife, we cited Dr. Javaheri.

We also note the presence of a former member of the Baha'i International Teaching Center, accompanied by her husband, Dr. Albert Lincoln, who had served for many years as Secretary General of the Baha'i International Community.

Among the institutions, we welcome the presence of the members of the Continental Board of Counsellors from Africa, represented here by 15 Continental Counsellors and Mr. Saba MAZZA Counsellor serving the European continent.

The expansion and growth of the Baha'i Faith in the D.R. Congo has not only been the prerogative of the Congolese Baha'is alone, but has also benefited from the contribution and accompaniment of the Baha'i institutions as well as the hundreds of souls who have risen up, leaving their countries to come and lend a hand to the Baha'is of the D.R. Congo.

We welcome and thank the presence of 32 foreign delegations of Baha'i friends from Africa, Europe, the USA, Asia and even Australia to celebrate with their Congolese brothers and sisters, this great victory of the Faith on Congolese soil: South Africa, Germany, England, Angola, Australia, Belgium, Cameroon, France, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Hungary, Israel, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Namibia, Niger, Uganda, Central African Republic, Rwanda, Republic of Congo, Canada, Sao Tome and Principe, Chad, Togo, USA, and Zambia

Among the Baha'is coming from the interior of the country, we would like to highlight the particular presence of the indigenous peoples from the provinces of Equateur, Katanga, Kasai-Occidental, and North and South Kivu. Their presence as Baha'is symbolizes and materializes the principle of unity in the diversity of different peoples, ethnic groups and tribes.

We would like to salute the presence of hundreds of Baha'is from all the provinces of the country who represent only a sample of the hundreds of thousands of Baha'is in the D.R. Congo whose efforts are crowned for the establishment of this great institution and who are determined to carry the torch of the Baha'i Faith throughout the world.

This is an opportunity to pay a deserved tribute and welcome 18 people from abroad who have served our country as pioneers in various ways. We cannot end this word without greeting and thanking those friends who have served as Members of the National Spiritual Assembly and who can rejoice in the fruits of their service to the national institution.

We welcome them and wish them a pleasant stay in Kinshasa, D.R. Congo.

We mention to your kind attention the presence of the former resource person or member of the Temples and Sites Office with whom we have labored to not only understand different concepts related to the House of Worship but also and especially to the purchase of the site, the selection of the design, the choice of the architect, it is Mrs. Sarah Talai and we cannot forget to mention the Representative of the said office in the person of Mr. Bernard B no t residing in Canada.

It would be aberrant not to welcome the Representatives of the DEVIMCO company, which played the role of contractor to the builder of this House of Worship and also the staff of the Rankin company which played the role of delegated project manager.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Distinguished guests,

To all of you we say thank you and we wish you a happy celebration of this inauguration.