

EMBASSY OF BENIN IN DENMARK

ADDRESS BY THE AMBASSADOR OF THE OCCASION OF THE  
NATIONAL DAY OF BENIN

Copenhagen, 1<sup>st</sup> August 2016

**YOUR EXCELLENCIES AMBASSADORS, DEAR COLLEAGUES;**

**HONOURABLE GUESTS;**

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN;**

I bid you a warm welcome to the Embassy of the Republic of Benin in Denmark. I and my wife are most delighted to host you this afternoon on the occasion of our national day celebrated on 1<sup>st</sup> August every year. This is a moment of conviviality, friendship and brotherhood that we place this year under the sign of friendship between Benin and Denmark.

I also wish to extend to you the warmest greetings of the President of the Republic of Benin, Head of State, Head of Government, His **Excellency Mr Patrice Talon**.

As you know, the presidential elections of 6 and 20 March 2016 brought about power shift with the brilliant election of **His Excellency Mr Patrice Talon**, a renowned businessman. The election, which earned international praise, was held in a peaceful and serene atmosphere which testifies to the maturity of the Beninese people and strengthens furthermore the democratic achievements that the country has been making for more than twenty-five (25) years.

Yes, Benin is a haven of peace and political stability, which now shares with the countries in the Embassy's jurisdiction, including Denmark, the same values of good governance, rule of law, respect of human rights and freedom, economic liberalism, interest protection, fight against corruption and accountability. The Government of Benin works

tirelessly for sustained economic growth and for the well-being of populations.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

I have just spent 14 months to date, as the Head of the only diplomatic mission of the Republic of Benin which covers all of Northern Europe (Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway), the Republic of Iceland and the Baltic countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania), that is eight (08) countries; and I can tell you that I feel at home in Scandinavia, despite the climate contrasts and I am striving to promote my country in the region, like my fellow Ambassadors are also doing.

**Denmark** is certainly one of the countries in the region with which Benin has a rich cooperation in various fields such as education, health, water, sanitation, roads, environment, governance, democracy and gender.

Today, the will of the Government of Benin is to promote public-private partnerships between Benin and Denmark, in the prospect of attracting foreign direct investments in priority and profitable sectors in Benin such as agricultural production, agribusiness, energy, digital economy and tourism. In this context, the Embassy plans to hold a seminar before the end of 2016 on the opportunities offered by Benin for win-win partnerships. On that occasion, we expect to have the testimonies of several Danish Companies operating in Benin like **The MAERSK Group**, and others in the energy sector.

Another area of focus for the cooperation between Benin and Denmark is the promotion of partnership between the actors of civil

society organizations, through decentralized cooperation, for the local development of the Municipalities in our country. In this respect, I would like to pay a tribute to the **BØRNEfonden** Foundation which has been active in Benin for over 20 years in the sectors of education, health, income-generating activities for women. Currently **BØRNEfonden** is implementing a project on maternal and neonatal mortality in Benin, with the support and expertise of the Danish company **Falck**.

In the other countries in the Embassy's jurisdiction, efforts are also being made to kick-start development cooperation, especially with **Sweden** and **Norway** where the Beninese Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation carried out a working visit last May. Likewise, there is a shared willingness to develop some partnerships with **Finland** and **Estonia**.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Such is the purpose of our diplomatic Representation in Northern Europe that I have the honour of leading. The Embassy offers you a special issue of AFROSCANDIC Magazine to introduce Benin to you, as it is today, with its potential and its development ambitions.

I want to thank all of you for having responded to our invitation. It is a mark of solidarity and friendship for which I will continue to be grateful.

I invite you to raise your glasses to celebrate friendship and conviviality.

Thanks to you all!!!