MONIRA AL-MOHIZEA 2014-15 Term 1

ENGT 313 SIMOULTANEOUS TRANSLATION 13 SEPTEMBER

**Week: 2**

**Kofi Annan and Books for Africa**

Your excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to congratulate *Books for Africa* on its twentieth anniversary. It is an organization which was founded in the 1980s after one man, Tom Worth, was struck by the empty shelves of a library in Jinja, the second largest town in Uganda. He had travelled to east Africa looking for adventure. He returned with an idea and a mission, a mission to address the book famine in Africa. He decided to mobilize publishers, libraries, individuals and other organizations to collect books and send them to classrooms and libraries across the continent, where so many young people face a challenge of learning with hardly any resources.

In 1998, the first container of twenty five thousand books was sent. Twenty years on, twenty million books have been delivered to forty four African countries, with three million books sent last year alone. *Books for Africa* is a simple idea, but its impact is transformative, for as I have said before, literacy is quite simply the bridge from misery to hope. Literacy provides the keys to learning and empowers individuals to expand their choices and opportunities for the future. In doing so, it is a crucial bulwark against poverty and a necessary foundation for sustainable development. For everyone everywhere, literacy is, along with education in general, a basic human right. Over the last two decades, *Books for Africa* has made tremendous progress helping to extend this right in Africa.

I had the privilege to meet with staff members back in 1998, and in 2002, my wife Nan was able to visit the warehouse facility in Saint Paul Minnesota. We were hugely impressed by your efforts, but unfortunately today, many schools across the continent remain in need, and millions of children and adults are still without access to books and the tools to reach their full potential.

This year, *Books for Africa* is building on its assistance work with a new initiative which will send law-teaching books, legal treaties, human rights and rule-of-law books to African law schools, universities, bar associations, courts, government justice systems, and civic organizations. The goal is to help to strengthen the rule of law in Africa. It is an initiative named after my dear friend of forty years Jack Mason, a federal judge who sat on the board of this organization and I'm pleased to be able to co-chair with former Vice President Walter Mondale. I have no doubt that it would be administered with the same energy and commitment *Books for Africa* has shown over the past twenty years, and will help encourage progress in Africa to a transparent and accountable governance. Tom, staff, supporters and volunteers for *Books for Africa*, I thank you for your efforts and warmly congratulate you on this special anniversary.

Tom, I congratulate you for founding *Books for Africa* twenty years ago, your enthusiasm and total commitment to ending the book famine in Africa has opened up opportunities and no doubt changed the lives of many. We thank you wholeheartedly for your efforts. Good luck and wishing you every success in the future.