



AGA KHAN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

Press release

For immediate release

“Africa’s strength has always been her peoples”

Aga Khan delivers a message to Kusi Ideas Festival in Rwanda



Kigali, Rwanda, 8 December 2019 - “Africa’s strength has always been her peoples. Their resilience, sense of community and self-help, ingenuity and resourcefulness ... is responsible for the continent’s progress and exciting prospects.” This was the message by His Highness the Aga Khan, 49th hereditary Imam (Spiritual Leader) of the Shia Ismaili Muslims and founder and Chairman of the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) to the opening

session of the Kusi Ideas Festival, a gathering of over 500 influential leaders, scholars, entrepreneurs and innovators from across Africa.

The Kusi Ideas Festival was co-hosted by His Excellency Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, and attended by His Excellency Felix Tshisekedi, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, His Excellency Moussa Faki Mahamet, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Right Honourable Raila Odinga, High Representative for Infrastructure Development, African Union and Dr. Vera Songwe, Executive Secretary, UN Economic Commission for Africa, amongst other distinguished leaders.

Pointing to examples of compelling evidence that Africa is today a continent of hope and confidence, the Aga Khan emphasised that Africa offered opportunities for employment and investment, as well as a new market for goods and services.

He reminded the leaders gathered at the Conference that they have a responsibility “to assist people and communities to construct strong, resilient foundations, to ensure sustainable progress and lasting, positive change and to support and lift the hopeful voices of the continent’s youth.” He added that this could most readily be accomplished when government, the private sector and civil society institutions work together to create an enabling environment, where people can plan and build for their future and for future generations of their family.

The Aga Khan said that the Ismaili Imam (institution or office of the Imam) and the Aga Khan Development Network were committed to expanding their efforts, in partnership with others, to improve the quality of life for all Africans.

The Kusi Ideas Festival is a two-day, annual conference launched by the Nation Media Group as part of its 60th anniversary celebrations this year, to begin building a “Pan-African ideas transaction market” to capitalise on the opportunities and innovations available to Africa. Issues at this year’s conference include climate change, food security, human security, creating a borderless continent, media and democracy, culture and sports as well as sustainable economies.

The Nation Media Group, founded by His Highness the Aga Khan in 1959, is the largest multi-media house in East and Central Africa, with operations in print, broadcast and digital media that strive to improve the quality of people's lives by serving the continent as the Media of Africa for Africa.

Dr. Azim Lakhani, AKDN Diplomatic Representative for Kenya, delivered His Highness the Aga Khan's message at the Kusi Ideas Festival's Opening Ceremony, following opening remarks by Dr. Wilfred Kiboro, Chairman, Nation Media Group.

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NOTE:

AKDN in Africa

Under the leadership of His Highness the Aga Khan and his grandfather before him, the Aga Khan Development Network has been contributing to the development of Africa for over 100 years. The AKDN is present in 14 countries across the continent, from as far north as Egypt to as far south as Mauritius. The Network impacts over 14 million direct and indirect beneficiaries and employs over 35,000 Africans.

AKDN's not-for-profit social development agencies operate in over 10 sectors in Africa ranging from health and education to environmental sustainability, habitat protection and conservation and cultural restoration. Its for-profit agencies operate in the sectors of finance, industry, tourism, media, and infrastructure development, and re-invest surpluses into development activities.

Agencies of the AKDN partner with over 25,000 civil society organisations and over 100 funding partners. The AKDN's annual global budget for social development activities is close to US\$ 1 billion, a substantial percentage of which goes to Africa.

Read online: <https://www.akdn.org/press-release/“africas-strength-has-always-been-her-peoples”>