

MAKERERE CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL FRANCOPHONIE DAY

On 20th March, 2014, the Department of European and Oriental Languages at Makerere University joined the rest of the world to celebrate the International Francophonie Day. The function was held in the Upper Conference Hall of Senate Building and was graced by the French Ambassador to Uganda, Ms Sophie Makame and Ntungamo Municipality MP, Hon. Yona Musinguzi. French scholars from different parts of the country joined their counterparts at Makerere University in a round-table discussion on the learning and teaching of French in Uganda.

In his remarks, renowned French scholar Prof. Oswald Ndoleriire expressed concern over the small number of Ugandans who understand the language. He informed participants that Uganda has approximately 10,000 French speakers out of a population of 37 million. He urged Ugandans to develop interest in learning the language, noting that it is key in international relations. Ms Makame said the French Embassy would increase support towards the learning of French in Uganda.

In the speech read by the Principal, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Prof. Bernard Bashaasha, the Vice Chancellor of Makerere University, Prof. John Ddumba-Ssentamu, re-echoed the importance of the French language. He said French remains the only language other than English which is widely spoken on all the five continents.

He noted that in the Great Lakes Region of Africa, French is actively used in several countries as the official language and that it plays a vital role in their economic, human and social development. "Its teaching and learning at Makerere University since 1963 therefore opens doors to greater economic opportunities which are a key to the empowerment of the youth, our key stakeholders. Here at Makerere, the increasing number of students enrolled, especially in Beginners Programme and its integration in the Programmes of Agribusiness, Tourism, Business Management & Administration is a strong indicator of its relevance to the modern globalisation trends.

The Vice Chancellor said Makerere University is committed to working with the French Embassy, and the Government of Uganda to increase the visibility of French.

The preparations for the event were spearheaded by the Head of the Department of European and Oriental Languages, Dr Edith Natukunda –Togboa,

The International Francophonie Day is celebrated on March 20 every year throughout the world and especially in the 77 member countries of the International Organization of "La Francophonie". This date commemorates the signing on March 20, 1970, of the Niamey Convention which resulted in the grouping together of French-speaking states.

During the Francophonie week that runs from 14th -23rd March, millions of people around the world celebrate the values of the French Language, its culture and the values they uphold: such as freedom, tolerance and sharing.