

BAMVITA Chairman's welcome Note.

It is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity to welcome all visitors coming to this, the 18th National Book Week Festival. A special welcome to our brothers and sisters from Kenya and Uganda. I hope that authors, publishers, book sellers, librarians, book illustrators and others will find this Festival enjoyable and of benefit to their work. Warm welcome to participants in this Festival from Non Governmental Organisations which disseminate information through the print media and particularly through books. We do appreciate your contribution, especially as most of your publications are free and in some areas the only **reading material that is available.**

Everyone says Africans don't read. Tanzanians don't read. East Africans don't read. As in all generalisations, there is fact and there is fiction in that statement. Consider the following statements. "People do not have access to books." "People don't read because there aren't enough interesting books." "There are books but they are too expensive." "People want books that contain information that can help them improve their lives, and those books are not available." "Interesting books are written in English not Swahili." These statements may not explain fully why Africans don't read. But they certainly raise questions that must make us think and realise the complexity of the problem of readership and building the habit of reading.

Given interesting books from childhood, in the home and throughout the education years, every child has the same

chance to acquire the reading habit, irrespective of the society he or she comes from. The idea that Africans don't read is, therefore, false. What is true is that most Africans did not in the past, and do not still, have access to interesting books early in their lives for them to acquire the reading habit.

The Book Week Festivals that have been organised annually for the last seventeen years have the objective of remedying this situation by exposing to the Tanzania society, and especially to its children, all kinds of books produced in our country and in the sister Republics of Kenya and Uganda.

It takes great effort and requires a lot of support from people from all walks of life from different institutions to organise this Book Week Festival. I thank all those who gave their time, financial and other material support to the Organising Committee. Due recognition is given elsewhere in this brochure to those whose support was outstanding. We count on your support and hope you will be with us in the future. The work of educating our children and youths will never end and books will never outlive their usefulness or lose their fascination.

KARIBU to the 18th NATIONAL BOOK WEEK FESTIVAL

Walter Bgoya

Chairman

BOOK DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL OF TANZANIA