

ADDRESS BY MR. AZIZ KAICHOUH

President of the African Foundation for Lifelong Learning (AF3L)

Celebration of the 50th Anniversary of ICAE's First World Assembly

Online Webinar — 30 June 2026 at 2:00 pm (GMT+1)

Dr Jose Roberto Guevara, President of ICAE,

Madam Carole Houndjo, Vice-President of ICAE for Africa,

Prof. Emeritus Budd Hall, First ICAE Secretary General

Madam Isabell Kempf, Director of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning,

Madam Teddy Naluwu, UNBOUND National Coordinator, Uganda

Dr Edward Jackson

Dr Natasha Shivji

Distinguished speakers,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is with genuine emotion and with great pride, that I address you today on behalf of the African Foundation for Lifelong Learning.

Before anything else, I wish to extend our warmest congratulations to ICAE. Fifty years of sustained commitment is no small thing. For half a century, this organisation has championed one fundamental conviction on the world stage: **adult education is a basic human right, a source of dignity, and a force for social transformation.**

Through its tireless advocacy, adult education has come to be recognised as an essential component of educational policy, community development, democratic participation and social justice. We celebrate that legacy today with deep admiration — and with a sense of responsibility. Because marking fifty years of commitment also means asking ourselves: what will the next fifty look like? And to answer that question honestly, we must first look back at where it all began.

Fifty years ago, on African soil —Tanzania — ICAE held its very first World Assembly. It was more than a conference. It was a statement of belief: the belief that adult education could be a force for change, and that every man and woman, wherever they lived, had the right to learn, to grow, and to participate fully in the life of their community. That belief, planted in 1976, has taken root. But Africa has kept moving — and the challenges our continent faces today demand that same boldness, that same founding spirit, renewed for our time.

Because Africa is changing at a remarkable pace. Our continent is home to the world's youngest and most rapidly growing population — a generation hungry to learn, to build, to shape its own future. The transformation of work, the digital and ecological transitions, the demands of citizenship and social inclusion are all reshaping, profoundly, what it means to learn in the 21st century.

In this light, one conclusion is inescapable: education cannot be something that stops at the school gate. Learning must accompany people across their entire lives. Adult education is no longer simply about literacy. It has become a strategic priority —

enabling people to navigate economic change, engage meaningfully in public life, and contribute to sustainable development in their communities.

Put simply, adult education is now one of the cornerstones of lifelong learning — and that conviction lies at the very heart of our Foundation's purpose. AF3L was not born by chance: it is the direct response to a royal call to action. In June 2022, at CONFINTEA VII in Marrakech, **His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco** addressed a Royal Letter to participants, setting out a clear and ambitious vision — that lifelong learning must become a strategic priority for Africa, and that every African must have access to quality learning opportunities throughout their life. It is in the spirit of these Royal Orientations that AF3L was established, and it is what gives our work both its legitimacy and its sense of purpose."

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to say a few words about what unites AF3L and ICAE — and why we consider this partnership to be not merely important, but genuinely strategic.

For fifty years, ICAE has been the global voice of adult education. A voice shaped by dedicated women and men on every continent, all united in defending the right to keep learning throughout life.

AF3L, for its part, is grounded in African realities. We work alongside communities, grassroots organisations, governments and universities to make lifelong learning a tangible reality across our continent — in places where the need is great, but where the energy, the creativity and the will to change are equally powerful.

Our partnership with ICAE goes well beyond a formal institutional arrangement. It is an expression of a shared vision: that meeting today's challenges requires placing adult education at the centre of public policy, building real connections between global experience and local practice, and ensuring that African innovations find their rightful place in the international conversation.

Ours is a meeting of two complementary strengths: global reach on one side, and deep local rootedness on the other. Together, we are stronger, more credible, and more impactful than either of us could be alone.

And this event today is the first public expression of that alliance. We hope it will be the beginning of a long and fruitful journey together.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The theme of this gathering — *Looking Back to Move Forward* — is an invitation not to dwell in the past, but to draw from it the clarity we need to build a better future.

ICAE's history reminds us that the most lasting progress has always come through international cooperation and genuine dialogue across cultures and communities. That lesson has lost none of its relevance. In a world undergoing change at an unprecedented scale, investing in adult education means investing in people's ability to understand that change, to respond to it, to innovate — and ultimately, to build societies that are more resilient, more just, and more sustainable.

For AF3L, this translates into three clear commitments : **building the capacity of African adult education organisations** so they can serve their communities with the expertise and resources they deserve ; **securing recognition for non-formal and informal learning** — which, despite being the daily reality for millions of Africans, remains far too often invisible in policy frameworks ; And **forging strong continental and international partnerships** — like the one we are building with ICAE — so that African voices carry real weight in shaping regional and global education agendas.

We firmly believe that the decades ahead must see adult education move from the margins to the mainstream of development policy — recognised not as an afterthought, but as an indispensable pillar of any serious strategy for peace, progress and shared prosperity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we listen today to the speakers, as we reflect on Nyerere's enduring legacy, and as we look together toward the future of adult education and lifelong learning — we are doing something far more significant than marking an anniversary. We are reaffirming a commitment. We are renewing a promise. We are choosing, collectively, to hold onto the belief that education is a political act, an act of justice — and an act of faith in humanity.

In this milestone year, the African Foundation for Lifelong Learning reaffirms its determination to pursue that mission — side by side with ICAE and all our international partners.

In this milestone year, the African Foundation for Lifelong Learning reaffirms its determination to pursue that mission — side by side with ICAE, [UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning \(UIL\)](#) and all our international partners

Let us keep making adult education and lifelong learning what it was always meant to be: a force for emancipation, for innovation, and for transformation — for the generations of today and those yet to come.

AF3L is proud, and honoured, to walk this path with ICAE.

Thank you.