

**07-07-2023:**

## **Maadhimisho ya Siku ya Kiswahili Duniani (UNESCO) Hamburg – The celebration of the World Kiswahili Language Day in Hamburg**

The national celebration of the **World Kiswahili Language Day on 07 July 2023** in Germany was hosted by the University of Hamburg. The diverse programme was organised by activists from the Hamburg-Dar es Salaam city partnership, the former lecturer for Kiswahili at the university's Department of African and Ethiopian Studies, the Tanzanian Embassy in Germany, and the Senate of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg. The public was invited to come and learn about Kiswahili and aspects of East African culture, and to celebrate together. More than 200 guests participated in the event.



In his opening speech, Prof. Dr. Roland Kießling dealt with the history of Kiswahili in the context of pre-colonial trade in the Indian Ocean, its spread from the coast to the hinterland, the standardisation efforts, and the role of Kiswahili in the nation-building process in Tanzania. He also spoke about the current situation of the language in East Africa and especially in Tanzania stressing that Kiswahili is a true Bantu language which, through its history of contact has integrated many lexical elements of other languages, especially Arabic.

The Tanzanian Ambassador in Germany, Dr. Abdallah Possi, spoke on the role of Kiswahili in diplomacy, where the Kiswahili language can be used as a component of soft power in Tanzania's international relations due to its international importance and status. Moreover, East African countries should play a key role in defining proficiency levels within the framework of Kiswahili as a foreign language. They should also take the opportunity to develop teaching and learning materials for the international market. After his speech, the

Ambassador presented the department of African and Ethiopian Studies with a selection of dictionaries and textbooks prepared and published by BAKITA, the National Kiswahili Council of Tanzania.

The representative of the Hamburg Senate Chancellery, Mr. Markus Heilig, emphasised the achievements of the sister city partnership with Dar es Salaam. Since its launch in 2010, many people on both sides have helped to bring the partnership to life through their engagement in numerous projects and exchange programmes. He highlighted the partnership between the fire brigades of both cities, and cultural projects for disadvantaged youth and women.

All speeches were held in either German or Kiswahili and translated into the other language by the former lecturer of Kiswahili at the University of Hamburg, PD Dr. Uta Reuster-Jahn.

Two MCs guided through the programme: Chris Mwakihaba talked in German, while Thurid Beling talked in Kiswahili.



Ismael Sheha recited stanzas from Shaaban Robert's poem "Kiswahili", which were translated into German by Uta Reuster-Jahn.



Advanced students of Kiswahili performed a play based on the folk story „Abunuwasi and the cooking pot“ (written and directed by Uta Reuster-Jahn)



The many uses of khangas were explained and demonstrated.

- The sister city choir Hamburg presented songs in Kiswahili and the audience participated in the “partnership song”, in Kiswahili and German.
- Exhibition tables invited to take a look at children’s books in Kiswahili as well as various East African games.
- The partnership projects were presented.
- DJ Swai played Swahili music of different styles and eras.

How does Kiswahili cuisine taste? The buffet gave a wonderful impression of it.



The audience enjoyed the evening until late at night.



Many thanks to the enthusiastic organisation team! Many thanks to the University of Hamburg, the Tanzanian Embassy in Germany and the Hamburg Senate for funding the event!

Uta Reuster-Jahn