

Looted African Sculpted Arts Calls Intensify for Restitution

■ The Africa Avenir international Foundation reiterated the call during a workshop in Douala on Monday.



Sculpted arts constitute part of our collective memory.

Fred VUBEM TOH

The Africa Avenir International Foundation, the organisation spearheading the fight for the restitution of stolen African arts objects in Europe, organised a workshop on Monday August 27 at its head office in Bonaberi Douala with special focus on the restitution of not only the national patrimony but also the African patrimony. Speaking during the opening ceremony, the founding president of Africa Avenir International Foundation, Prince Kum'a Ndumbe III, said it was customary of the organisation to celebrate the collective memory of the people every year. First it was in honour of people who lived under colonialism and then heroes of the independence struggle and this

year focus is on the restitution of looted sculpted arts from Africa. He said the colonialists robbed Africans of their memory; spiritually, intellectually and culturally. He appealed to government and UNESCO to assist in the fight for the restitution of the stolen arts objects. He said Africa has come of age and restoring African history begins from the restitution of the stolen arts works. "15000 arts objects are found at the Quai Branly museum in France alone. Prince Kum'a Ndumbe equally called for the repatriation of the skeletons of Africans taken to Europe as trophy of war.

The representative of UNESCO at the workshop, Christian Ndombi said the Douala meeting coincides with a similar meeting to be organised by UNESCO in the days ahead on the illicit trafficking of

cultural objects during which he said, UNESCO will be recommending the restitution of African arts objects whether stolen, bought or offered as gifts. He said they will also be sensitising the forces of law and order as well as the customs on the differences between arts objects and artisanal objects.

The Governor of the littoral Region, Samuel Ivaha Diboua promised to transmit the concerns of the NGO to the appropriate quarters saying the issue is pertinent to our history. Issues to be raised during the workshop include conquest, resistance and looting of sculpted arts during colonialism, destinations of looted objects, attitude of some colonial masters to the issue of restitution, elaboration of African principles on restitution and several other issues. ■