

OFFICE OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR



SPEECH BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

**VII INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AFRO-HISPANIC, LUSO-BRAZILIAN, AND
LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES (ICALLAS 2026)**

ADDRESS BY:

**PROFESSOR NANA ABA APPIAH AMFO
VICE-CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA**

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5, 2026

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

Provost, College of Humanities and Chairman of this Occasion,

Our distinguished keynote speakers, Hon. Kojo Yankah, Emerita

Professor Alicia Girón, and Mr. Pedro Pérez-Sarduy,

Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Distinguished scholars, colleagues, students, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning.

It is my singular honour and privilege to welcome you to the University of Ghana for the Seventh International Conference on Afro-Hispanic, Luso-Brazilian, and Latin American Studies (ICALLAS 2026).

On behalf of the University Council, Management, faculty, staff and students, I extend our warmest welcome to all participants who have travelled from across Ghana, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and many other parts of the world to be with us.

There are some oceans that divide people. The Atlantic Ocean is not one of them.

For centuries, it has carried people, languages, cultures, ideas and traditions between Africa and the Americas. It has also borne the painful histories of enslavement, displacement and colonialism. Yet alongside those painful histories are equally powerful stories of resilience, creativity, resistance and renewal. It is these complex and enduring connections that bring us together today.

The theme of this conference, **"Transatlantic Pathways: Culture, Politics, and Knowledge Between Africa and Latin America,"** could hardly be more timely. It reminds us that the relationship between our regions is not merely historical; it continues to shape contemporary debates about identity, language, governance, development, culture and knowledge production. More importantly, it challenges us to imagine new possibilities for collaboration and shared progress.

Since its establishment in 2007, ICALLAS has become an important platform for interdisciplinary scholarship and intellectual exchange. It has strengthened academic networks across continents and deepened our understanding of the rich historical and cultural connections

between Africa, Latin America and the wider African diaspora. The University of Ghana is proud to host this seventh edition.

As a linguist, I have long believed that languages carry far more than words. They carry histories, identities, memories and ways of seeing the world. In many respects, this conference celebrates exactly that richness. It brings together scholars whose work demonstrates that our shared histories are preserved not only in archives and monuments, but also in our languages, literature, music, religions, artistic traditions and everyday cultural practices.

This gathering also speaks directly to the mission of the University of Ghana. We are committed to generating knowledge that is globally relevant while remaining deeply rooted in African realities. Through our Strategic Plan, we have prioritised impactful research, transformative student learning and meaningful international partnerships. ICALLAS embodies these aspirations by creating opportunities for interdisciplinary research, international collaboration and intellectual engagement across regions that share much more than geography might suggest.

Indeed, the challenges confronting our world today—whether inequality, migration, cultural preservation, social justice or sustainable development—cannot be addressed in isolation. They require dialogue across disciplines, across cultures and across continents. Universities have a unique responsibility to create the spaces where those conversations can happen. This conference is one such space.

The significance of this work is reflected in growing international attention to the histories and contributions of people of African descent. The United Nations' Second International Decade for People of African Descent invites us to advance recognition, justice and development. Here in Ghana, initiatives such as the Year of Return, Beyond the Return, and now the Black Star Experience similarly seek to reconnect Africa with its global diaspora and strengthen enduring bonds between peoples.

Latin American scholarship has also enriched this conversation through the idea of the "**Third Root**," recognising African heritage as one of the foundational influences in shaping Latin American

societies. It is a powerful reminder that the histories of Africa and Latin America have always been intertwined.

One historical figure captures that connection particularly well. Gaspar Yanga, believed by many historians to have originated from this part of West Africa before being taken across the Atlantic, became one of the earliest leaders of successful resistance against enslavement in the Americas. His legacy reminds us that the links between Africa and Latin America are not abstract subjects of academic inquiry. They are living histories that continue to shape identities, communities and aspirations on both sides of the Atlantic.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we gather over the next few days, I encourage us to think beyond disciplinary boundaries. Let us use this conference not only to present papers but to build partnerships, challenge assumptions and learn from one another. The most enduring contributions of conferences are often not the presentations themselves, but the collaborations they inspire.

At the University of Ghana, our motto is ***Integri Procedamus***—*Let us Progress with Integrity*. It reminds us that scholarship is at its best when it is rigorous, inclusive, collaborative and directed towards the public good. May that spirit guide our deliberations throughout this conference.

It is therefore my pleasure to welcome you once again to the University of Ghana. I wish you fruitful discussions, stimulating intellectual exchanges and lasting collaborations.

It is now my honour to declare the Seventh International Conference on Afro-Hispanic, Luso-Brazilian, and Latin American Studies (ICALLAS 2026) officially open.

Thank you.

God bless the University of Ghana.

God bless Ghana.

And God bless us all.

Prof. Nana Aba Appiah Amfo

Vice-Chancellor

August 5, 2026