



Tribute to Dr. Boubakar Barry (former CEO of WACREN)

Read by by Dr. Venant Palanga (Board Chair and Interim CEO of WACREN)

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. All protocols observed.

It is a great honour to speak about Dr. Boubakar Barry, the former Chief Executive Officer for WACREN, who left us painfully in September 2024.

Before I go on, allow me to say 'thank you' on behalf of the WACREN community to the Board, CEO, and entire Secretariat of UbuntuNet Alliance for honouring Dr. Barry's legacy with this special moment. This is a testament to the 'Ubuntu' spirit. Thank you, Prof. Madara.

Ladies and gentlemen, on Wednesday, September 18th, 2024, the global research and education network community heard the unfortunate news of the passing of Dr. Boubakar Barry—one of the icons of the research and education network fraternity.

Boubakar, as some of us affectionately called him, was a man who demonstrated an unwavering dedication to research and education in Africa. He dedicated most of his life to advancing African's research and education landscape in many ways. He believed in the ability of the African and demonstrated this in his work life and contribution to the research and education network community.

Boubakar was a pioneering force behind WACREN and a contributor to the internet community in Africa. He was instrumental in building a vibrant network infrastructure and community of stakeholders and fostering collaboration among research and education institutions in West and Central Africa through the support of the AfricaConnect project (co-funded by the European Commission). His desire was to see African knowledge gain visibility and contribute significantly to the global knowledge ecosystem. Indeed, his pioneering efforts significantly strengthened digital connectivity and collaboration in research and education across the continent.

For more than 13 years, he steered the affairs of WACREN, moving it from a 'no connectivity' to 'a beyond connectivity' community. Through his wise leadership at WACREN, hundreds of thousands of researchers, faculty and students have been enabled to engage in cutting-edge research and contribute meaningfully to global knowledge.

Boubakar's contributions were not confined to technical infrastructure alone. He championed the principles of openness, cooperation, and inclusivity, ensuring that African institutions had the resources to participate fully in the global research ecosystem. His leadership inspired the creation of solid partnerships and paved the way for innovative projects that continue to advance scientific discovery, education, and development in our community and beyond.

His legacy will live on in the vibrant African research and education communities to which he dedicated his life. His life is a true reflection of the wise saying, 'To open the door of knowledge is to open the door of possibility'.

If you ever got an email from Dr. Barry, you would have seen his signature reading - 'Keep it simple, as simple as possible, but not simpler. (A. Einstein)'. Boubakar was a simple man but with great depth of experience, gravity and wisdom.

As I end, I would like to invite the UbuntuNet community to join us to eulogise Dr. Barry by sharing your tributes at <https://boubakarbarry.wacren.net/>

Ladies and gentlemen, may I humbly request that we all stand on our feet and observe a minute of silence in honour of the life and legacy of Dr. Boubakar Barry.

Thank you, Dr Boubakar Barry, for dedicating your life to research and education in Africa.

Rest in peace, Boubakar!

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.