

The testimony of Professor Philibert Nang

Professor Philibert Nang is currently Professor at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Libreville (Gabon). He was awarded the 2011 ICTP Ramanujan Prize for young mathematicians from developing countries, the 2017 AMMSI Phillip Griffiths Prize (African Mathematics Millenium Science Initiative) and the CENAREST Grand Prix of the National Center for Scientific Research.

In the context of the French bid for the organization of ICM 2022 in Paris, I find it useful to illustrate the connections between France and Africa through the prism of my precise case in Gabon.

After having obtained a University Degree in Scientific Studies in Mathematics in 1989 in Gabon, I was awarded a scholarship grant within the framework of the French-African cooperation. This allowed me to study at the Henri Poincaré University in Nancy, where I obtained a Bachelor's Degree and a Master's Degree 1 in Mathematics, respectively in 1990 and 1991. I then entered the graduate program at Pierre and Marie Curie University in Paris where I prepared of PhD in Mathematics under the direction of Professor Louis Boutet de Monvel. I was funded by a research allocation from the French government and I also practiced as instructor in the same university during that period. On November 15th 1996, I defended a PhD in Pure Mathematics entitled «Regular holonomic D-modules associated to the group of similitudes ».

After my PhD and a few years of practice as an ATER (Temporary Teaching Researcher) in Pierre and Marie Curie University, I returned to Gabon to teach Mathematics at the University of Science and Technology MASUKU (USTM) in Franceville and at the Ecole Normale Supérieure (ENS) in Libreville until now. Meanwhile however, I created the Society of Mathematics of Gabon (SMG). I also kept structuring and livening up the ENS Mathematical Research Laboratory, as well as seminars and working groups, particularly in Algebraic analysis: a weekly working group on D-modules theory and sheaf theory and a bi-weekly working group on analytic pseudo-differential operators.

I regularly visit France for extended scientific stays, that provide me the opportunity to exchange views with other mathematicians and to make progress in my research, notably at the “Institut des Hautes Etudes Scientifiques” (IHES) in Bures-sur-Yvette, and the Institute of Mathematics of Jussieu (IMJ). During these visits I benefit from an exceptional working environment with excellent working conditions that are missing in sub-Saharan countries like Gabon.

I would like to use this opportunity to encourage the French mathematical community to pursue and develop further its fruitful scientific cooperation with mathematicians from Africa. In particular, I consider the French initiative to organize summer schools in direction of young mathematicians from developing countries just before the ICM may have a great impact on the future of Mathematics in these countries.