



Obafemi Awolowo Prize for Leadership
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STATEMENT BY THE SELECTION COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN AT THE UNVEILING
OF THE RECIPIENT OF THE MAIDEN AWARD OF
THE OBAFEMI AWOLOWO PRIZE FOR LEADERSHIP

I welcome you all to this unveiling of the recipient of the maiden award of the Obafemi Awolowo prize for leadership.

Background

The Obafemi Awolowo Prize for Leadership is an initiative of the Obafemi Awolowo Foundation, which was set up in April 1992 to serve as the custodian of Chief Awolowo's intellectual legacy. It was established as an independent, non-profit, non-partisan organisation dedicated to immortalising the democratic and development-oriented ideals of Chief Obafemi Awolowo.

The Foundation has sought, over the years, to actualise its mission-mandate through various activities, which include the periodic hosting of Dialogues, designed to examine critical issues of national concern with a view to proposing viable strategies for their solution.

In the communique issued at the end of one of such Dialogues, the Special Dialogue held in July 2011 with the theme, 'Transformational Leadership and Good Governance: Lessons from the Awolowo Example', it was observed that one of the greatest challenges facing Nigeria and, indeed, African countries today is the dearth of good leadership.

One of the major recommendations of the Special Dialogue was that the Obafemi Awolowo Foundation should institute an **Obafemi Awolowo Prize for Leadership** to encourage, recognize, reward and celebrate excellence in Nigerian leadership.

As is well known, Chief Obafemi Awolowo was a Nigerian and Pan-African nationalist of global repute. He was the First Premier of Nigeria's Western region and, later, Leader of Opposition in the Federal Parliament. He was also, *inter alia*, Nigeria's Federal Commissioner (now known as Minister) of Finance and Vice Chairman, Federal Executive Council. He played key roles in the colonial and postcolonial history of Nigeria's constitutional and political development.

A highly revered Nigerian federalist, Chief Awolowo, upon his transition, was variously described by Nigerian leaders as “the issue in Nigerian politics” and “the best president Nigeria never had” in recognition of his indomitable role as a leader in Nigerian politics.

The Prize

This prestigious biennial national prize is structured to follow a rigorous process of nomination and subsequent screening by a Selection Committee made up of some of the most outstanding Nigerians.

Members of the Selection Committee which is chaired by my humble self, include Justice Muhammadu Uwais, Professor Akin Mabogunje, Sir Olaniwun Ajayi, Chief Ayo Adebajo, Olorogun Felix Ibru, Professor O. O. Akinkugbe, Bishop Emmanuel Gbonigi, Bishop Matthew Kukah, Professor Adetokunbo Lucas, Professor Ladipo Adamolekun, Professor Anya O. Anya, Mr Bola Akingbade, Professor (Mrs) Funmi Soetan, and Mr Niyi Adegbonmire. The Committee is very ably assisted in its work by the Foundation’s Executive Director, Dr Tokunbo Awolowo Dosumu.

Nominees for the prize are expected to have demonstrated, to a substantial degree, the attributes considered to have characterised Chief Awolowo’s leadership style, which include integrity, credibility, discipline, courage, selflessness, accountability, tenacity of purpose, visionary and people-centred leadership, as well as respect for the rule of law and press freedom.

The prize consists of a medal, a certificate and a plaque. The emphasis is on the intrinsic value of the award, which, in itself, not only confers considerable honour and recognition on the recipient, but also serves as a strong incentive for the pursuit of excellence in leadership and good governance in Nigeria.

The 2012 Award

In line with the relevant guidelines for the selection of candidates for the award, the call for nomination for the maiden award of the Obafemi Awolowo Prize for Leadership was published from 29th June to 30th September, 2012. At the close of nomination, an impressive number of nominations was received. We wish to thank all those who sent in nominations for consideration. We would also like to acknowledge that many of these nominees are eminent persons who have made tremendous contributions in various spheres of national and international life.

The Recipient

It gives me immense pleasure to announce that, after very careful consideration, the Selection Committee came to the unanimous conclusion that, of all the nominees presented before it, the individual adjudged to possess to the highest degree the

attributes for the award, and is, therefore, the **first ever recipient of the Ọbafẹmi Awolọwọ Prize for Leadership, is Professor Wọle Soyinka.**

An appropriate citation of Professor Soyinka will be given at the actual award ceremony which is scheduled to hold in March 2013, to coincide with Chief Awolọwọ's birth anniversary.

Suffice it to say at this point, however, that Professor Soyinka has, in various ways, demonstrated many of the core values that have been associated with Chief Ọbafẹmi Awolọwọ, and which this Prize is meant to encourage and reward.

I thank you all for your attention and support.

**Chief Emeka Anyaoku GCVO, CFR, CON.
Chairman, Selection Committee of the Ọbafẹmi Awolọwọ Prize for Leadership
December 19, 2012**