

**LAUREATE AWARD CEREMONY**

**Laureate: *Akinwumi Adesina***

**October 19, 2017 - 7:00 p.m.**

**Akinwumi Adesina**

President, African Development Bank

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...the vice president, my companions of the United States, representative, and my dear friends, Honorable Green, of the USAID administrator. Thank you very much for that warm letter from His Excellency, the vice president. Thank you so much.

Madam Governor Reynolds of Iowa, my dear friend, Secretary Vilsack, former governor of Iowa, my beautiful wife—isn't she gorgeous—Grace, my family that are here with me, for my President, Olusegun Obasanjo, who is actually a father for me, for my president Mahama of Ghana, representative of the president of Nigeria, President Muhammadu Buhari, and representative of President Macky Sall of Senegal, Your Excellencies, ambassadors, congressmen that are here, distinguished ladies and gentlemen.

First and foremost I thank God and my Savior, Jesus Christ for his grace in my life, and to Him I rededicate myself to help feed our world. I wish to thank Ambassador Quinn. I want to thank in particular John and Janis Ruan, the Borlaug family to have Jeanie and Julie, Professor M.S. Swaminathan, the board of the World Food Prize Foundation for the great honor of being awarded the World Food Prize for 2017. And I wish to thank my mentor, Dr. Norman Borlaug, for taking time off at this point to look down from heaven at this moment, here is for you, Norman.

I feel so inspired to receive the World Food Prize. It is simply amazing that a son of a poor farmer who grew out of poverty would be on world stage to receive the World Food Prize. I thank my parents for sacrificing for me to go school. If not, I probably would not have been here today. I probably would be a poor kid, languishing away in the village.

I want to thank my father-in-law who is not here—I wish he was here today—Dr. Barnabas Oloruntoba - He gave me a lot of inspiration in agriculture, but he left me something great I will never forget, a wonderful daughter in Grace. I did not get here alone. My dear wife, Grace, if you may stand, please. And please remain standing until I ask you to sit. Grace sacrificed her career for mine. She helped to bring up our two lovely sons, Rotimi and Segun. As we move around the world, she is my closest partner in this journey. She inspires me and challenges my ideas, refines them but as always made them shine. I love you, honey. Thank you very much.

My bosses and colleagues throughout my career, several who are here tonight, they inspired me. From the Rockefeller Foundation, Gordon Conway, president who hired me there. Bob

Herd , Gary Toenniessen, Peter Matlon – these are the folks that helped to shape me, and I want to thank you very much tonight.

My professors at Purdue University – they sewed in me a passion for international development, and of course I feel tremendously honored that President Mitchel is here from Purdue University, and what an outstanding band we had from Purdue University – great surprise. Thank you very much, professor, for being here.

The Rockefeller Foundation – what would I be without the Rockefeller Foundation? The Rockefeller Foundation and the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa, where I worked for over a decade. They allowed me to try out many of my bold ideas, and some of them were pretty risky as well, and sparked my drive to end hunger and poverty.

I would like to particularly thank Bill & Melinda Gates, because they played a great role in all the work that I did. I salute and thank all my staff, my colleagues, the board of directors of the African Development Bank for our shared passion to feed Africa. Several leaders supported me, especially Baba, President Obasanjo who nominated me to be the Minister of Agriculture in Nigeria. And that's another story that I must tell another day.

And for my president, Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria, who gave me the honor of my life to serve Nigeria as minister of Agriculture. I also wish to thank the president of my country, Nigeria, President Muhammadu Buhari, for his very strong support of me. And of course sitting right here is President John Mahama who has supported me so much over the years.

My staff and the ministry of agriculture in Nigeria, the farmers of Nigeria, the private sector, the youths of Nigeria were part of the remarkable successes we have achieved on agricultural transformation in Nigeria. To them I say a very big thank you.

I dedicate this World Food Prize to my dear wife Grace, to Africa, and to all my colleagues with whom I have worked over the years. I didn't work alone. There will not be any rest for me until Africa feeds itself, and for that, we need the youth.

And so even though I don't have the check in my hand right now, I hereby commit my \$250,000 U.S. dollars – that's a quarter of a million dollars – World Food Prize Award to set up a fund fully dedicated to providing grants, fellowships and financing for the youth of Africa in agriculture as a business.

Thank you. We will arise and feed Africa. The day is coming very soon when the barns of Africa will be filled, when all of its children will be well fed, when its millions of smallholder farmers will be able to send their kids to school. Then you will hear a new song across Africa. Thank God, our lives are better at last. Thank you very much and God bless you all.