

MOGA Award Acceptance Statement

Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am deeply humbled and honoured to accept the Medal of Glory Award (MOGA), the Highest Honour the Foundation for Democracy in Africa has to offer to personalities deemed to have made considerable contributions to the development and promotion of democracy in Africa.

2. This recognition is not only a personal achievement but a testament to the collective efforts and commitment of many individuals and organisations who have worked tirelessly to advance democracy and human rights on the African continent. The distinguished honourees for this year, Dr. Condoleezza Rice, former US National Security Adviser and Secretary of State, the Reverend Jesse Jackson, the Founder and Past President of the Rainbow Coalition, my brother and colleague Amb. Kingsley Mamabolo, the current South African High Commissioner to the United Kingdom and my humble self, illustrate this point very clearly through the contributions we have made in the course of our illustrious careers. The list of previous recipients of the Award, including two former Presidents of my country, Nigeria, Alhaji Shehu Shagari and Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, and my former boss in the African Union Commission, Professor Alpha Oumar Konare, former President of Mali, clearly further confirms this assertion.

3. I congratulate my fellow Awardees for this year and commend them for their contributions to the promotion of democracy and all that comes with it, not only in Africa but beyond our continent. Their efforts, particularly those of Dr. Rice and Rev. Jesse Jackson, have helped to uplift the profile and status of the Black race in the United States and all over the world.

4. Ambassador Mamabolo and I had the privilege and honour to have been our countries' Representatives in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and made considerable contributions to the transformation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to the African Union (AU) from 2000 to 2002, when the AU was established. We have also contributed to the development of virtually all the AU instruments that guide its governance institutions. That is why we had the

pleasure to participate in the African Diaspora Town Hall Meeting jointly organised by the Foundation and the AU in December 2002. I am therefore particularly happy that we are receiving this Award together. He has been a worthy son of Africa and a good personal friend.

5. I want to express my profound gratitude to the Foundation for Democracy in Africa for bestowing their prestigious Award upon me. This organisation has been a beacon of hope and progress, tirelessly working to promote democracy and strengthen the foundations of peace and prosperity in Africa. The Foundation has played a significant role in promoting African Diaspora participation in Africa's political and economic development over the past two decades. It has done so through many means, including research and advocacy to highlight the potentials of the African Diaspora as a valuable resource for Africa's development; building partnerships between African Diaspora groups and African governments; and promoting investments in Africa. Thus, over the last 20 years, the Foundation has helped to create awareness, built bridges and fostered collaboration between the African Diaspora and their home countries. The massive AfrICANDO 2023 programme illustrates all of this.

6. Thus, to be honoured by such a distinguished institution is not only a privilege but a great honour. I therefore want to thank the Foundation for this prestigious Award, which I accept with humility and profound gratitude.

7. As I accept the Award, I am acutely aware that it is not just a personal achievement but a testament to the collective efforts of countless individuals and organisations that have dedicated themselves to the noble cause of democracy. It is a reflection of the work of diplomats, statesmen, activists, and ordinary citizens who have strived to build a brighter future for our continent.

8. In saying this, I like to point out that the work of instituting democracy in Africa is far from finished. One only needs to recall the recent reversal of constitutional rule in four West African countries and others in Central Africa Republic and Gabon, to know that democracy is not yet a given in Africa. It also makes it plain for all to see that just holding elections, however well it is done or not, is not a measure of how firmly democracy has taken root in Africa. Things have to change. The MOGA Award therefore serves as a reminder that the work of promoting democracy in Africa is far from over. Challenges still exist, and efforts must continue to diligently address them. There is need to safeguard the principles of good governance, human rights, and the rule of law.

Efforts must also be made to ensure that the voices of all Africans are heard and that their aspirations are met.

9. I pledge to continue my commitment to remain engaged in this noble cause, working in collaboration with the Foundation for Democracy in Africa and all those who share the vision. Together, we can bring about positive change and inspire future generations to build a more democratic, peaceful, and prosperous Africa.

10. In closing, I want to express my deepest gratitude to God Almighty who made this award possible. I must also acknowledge the incredible support of my family, friends, and colleagues, without whom I would not have been able to accomplish what I have. I thank them all for being there for me, especially my wife who did not live to witness this day. I cannot also fail to express deep appreciation to my country and its various governments for whom I worked, and which gave me the opportunities that enabled me to make the contributions leading to the MOGA Award. My own government recognised my contributions to peace and security, as well as good governance and democracy, in Africa by conferring on me the national honour of Officer of the Order of the Federal Republic in 2001, for which my family and I are eternally grateful.

11. The MOGA Award, which comes, as it were, out of season and unexpectedly, is truly gratifying. I therefore, once more, thank the Foundation for Democracy in Africa for this distinguished recognition. I thank the President of the Foundation profoundly, and all his colleagues who put this gigantic programme together and successfully too. I wish you the very best for the great task that still lies ahead.

12. Thank you for your kind attention.



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