

Being in Bahrain was a

It is interesting that the Bahrainis probably commenced the idea of setting u



BABAFEMI A BADEJO

The opportunity of another diplomatic travel will always, hopefully for some time to come, be an allure for me. So, an invitation to Manama, Bahrain, from September 9-13, as senior adviser to H.E. José Ramos-Horta, former president of East Timor and Nobel Peace Laureate was a very welcomed development. José Ramos-Horta had rallied the entire world to support freedom for his country and was recognised by the Nobel Committee in 1996 for this role. At independence, he served as foreign minister, subsequently as prime minister and finally as president of his country.

Part of my excitement for participation in the visit to the Kingdom of Bahrain was the fact that two other former presidents and Nobel Peace Laureates: F. W. De Klerk of South Africa, who had joined hands with Nelson Mandela's African National Congress to dismantle apartheid, and Lech Walesa, who led the Solidarity movement – a trade union in Poland that signaled the trend towards the crumbling of the former Soviet Union, and then became president of Poland, were also going to be in Bahrain.

I had met F.W. De Klerk in 1991 when I accompanied General Olusegun Obasanjo on a peace venture sponsored by President Babangida, to explore what Nigeria could do to help the difficult negotiations that

were ongoing at the time to end apartheid. September 10, 2018 was my first meeting with the revolutionary President Lech Walesa.

Another Nobel Peace Laureate, Kailash Satyarthi, an Indian child welfare activist of over 30 years, especially on eradicating the keeping of children in slavery, who shared the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize with Malala Yousafzai was also in Bahrain for the same visit. Professor Anna Tibaijuka, the former Head of UN-Habitat and former Tanzanian minister and a leader in her own rights, was the fifth principal during the visit to Bahrain.

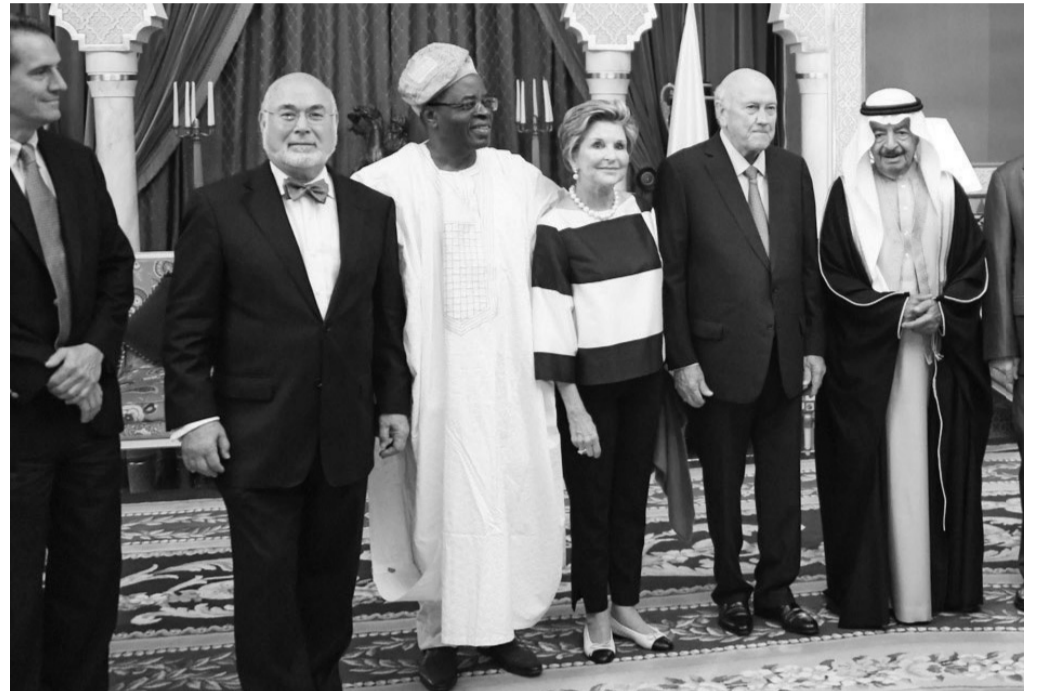
Africa has only produced nine Peace Laureates, out of some 100 individuals (aside from institutional winners), since the beginning of the awards in 1901. Europe, with 50, has the bulk of the Laureates for peace and United States alone accounts for 10, including three who are of African descent: Ralph Bunche; Martin Luther King Jr. and President Barack Obama. On the African continent, South Africa has provided four Laureates, starting with Chief Albert Jacob Luthuli, then president of the banned ANC, who won the prize in 1960 for his Ghandist non-violent effort towards ending apartheid; Archbishop Desmond Tutu defending human rights from the pulpit won his prize in 1984. Of course, Nelson Mandela/F.W. De Klerk shared the prize that recognised their joint and respective roles towards ending apartheid in 1993.

Earlier, beyond the duo of Mandela/De Klerk, Anwar Sadat, as president of Egypt had pursued the peace option with Menachem Begin, one time prime minister of Israel. Both

shared the Nobel in 1978, as a result of the Camp David Accord that President Jimmy Carter had facilitated. The signing of that Accord did not go down well with many Arabs and was given as a possible reason, for the subsequent assassination of President Anwar Sadat.

Kofi Annan from Ghana shared the honour of the prize with the United Nations that he led in 2001. In addition, Africa had late Wangari Maathai from Kenya who is on record as the first female – affording the Nobel Committee the opportunity of a wider definition of peace – to win the prize in 2004 for her struggles for the protection of the environment in Kenya. She not only planted thousands of trees and organised others to do the same for decades, she went to jail in protecting green spaces from encroachment by powerful individuals/institutions in Kenya.

Leymah Gbowee and President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (both Liberians) shared the prize in 2011. This sharing turned out to be very controversial. It did appear that the Nobel Committee became partisan and interfered in the Liberian elections by giving an incumbent president the prize on the eve of an election in which she was seeking mandate renewal. Furthermore, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was criticised as not deserving the prize for being the “mother” of the initial round of civil war in Liberia and for which the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Liberia had recommended that she be banned from politics for quite a while. That the Nobel Committee ignored this development was of concern to many, especially



HRH the Premier with the delegation of former Nobel Peace Prize winners.

Liberians.

Well, it appears the Nobel Committee may be easily forgiving on past misdeeds and President Sirleaf may not be unique in this respect. Or else how does one explain Menachem Begin being awarded the Peace Prize in 1978. And some may even argue that the same should be said of Nelson Mandela, whose strive for freedom by any means necessary has my respect. But then, he had been classified as a terrorist not only by the apartheid governments of South Africa but also by Western leaders like President Ronald Reagan of the U.S.

Important, however, was the criticism of President Ellen Johnson

Sirleaf by her compatriot and 2011 co-winner, Leymah Gbowee. According to her, President Sirleaf failed to speak up against ills perpetrated under her rulership, including nepotism. Leymah Gbowee was reported to have said: “you are as bad as being an accomplice for things that are happening in the country if you don't speak up.”

There is yet to be any Nigerian winner arising from dedication to any issue that bothers on peace, even using the larger definition like the case for Wangari Maatahi or Kailash Satyarthi. Consistency in being at the fore-front of handling many conflicts must not be vitiated by other behaviours that suggest a lack of respect

for the rule of law effect, one cannot of conflict on one fuel into potential conflicts elsewhere o

In effect, being that included for Laureates is of i is more so when respective exper recommendations strive for peace ar our world. This t well articulated c meeting and at t given by His Roya Prime Minister P Salman Al Khalif: spirited efforts to

Kofi Annan rewarded the



ANTÓNIO GUTERRES

Kofi Annan could say everything, sometimes without uttering a word

Since the shock of former United Nations' Secretary-General Kofi Annan's death, I have been reflecting on what made him so special.

To my mind, it is simply this: Kofi Annan was both one-of-a-kind and one of us.

He was an exceptional global leader – and he was also someone virtually anyone in the world could see themselves in: those on the far reaches of poverty, conflict and despair who found in him an ally; the junior UN staffer following in his footsteps; the young person to whom he said until his dying breath “always remember, you are never too young to lead – and we are never too old to learn.”

Like few in our time, Kofi An-

nan could bring people together, put them at ease, and unite them towards a common goal for our common humanity.

There is an old joke: The art of diplomacy is to say nothing especially when you are speaking!

Kofi Annan could say everything, sometimes without uttering a word. It came from the dignity and the moral conviction and the humanity that was so deep in him.

He had that gentle voice, that lilt that made people smile and think of music. But his words were tough and wise. And sometimes the graver a situation, the lower that voice would get.

We would lean in to listen. And the world would lean in. And we were rewarded by his wisdom.

Kofi Annan was courageous, speaking truth to power while subjecting himself to intense self-scrutiny. And like his predecessor as UN Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, he had an almost mystical sense of the role

of the United Nations as a force for good in a world of ills.

All of this added up to a remarkable record of achievement.

He pioneered new ideas and initiatives, including the Millennium Development Goals and the landmark reforms in his report, “In Larger Freedom”.

He opened the doors of the United Nations, bringing the Organization closer to the world's people and engaging new partners in protecting the environment, defending human rights and combating HIV/AIDS and other killer diseases.

Kofi Annan was the United Nations and the United Nations was him.

He was also my good friend. We marched through life together in many ways.

When the people of Timor-Leste were seeking self-determination, we worked together -- he from the United Nations, and I as Prime Minister of Portugal -- to support the peaceful resolution of their plight.



Family members at Kofi Annan's funeral.