



**GOODWILL MESSAGE BY
HIS EXCELLENCY DR JULIUS MAADA BIO
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE AND CHAIRMAN
OF THE ECOWAS AUTHORITY OF HEADS OF STATE AND
GOVERNMENT
ON THE OCCASION OF THE PUBLIC PRESENTATION OF THREE
BOOKS COMMEMORATING THE 84TH BIRTHDAY OF HIS
EXCELLENCY GENERAL ABDUSALAMI ALHAJI ABUBAKAR, GCFR
PRESIDENTIAL BANQUET HALL, STATE HOUSE,
ABUJA, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA
SATURDAY, 13TH JUNE 2026**

- **Your Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR,**
 - **Your Excellency, General Abdulsalami Alhaji Abubakar, GCFR,**
 - **Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government,**
 - **Esteemed Guests,**
 - **Ladies and Gentlemen,**
 - **All Other Protocols Observed,**
1. When **General Abdulsalami Abubakar** invited me to serve as his Guest of Honour today, I did not hesitate.

2. There are only a handful of individuals whose birthdays transcend personal milestones and become occasions of continental significance. **General Abdulsalami Abubakar is one of them.**

3. At the outset, let me **express my sincere appreciation to His Excellency President Bola Ahmed Tinubu**, and to the Government and People of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for their warm hospitality and for

hosting this important occasion in honour of one of Africa's most distinguished sons.

4. The presentation of these three books is a fitting tribute to a life dedicated to service, peacebuilding, patriotism, and leadership.

YOUR EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

5. The fact that we are gathered here today in the State House is itself deeply symbolic.

6. This is the House **General Abubakar** could have kept.
But he chose to give it back.

7. In 1998, when Nigeria stood at a defining crossroads, the authority of the state rested firmly in his hands. Yet **he chose national interest over personal ambition, democracy over incumbency, and country over self.**

8. **He walked out of this House so that Nigeria could walk forward.**

9. Perhaps one of the reasons I have always held **General Abubakar** in such high regard is because I understand the significance of that choice.

10. Having also overseen a democratic transition and relinquished power to a democratically elected civilian government, I understand the weight of such a decision.

- 11. General Abdulsalami understands it because he lived it. I understand it because I lived it.**

- 12. And both of us know that some of the greatest acts of leadership require a leader to step aside so that democracy may move forward.**

- 13. History rarely remembers leaders for the power they possess.**

14. History remembers them for the power they are willing to surrender in pursuit of a greater national purpose.

YOUR EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

15. I speak today not only as Chairman of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government. I speak as a Sierra Leonean.

16. At a time when Sierra Leone was enduring one of the darkest chapters in its history, ECOMOG, under Nigeria's leadership, helped create the conditions for peace, stability, and democratic restoration.
17. For that, Sierra Leone remains deeply grateful.
18. So, General, when I stand before you today, I do so not only as a fellow Head of State. **I stand before you as a grateful son of Sierra Leone.**

- 19.** And on behalf of the Government and People of Sierra Leone, I say: **Sierra Leone remembers. Sierra Leone appreciates. Sierra Leone is grateful.**
- 20.** Your contribution to West Africa did not end when you left office. If anything, it deepened.
- 21.** From Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire to Togo and beyond, **you became one of the region's most respected mediators and elder statesmen.**

- 22. You entered rooms where dialogue had broken down and helped nations find pathways back to peace.**
- 23.** That is why leaders across Africa continue to seek your counsel today — not because of the office you once held, but **because of the integrity, wisdom, and moral authority you continue to embody.**

MY GENERAL AND DEAR BIG BROTHER,

24. Over the years, I have come to know you not only as a distinguished statesman, but as a remarkably humble and gracious man.

25. In public life, you are admired for your statesmanship. In private life, you are respected for your humility, decency, and kindness.

- 26.** At a time when many societies around the world are grappling with questions of leadership and public trust, **your life offers an enduring lesson: Authority is temporary, but legacy is permanent.**
- 27.** There are children in Sierra Leone today who have grown up in peace, attended school in freedom, participated in democratic elections, and dreamed boldly about their future.

28. Many of them may never know your name. Yet they are beneficiaries of decisions you helped make. **They are part of your legacy.**

29. And that, perhaps, is **the highest measure of leadership — to improve the lives of people you may never meet.**

30. I also wish to **acknowledge your family, whose support and sacrifices made decades of public service possible. Today, we honour them as well.**

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

31. Eighty-four years is a remarkable gift from Almighty God.

- 32.** But what you have done with those years is an even greater gift to Nigeria, West Africa, and Africa as a whole.
- 33.** You gave Nigeria a democratic transition that became a model for Africa.
- 34.** You gave West Africa an enduring example of constitutional order and restraint.

- 35.** And you gave Africa a living example of principled leadership.
- 36.** History will remember you not only as a former Head of State, but as a statesman who chose country over self, peace over conflict, duty over ambition, and service over power.
- 37.** For that, Nigeria is grateful, Sierra Leone is grateful, ECOWAS is grateful, and Africa is grateful.

YOUR EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

- 38.** We are gathered here today to celebrate the life and legacy of **General Abdulsalami Abubakar.**
- 39.** Twenty-seven years ago, he made a decision that changed the course of history.

- 40. He helped give Nigeria stability. He helped give West Africa hope. And he gave Africa an enduring example of principled leadership.**
- 41. Our region continues to look to him as an example of leadership anchored in principle, humility, courage, and service.**
- 42. That is why we celebrate him today. That is why ECOWAS honours him today.**

- 43.** And that is why future generations will continue to study his life for lessons in courage, restraint, statesmanship, and service.
- 44.** On behalf of the **Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS**, and on behalf of the **Government and People of the Republic of Sierra Leone**, I extend our warmest congratulations on this remarkable milestone.

- 45.** May Almighty God grant you continued good health, strength, peace, and fulfilment.

- 46.** May your wisdom continue to guide our region. May your example continue to inspire future generations.

- 47.** May your legacy continue to strengthen the cause of democracy, peace, and good governance across Africa.

48. Happy 84th Birthday, Your Excellency.

**49. ECOWAS salutes you. Africa honours you. And our
Continent is better because you served.**

50. Congratulations, General.