



The 2022 Nigeria Prize for Literature, Science, and Literary Criticism Address by Dr Philip Mshelbila, MD/CEO of Nigeria LNG Limited

Protocols

You are all welcome to the 2022 Grand Award Night. Today, we celebrate deserving winners of the Nigeria Prize for Science, the Nigeria Prize for Literature, and the Nigeria Prize for Literary Criticism.

Nigeria LNG Limited in its 33 years of existence has been a world class Company, competing with the best in its field globally. As the biggest LNG plant in Africa and one of the top 6 in the world, NLNG was once the fastest growing LNG plant in the world, and after a 15-year hiatus, we are proud to resume our expansion with Train 7, which will increase our production capacity by 35%. We have numerous other global achievements of note.

I would like to recognize at this time some of those present, and absent, who have contributed immensely to the successes of our Company.

Great as our history is, it is not enough. And so we strive to secure our place of pride in the future as well. Some may leave the future to time and chance, but we believe in shaping it. So we have embarked on a journey to future-proof our business, insisting that we have a say as to what should be beyond the horizon. While we cannot control everything, we exert maximum influence over those that we can. As the world tackles the trilemma of energy security, energy transition and energy poverty, we see opportunity to secure a leading position for NLNG and for Nigeria as a leading energy player in the future.

In the meantime, in straddling the path of transition, NLNG embarked on a message campaign that **'it is time for gas.'** Thankfully, this has been widely accepted and now endorsed. President Muhammadu Buhari flagged off the Decade of Gas initiative in March 2021 with a view to identifying potential enablers and interventions required to unlock significant gas volumes as well as gas delivery infrastructure and commercial frameworks both for the domestic and export markets. We funded this comprehensive work due to its strategic national importance. Furthermore, in deepening our resolve for

domestic LPG intervention, we received the support and approval of our Board, to commit 100% of our LPG production to the Nigerian market.

While part of our vision is to compete globally with other LNG companies, the other part is to “help to build a better Nigeria”. This is what drives our passion and motivates our people every day. I have never seen a prouder and more dedicated group of Nigerians than our staff. It is in this line of envisioning, that the Nigeria Prizes for Science and Literature, were birthed in 2004.

NLNG has always been at the forefront of stakeholder partnerships that strengthen our country, inspires our people and builds our sustainable future. While working at it, we are humble enough to recognise that, as a business alone it is impossible to achieve much, we need your invested confidence and support to get to where we all desire to go.

It is on this note, that I once again, welcome every one of you to the 2022 Grand Award Night – *Touching the Stars!* Thank you immensely, for standing with us, and for us.

Our standing together is both a shield, and a pedestal for strength. The Nigerian Coat of Arms being one of the most symbolic emblems of Nigeria, has every aspect of its design well thought-through and heartfelt in meaning. The eagle which stands perched on the national colours, is symbolic of the strength of Nigeria. Its wings are spread open, unencumbered in its flight, to soar to great heights and across vast terrains. Key here, are the heights attainable, the fortitude to rule in those lofty spheres and remain above! This brings to my mind, the well-known poem by Maya Angelou:

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

*The free bird leaps
on the back of the wind
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wings
in the orange sun rays
and dares to claim the sky.*

The caged bird sings

*with fearful trill
of the things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.*

The free bird soars above its situation and aspires to touch the stars! It takes vision, purpose and strength to achieve that. But sometimes it also takes failing and trying again, to advance, grow, and reach that goal. Tonight, we celebrate true Nigerian eagles, who have dared to claim the skies and to reach for the stars in the fields of science and literature.

We chose to sponsor the Nigeria Prize for Science and the Nigeria Prize for Literature with monetary awards of US\$100,000 each. The Nigeria Prize for Literary Criticism historically had an award of N1m, but today we revise that up to US\$10,000 going forward. The overall intent of these significant prizes is to place a high bar of excellence and shun mediocrity in creativity and innovation.

The Nigeria Prize for Science this year, speaks to food security. The United Nations' Committee on World Food Security defines it as a situation wherein *all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life.*

From the mangroves of the Niger Delta, through the rain forests, to the grassy plains and savannah terrains, our nation pitifully boasts of poverty, yet it is bountifully endowed with arable lands and agricultural treasures, including its aquatic wealth. This is a wake-up call! We must take responsibility for food sustenance at the very least, and scale up to foreign exchange revenue drive from food and agricultural export once the needs of our people are secured. What's more, we have an obligation to shun wastage, arising from poor handling, preservation and transportation of agricultural produce.

Congratulations to the recipients of the 2022 Nigeria Prize for Science: Muhyideen Oyekunle and Shehu Ado; as well as Sesan Peter Ayodeji and

Emmanuel Olatunji Olutomilola, for your respective works titled, *Gains in Grain Yield of Released Maize (Zea Mays L.) Cultivars under Drought and Well-Watered Conditions*; and secondly, *Development of Process Plant for Plantain Flour*. Thank you for the scientific intervention put forward to address food security in Nigeria. I also congratulate all who found it worthy to participate in this year's edition of the Nigeria Prize for Science. Everyone here, industry leaders and other decision-makers should please take time to look through all the submissions for this year. While there would be only a selected winner or joint winners, the potentials for the nation should be extracted fully by taking a closer look at all the entries.

This year in Literature, we celebrate the poetry genre. Leading publishing experts indicate that poetry submissions have been unprecedented the world over. The entries received for the 2022 Nigeria Prize for Literature were no different - the most ever in the history of the prize. It is a testament to our times. We had a record number 287 poetry submissions, a longlist of 11 and now, a shortlist of 3. I congratulate those on the shortlist of three; Romeo Oriogun, S'uieddie Agema and Saddiq Dzukoji and in advance, I celebrate the eventual winner of this year's literature prize.

The poet is first and foremost a thinker. One who surveys the universe and translates into words things that most of us cannot fathom or express, creating literary imagery that is emotive and gripping. The poetry spectrum gives poets latitude to bare their minds on crucial matters of life. Just like Angelou's piece, I would implore that you take copies of the longlisted or shortlisted works, read beyond the fine letterings to hear the voices through every line and rhyme, irony and simile, and in their pithy literary art, plumb the depths of wisdom and insight, while sometimes reflecting in the mirror of their words.

The award for literary criticism, serves a unique purpose, in that it emphasises the place of questioning and critiquing for excellent work and outcome. Congratulations in advance to the winner!

This evening is just one more way in which NLNG is helping to build a better Nigeria, by shining a light on our creative genius. Helping our eagles soar even higher.

May today be one to remember. You are most welcome!