

Mr. President, Commander-in-Chief of Armed Forces,

CITATION OF PROFESSOR OLUWAFEYISOLA SYLVESTER ADEGOKE
B.Sc. (London), Ph.D. (California), F.S.A.N., F.N.A.S., F.N.M.G.S.

for

The Nigeria National Merit Award, 1987

Professor Oluwafeyisola Sylvester Adegoke was born in Ode-Ondo State on 9th July, 1937. After his Primary Education at St. Gregory's Primary School, Ire-Ekiti, he gained admission to Aquinas College, Akure where he had a most distinguished Secondary School Education. In 1958, he again was admitted to the then University College in Ibadan from where in 1962 he graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Zoology. From Ibadan, Oluwafeyisola Adegoke proceeded in 1963 to the University of California, Berkeley, and this time to read for a higher degree in Geology with special emphasis on Paleontology, the study of fossils for dating earth structure. Adegoke is reputed to have been one of the very few graduate Students in the history of that University who completed their Doctoral dissertations within the record period of three years. The high quality of that dissertation was attested to by no less eminent a Scientist than Myra Keen, Emeritus Professor of Paleontology of Stanford University who noted that it clearly belonged to "the classic type that has been a hallmark of the University of California Geological Series for the past half century."

Today, there is no doubt that Professor Oluwafeyisola Adegoke is pre-eminently the most distinguished geologist this country has produced. The Board of Trustees of the Nigerian National Merit Endowment Fund is gratified that he is also the first physical Scientist it has had to honour in the country. Professor Adegoke's career since returning to Nigeria in 1967 and taking up academic appointment at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife has shown him to be a versatile and outstanding Scientist whose national recognition rests on four solid grounds.

In the first place, over the years, Professor Adegoke had engaged in geological researches of a very high scientific quality and originality. These have been widely acknowledged nationally and internationally and they have made him a world-acclaimed authority on post-Cretaceous stratigraphy of West Africa. Apart from notable contributions to the broad fields of paleontology, biostratigraphy, palaeo-ecology, sedimentology, industrial and economic geology, Professor Adegoke initiated the monumental study of the stratigraphy and paleontology of the Ewekoro formation of Southwestern Nigeria between 1970 and 1977. The result is the monography published in 1977 as a volume in the Bulletin of American Paleontology. In the study, Adegoke identified, described and illustrated some 221 species of fossils organisms. Of these, 175 were new to science. The study also included the erection by him of 3 new Families, 9 new genera and 13 new subgenera. It also clearly documented for the first time the basis of the affinity of the fossils, the geologically postulated close physical proximity of the West African landmass to the coastal stretches of both North and South America.

In the second place, Professor Adegoke has provided leadership for the growth and development of scientific knowledge in his field in the country. Apart from his exemplary career as a University teacher, he has served in the period 1980-82 as the President of the Science Association of Nigeria and also as a member of the Council of the West African Science Association. He is a Foundation Fellow of the Nigerian Academy of Science and the Editor of its most active publication, the Discourses of the Nigerian Academy of Science. For ten years, Professor Adegoke was also the Editor-in Chief of the Journal of Mining and Geology, the periodic publication of the Nigerian Mining and Geosciences Society. In this capacity, Professor Adegoke has given journal impetus, a sense of direction and the international scholarly image which it now enjoys. It was in appreciation of his contributions to the development of the Earth Sciences and to the Society's overall growth that Professor Adegoke was in 1982 honoured, with seven other distinguished geologists with the Fellowship of the Nigerian Mining and Geosciences Society (F.N.M.G.S.).

Thirdly, on the international scene, Professor Adegoke has maintained his position as a leading paleontologist of repute. In recognition of this, he was appointed Project Leader of the International Geological Correlation Programme (Project No. 183) which co-ordinates the world-wide activities of researchers on the Cretaceous – Tertiary stratigraphy of West Africa. In 1976, Professor Adegoke was also the Convener and Chairman of the Seventh African Micropaleontological Colloquium which was held at the Obafemi Awolowo University at Ile-Ife and which attracted over 200 scientists from all over the world. Professor Adegoke has also for many years served as the Honorary Secretary for the Nigerian Committee of the International Union of Geological Sciences.

But, above all, it is in the practical application of his geological expertise and competence that Professor Adegoke is widely known in business and industrial circles throughout the length and breadth of this country. Beginning from 1974, Professor Adegoke consolidated the efforts of his colleagues to initiate the Geological Consultancy Unit of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. This unit, under his leadership, has been responsible for carrying out geotechnical studies that have contributed to the establishment of industries in the country. The Unit also undertook geotechnical studies for the construction of the new Port-Harcourt deep harbour complex at Onne, assisted in the engineering geological mapping of the new Federal Capital Territory at Abuja and the assessment of the mineral potential of the seven new states created in the country in 1976.

But perhaps the best nationally known of the industrial studies co-ordinated and executed by Professor Adegoke is that of the extensive tar sands and bitumen-bearing beds of Ondo, Ogun and Bendel States within which heavy and extra-heavy crude oil is known to exist. This forms the basis for the production of lubricants, automatic fuels, sulphur, petrochemicals and other important industrial chemicals. Not unexpectedly, the Federal Ministry of Mines, Power and Steel is now actively engaged in commissioning a project designed to fully realize the potential of this study.

Mr. President, the Board of Trustees of the Nigerian National Merit Award is pleased to present to you as eminently worthy of this Award, Professor Oluwafeyisola Sylvester

Adegoke, one of the outstanding scientists and geologists which the country has been fortunate to produce. His unique ability combine a probing academic mind with a dogged disposition for practical application stands out as a source of continuing inspiration and encouragement for a nation that is studiously learning the virtue and merit of specially mobilizing its natural resources for self-reliant development.