

## **Adieu HRH Prince Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa**

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The death of HRH Prince Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa marks the end of a long era in governance in Bahrain. None of us took personal decisions to be on earth. Others, by their actions, resulted in our being here. Our departure from planet earth is a given. We certainly must depart one time or the other. For most, we would not know how and when. On Wednesday, November 11, 2020, a unique day in figures as 11-11-2020, a unique individual was one of those who departed planet earth. His Royal Highness, Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, the Prime Minister of Bahrain over the years took a bow out of our existential reality. We only have his too many legacies left. I have chosen to highlight a few in this tribute.

I had the privilege of being in the company of HRH Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa twice in 2018. I had been invited 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. I had a warm reception from a sage who remembered my country and some of his relationships with Nigerians before he started talking about peace. The other meeting was at a beautiful state banquet that was given to our team by HRH, the Prime Minister.



**Babafemi Badejo in a handshake with late HRH Prince Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa**

This visit resulted into a warm relationship with the Court of the Prime Minister, led by Shaikh Hussam bin Essa Al-Khalifa. Within this relationship has been my service on the Board of the Bahrain Visions Forum (BVF). The BVF, is a major visionary contribution of HRH Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa to the world. So far, we have had three BVF meetings at the sidelines of United Nations General Assembly. On September 27, 2018, the Kingdom of Bahrain and Global Security Institute hosted the Bahrain Visions Forum: Shared Vision Towards a Successful, Sustainable Future” National, regional and global challenges and opportunities. The most recent BVF was virtually held on September 29, 2020. This year’s BVF attracted the Secretary-General of the United Nations (the Deputy Secretary-General and the then President of the UN General Assembly jointly opened the maiden edition), who sent a recorded message and participation by several high ranking members of the international community, including the Directors General of WHO and UNESCO and Foreign Ministers. It is important that the theme of the third BVF was on ensuring that Covid-19 pandemic does not undermine the Social Development Goals (SDGs) that are crucial for the progress of humanity.

The highlight of this year’s event is a major legacy of the late Prime Minister of Bahrain if well nurtured. In his opening address, HRH had put forth the idea of setting up an informal association to be called, “Group of Friends of the Secretary General on the Amelioration of the Negative Effect of Covid-19 Pandemic” This would be a major step in controlling the draw back effect in the pursuit of the SDGs which have been identified as the only path to a better future for all humanity. The Forum has become an opportunity for world leaders to look at the developments at the global system, and consider ways to respond to the changes, challenges to peace and sustainable development from sharing values, in a very interconnected global system.

The late Prime Minister also sponsored a UN General Assembly Resolution that resulted in the recognition of April 5<sup>th</sup> of every year as the International Day of Conscience. Owing to the Covid-19 realities, a virtual event was observed, with the message shared worldwide. The central message of promoting the culture of peace with love through the constant nurturing of that inner guide within us all, that leads us to doing good. A collection of good conscience is necessary in having a safer world and environment as well. The world owes the innovation of a day to push for the role of conscience to one of the legacies of HRH Prince Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa.

The Bahrainis, under the leadership of King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa and his late Prime Minister were much interested in the SDGs and use it as guide for state planning and policies. For them, it is not just a UN mantra for lip service. On 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2007, His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, the late Prime Minister of Bahrain received the Habitat Scroll of Honour Award from the then Secretary-General of the United Nations, H.E. Ban Ki-moon in recognition of the role of HRH, in the transformation of the Kingdom of Bahrain from largely a collection of rural villages into a thriving and diversified economy with social welfare support, educational opportunities and employment for all. On that very 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2007, His Royal Highness Prince Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, instituted the bi-annual Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa Sustainable Development Award to promote good governance with consideration of ecological, economic and all rounded social development that is inclusive,

equitable and more importantly, sustainable. The award with a prize money of \$200,000 was first made in 2008 to The Green Brigade Project in Burkina Faso. The second award in 2010 went to the Brazilian Bento Rubiao Foundation. The Selection Committee of the Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa Sustainable Development Award searched for people and institutions but did not make any award in 2012 and 2014. However, Prof. Anna Tibajuka, former Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of UN-Habitat won. The fourth winner was none other than Ban Ki-moon who received the award in Manama, Bahrain last year. This Foundation is a great legacy that could be well managed to continue to make a difference in our world.

Under HRH Prince Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, Bahrain faced many major challenges. The challenge of modernization and building on the religious tolerance among his people before him required an unparalleled liberal orientation in sea of conservatism within the Kingdom and the Gulf. Religious and cultural tolerance easily strikes any visitor to Bahrain. There were economic and political challenges like conflict on control over the Island of Hawar and the Arab Springs fervour. These issues, like many others, the late Prime Minister deftly handled. Knowing that preventing the scourge of conflicts and specifically wars through the waging of peace is not for the United Nations alone, he has been pushing for peace in the Gulf. The spirit of Ramadan had inspired an unexpected call by the late Prime Minister of Bahrain, on May 6, 2019 to the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani in spite of the cold war between Qatar on the one hand and the alliance of Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt and Bahrain on the other. Then is the recent rapport between Israel and Bahrain that one hopes would result in a final solution on the inalienable rights of the Palestinians and peace in the Middle East.



**A cross-section, including 3 former Presidents who are also Nobel Laureates**

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