

Section on Public and Professional Interest Awards Presentation

IBA Annual Conference 2026

Bella Center, Copenhagen, Denmark

Thursday 8 October 2026

Yusuf Temilola Nurudeen

Winner

IBA Pro Bono Award



Speech

The President of the International Bar Association,
The Chair and members of the IBA Pro Bono Committee,
Distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen:

I am deeply honoured to receive the IBA Pro Bono Award. I sincerely thank the International Bar Association and the Pro Bono Committee for considering our work worthy of this recognition.

Approximately two-thirds of the world's population lack meaningful access to justice. Behind this statistic are people who remain in detention because they cannot afford legal representation, women trapped in abusive marriages, children for whom maintenance

obligations remain unenforced, and families deprived of their homes and livelihoods because justice is unaffordable.

Leaving these victims of the society's inherent inequalities helpless cannot be the promise of the legal profession. Our undertaking must be to ensure the law remains an instrument of justice, not a privilege reserved for wealth, power, or influence.

Guided by this conviction, I resolved to lead a team of volunteer lawyers providing legal assistance to indigent and vulnerable persons who might otherwise remain unheard and defenceless.

This award does not belong to me alone. I dedicate it to our 141 remarkable volunteer lawyers across eighteen states in Nigeria at the Foundation for Public Interest Law and Development (The Pro Bono Centre), who continually give their time, knowledge and resources without expectation of financial reward.

I accept this award not as a declaration that our work is complete, but as a challenge to do more. It renews my commitment to resisting the commodification of justice and ensuring that poverty does not become a sentence of helplessness. I am convinced that pro bono service is not merely charity; it is a professional responsibility and a fundamental pillar of justice.

This recognition strengthens my resolve to continue working towards a society in which no person is too poor to be defended, too powerless to be heard or too marginalised to be protected.

Thank you.