



New York salutes African business champions

The sixth edition of the annual African Business Awards was held at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in the heart of New York City on 20th September. Report by **Alessia d'Alvi**.

ONCE AGAIN THE AFRICAN Business Awards ceremony brought together some of the most successful business people from across the region.

This year the awards were held at the Mandarin Oriental overlooking Central Park and New York's famous skyline. Guests included government officials and delegates attending the UN General Assembly, the UN Global Compact Leaders' Summit, and *African Business* magazine's African Leadership Forum.

The publisher of *African Business* magazine, Omar Ben Yedder, echoed a commonly held view regarding the empowerment of the private sector: "The winners tonight again show the array of talent we

Above: The assembled award-winners

have across the continent. The private sector is undoubtedly taking the lead in helping transform the continent, in terms of what it can do and in terms of creating opportunities and solutions out of problems.

"We are also seeing the private sector work better with government in what are being called transformational partnerships. We are not yet there in terms of creating global world-beating brands but we are definitely on the right track, as demonstrated by the talents on show tonight."

African Business editor Anver Versi said the story of *African Business* magazine, which has been published continuously for



WINNERS

African Business of the Year
Ethiopian Airlines, Ethiopia
Business Leader of the Year
Edward Boateng, CEO, Global Media Alliance, Ghana
Outstanding Woman in Business
Bola Adesola, Managing Director/Chief Executive Officer, Standard Chartered, Nigeria
Award for Good Corporate Governance
The Abraaj Group, UAE
Award for Innovation
Mawingu, Kenya
Lifetime Achievement Award
HE Gervais Koffi Djondo, President, Askya Airlines
African Business Icon
Tony Elumelu, Chairman, Heirs Holdings
Most-Admired and Valuable Brands in Africa
African Brand
MTN
Global Brand
Coca-Cola

over 36 years, was itself the story of African business success “in a very difficult sector and in often very difficult circumstances”. He added that what had kept the group going when the chips were down was an unshakeable faith that Africa would prevail. “That faith is now being repaid and those that had dismissed us a few years ago are scrambling to follow our lead.”

The Lifetime Achievement award was given to Togolese businessman Gervais Koffi Djondo. The African Business Icon award is given to someone who through his work or initiative has helped transform the African business landscape. This award was presented to Nigerian banker, investor and philanthropist Tony Elumelu.

One of the most hotly contested awards of the evening, the African Business of the Year, went to Ethiopian Airlines. The airline has a unique business model and has created a profitable and growing franchise in what are tough times in the aviation industry.

The much-coveted Business Leader of the Year went to Edward Boateng. This entrepreneur may not be a household name in African business circles but in a very short space he has created an influential media group in his home country, Ghana, as well as putting in place best business practices

Clockwise from top left: IC Publications MD Omar Ben Yedder; Gervais Koffi Djondo, President, Askya Airlines; Rt. Hon. Patrick Amama Mbabazi, Prime Minister of Uganda, one of the keynote speakers at the African Leadership Forum; Fr d ric Sicre (left), MD of the Abraaj Group, receives the award from Frances Nwokedi, Partner at Fasken Martineau.

“The winners tonight again show the array of talent we have across the continent. The private sector is undoubtedly taking the lead in helping transform the continent”

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with an emphasis on sustainability, human capital and the environment.

The Outstanding Woman in Business category went to Standard Chartered’s Nigeria MD, Bola Adesola. The Award for Innovation was given to the newly launched Kenyan project, Mawingu, which leverages innovative new wireless technologies utilising unused TV band spectrum (“TV white spaces”) and solar-powered base stations to deliver nationwide broadband access. The Chairman of Brand Africa and Brand Leadership Thebe Ikalafeng presented awards to the most-admired and most-valuable brands in Africa. MTN won the Best African Brand and Coca-Cola the Best Global Brand.

The African Business Awards are organised by *African Business* magazine and BusinessinAfrica Events and produced by IC Events. The Awards preceded the African Leadership Forum, a gathering of African leaders to discuss issues of leadership within an African context. The Awards are supported by GTBank and Mota-Engil Africa (Platinum Sponsors); Bank of Industry and Microsoft 4Afrika (Gold Sponsors); DHL and Fasken Martineau (Silver Sponsors); African Development Bank (Official Sponsor); and Paramount Group (Sponsor). ■NA