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## PRESS RELEASE

May 7, 2018  
PR-015/2018

### **60 Young Nigerians to attend 2018 Mandela Washington Fellowship Program**

The U.S. Mission to Nigeria will send 60 young Nigerians to participate in the 2018 Mandela Washington Fellowship program for six weeks from June 18 to August 2. The Mandela Washington Fellowship is the flagship program of the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI). It is composed of academic coursework, leadership training, and networking. A total of five out of the 60 fellows will remain in the United States for an additional six weeks to participate in a professional development experience at select companies and organizations.

Through this initiative, 28 U.S. universities will host 700 young leaders from sub-Saharan Africa for institutes focused on public management, business and entrepreneurship, and civic leadership. Nigeria's fellows represent the largest cohort from any one country.

As part of the orientation, the U.S. Embassy invited three leading Nigerian professionals to participate in a mentoring workshop: Afolabi Imoukhuede, Senior Special Advisor to the Vice President on Job Creation; Serah Makka-Ugbabe, ONE Campaign Country Director; and Lawrence Afere, 2014 MWF alumnus and founder of Springboard Farms. All three of them shared unique perspectives on leadership and opportunity. In his remarks, Mr. Imoukhuede quoted Nelson Mandela in speaking about Nigeria's importance to the future of Africa. Ms. Makka-Ugbabe continued, "These are the faces we've been waiting for." Mr. Afere concluded the workshop explaining how his fellowship experience "gave him wings to fly" with his business success.

In his remarks, the U.S. Embassy Counselor for Public Affairs Mr. Aruna Amirthanayagam explained that more than 11,000 Nigerians applied to participate in the 2018 Mandela Washington Fellowship program. "After the review by our partner NGO, after a reading by members of the Mission Nigeria community, after

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an interview in either Abuja, Lagos, Ibadan, Akure, Enugu, Port Harcourt, and Calabar, a total of 60 young Nigerians were selected”, he said.

Mr. Amirthanayagam further explained that, “Nigeria has the largest single cohort from any country in Africa, and this is in recognition of the fact that the U.S.- Nigerian relationship is one of the most important, not only in Africa, but in the world. ”

Speaking at the reception by the U.S. Embassy in their honor, *Chargé d'Affaires* David Young urged the fellows to be generous with the unique opportunity they had been given, “The United States is making an investment in you through academic coursework, leadership training, and networking; you will return to Nigeria later this summer with increased capital. Share that wealth with others.”

The Mandela Washington Fellowship and the larger YALI program embody the U.S. government’s commitment to investing in the future of Africa.

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