Acceptance Speech for The 2026 Henry Dunant Field-Prize

By

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Theme: Field, recognizing grassroots humanitarian law enforcement and assistance.

Distinguished members of the Board of the Henry Dunant Prize Foundation, esteemed colleagues, humanitarians, and honored guests.

Standing before you today as the recipient of the 2026 Henry Dunant Field Prize is an honor that words cannot fully capture. When Henry Dunant witnessed the horrors of the Battle of Solferino in 1859, he was not a career humanitarian. He was simply a human being who looked upon immense suffering and refused to look away. He chose to act, birthing a movement that reminds us that even in the darkest depths of human conflict, humanity must have a limit.

To receive a prize bearing his name is both profoundly humbling and a reminder of the immense responsibility we carry. I accept this award not just for myself, but on behalf of the passionate, tireless student-clinicians and supervisors at Baze University, and most importantly, on behalf of the resilient communities within the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps who teach us the true meaning of dignity every single day.

The Reality on the Ground

When we first founded the Law Clinics at Baze University, specifically our International Humanitarian Law and Migration and Trafficked Persons frameworks, our goal was to bridge the gap between abstract classroom theory and raw human reality.

In the peaceful quiet of an academic lecture hall, International Humanitarian Law is a beautifully structured system of treaties, protocols, and custom. But in the dust of an Internally Displaced Persons camp, it is a lifeline. It is the boundary line between absolute vulnerability and fundamental human dignity.

Nigeria, like many nations facing complex security challenges, is home to a lot of displaced families. These are civilians uprooted by violence, stripped of their homes, their livelihoods, and often, their sense of safety. Among them, the most profoundly affected are always the children.

Igniting a Light: Teaching Children IHL

Many of the children we meet in the camps have known only the language of displacement, loss, and conflict. It is easy for a child exposed to such environments to believe that violence is the only law that governs the world.

That is why our clinic began a unique mission: **teaching International Humanitarian Law to children inside the IDP camps.**

The question is *‘how do you teach complex Geneva Conventions to a displaced child?"*

The answer is simple: We do not talk to them about state responsibility or complex legal mechanisms. We talk to them about humanity. We use interactive storytelling, simple illustrations, and role-play to teach them the basic tenets of restraint and protection. We teach them that even in war, there are strict rules. We teach them that doctors and hospitals are sacred, that civilians must never be targets, and that treating an enemy humanely when they can no longer fight is an act of ultimate strength, not weakness.

By instilling these principles early, we are doing more than teaching law, we are disrupting the cycle of violence. We are sowing the seeds of accountability, empathy, and peace in the minds of the very generation that will rebuild our societies.

Law and Humanitarian Assistance

But legal education alone cannot heal a crisis. You cannot teach a hungry child the law on an empty stomach. You cannot advocate for the dignity of a displaced mother without addressing her immediate, basic survival.

Through the Baze University International Humanitarian Law Clinic, our students have embraced a holistic model of lawyering. We pair our legal awareness tracks with direct humanitarian assistance. Our clinics regularly mobilize to provide essential food items, clothing, medical aid, and hygiene kits to the camp residents.

For our law students, this is a transformative education.Through clinical legal education by way of experiential learning,they learn that a true champion of the law does not just write briefs or cite articles; a true lawyer steps into the arena, gets their boots muddy, and uses their skills to lift up the vulnerable. They learn that the law must be an instrument of active compassion and change.

A Call to Action & A Personal Tribute

This prize is a magnificent validation of our work, but it must not be viewed as a finish line. Instead, let it be a rallying cry.

The global crisis of internal displacement is expanding. Millions of people worldwide are caught in the crossfire of hostilities, looking to the international community for the protections promised to them under international law. We must do more to localize the International Humanitarian Law. We must bring it out of the diplomatic chambers of Geneva and the academic halls of universities, and plant it firmly on the ground where the suffering is happening.

Receiving this award and being recognized by experts, colleagues, mentors and teachers is not a pinnacle per say, it is rather a responsibility I have been charged with to continue and do more.

Now the thank you's begin
I would like to thank:

a. Minister Chargé d'affaires of the Permanent Mission of Nigeria to the United Nations Office at Geneva -Amb. Innocent Iwogu
b. ICRC Nigeria
c. representatives of the family of Henry Dunant;
d. my family and loved ones present in this room and watching from home;
e. my colleagues and classmates;you have contributed in more ways than you can imagine
f. everyone present in this room;

Ladies and gentlemen, permit me to get personal before I step off this stage.
To my mother who is here with me today, dealing with a hyperactive child could not have been easy, thank you for never giving up on me.

Lastly I left acknowledging you until the very end, not because you matter the least, far from it—but because you are where it all started. I remember the crusade you embarked upon for out-of-school children in Nigeria. I remember the policy documents you published to push the agenda that these children have a fundamental right to education, not a life of begging on the streets. I remember how you would often stop by the roadside just to give them food.

So yes, long before I ever stepped into a law clinic, I learnt advocacy and humanitarian work from you. You started it all. You were my very first Henry Dunant.

I dedicate this award to you. In my heart, I know you are watching right now alongside your heavenly companions, turning to them with pride and saying, *"Yes... that's my baby girl."*

Thank you daddy for educating this girl child, and may you continue to rest in peace,amen.

Thank you, Foundation Prix Henry Dunant. Thank you all, very much.