

**A SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY BUKOLA SARAOKI, EXECUTIVE GOVERNOR, KWARA STATE & CHAIRMAN NIGERIA GOVERNORS FORUM AT The "1<sup>ST</sup> NATIONAL ROUND TABLE STRATEGY SESSION ON INTERNALLY GENERATED REVENUE" SCHEDULED TO HOLD 16-18<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2009.**

**Protocols.**

It is indeed an honor to be part of history, and a great privilege for me to address this eminent gathering of distinguished compatriots under the aegis of the **Nigeria Governors' Forum** during this "**1<sup>st</sup> National Round Table Strategy Session on Internally Generated Revenue**". I believe this event will capture the vision for Nigeria's economic diversification and fiscal autonomy for sub-national governments which shall serve as a blueprint for by successive governments. I welcome and salute all my colleagues and also our distinguished invited guests to this epoch making event.

As you are all aware, few Governors, if not all of us are enjoying State Council meetings today because we are under pressure to produce results of democratic dividends, notwithstanding the impact of global recession on our mono-product economy. Typically, state governments are expected to improve services even in the face of pressure such as tightening budgets, high debt burden, volatile oil prices and regulatory reforms. Therefore, to close the gap between our current performance and our potential, sub-national governments must aspire to expand their IGR. In a recession therefore, cold hard facts will always win every time. The current average of 12% IGR is unsustainable if fiscal autonomy is to be achieved by State and Local Governments. Therefore, sub-national governments must understand that to avoid the potential threat of going bankrupt by some tiers of government, sustainable and better means and ways of reducing fiscal dependency on oil-revenues must be harnessed to survive the down turn and also build a greater future.

Distinguished guests, in order to address the above without increasing the taxpayers burden, this round-table session is expected to identify "**what works and what doesn't**" and align them with

the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which typically distills into achieving the 7 Point Agenda of Mr. President and the Vision: 20 20-20 targets, thereby delivering greater outcomes with the same or fewer resources. I believe this will be the panacea that would bring relief to our teeming localities and electorates who have embraced democracy in Nigeria and voted us into positions of authority and power.

The challenges of increasing internally generated revenue in a depressed economy cannot be overemphasized; however a holistic approach conscious of good governance, poverty alleviation and job creation shall be pursued. Let me also take time to commend the initiatives and wisdom of the Governors regarding the current Peer Review exercise being undertaken by the Nigeria Governors Forum Secretariat. My dear colleagues, this is the first time in Nigeria that, Governors have openly decided to learn from each other by benchmarking certain best practices that could be adopted with a view of deepening our federalism and building a sustainable democracy. The outcome of the peer review is expected to serve as a *“learning-point”* for each Governor which shall be further domesticated depending on the peculiarities and needs of each state.

I’m sure that the conceptual models to tackle these challenges are available here today given the quality and capacity of the delegates. Whilst it is certainly not my desire to bore my distinguished colleagues and compatriots with a long speech, may I now humbly declare the **“1<sup>st</sup> National Round Table Strategy Session on Internally Generated Revenue” 2009** opened. I wish you fruitful deliberations.

Thank you.

**Dr. Bukola Saraki (Turakin Ilorin)**

**Executive Governor, Kwara State & Chairman Nigeria Governors Forum**