

## **GOVERNOR ABUBAKAR BUKOLA SARAHI OF KWARA STATE & CHAIRMAN OF NIGERIA GOVERNORS' FORUM**

Governor Abubakar Bukola Saraki of Kwara State, who is also the current Chairman of Nigeria Governors' Forum, was born on the 19<sup>th</sup> of December, 1962. For his primary education, he attended the elitist Corona School on high-brow Victoria Island, in Lagos which he followed up with his secondary education at the prestigious King's College in the same city from 1973 to 1978.

After his post-secondary schooling at Cheltenham College, Cheltenham, London (1979 – 1981), he entered London Hospital Medical College to read medicine in 1982 and graduated with a Bachelor of Medicine & Surgery (M.B; B.S.) in 1987. From 1987 to 1988, he worked at Rush Green Hospital, Essex, London as a Medical Officer. For the following two years, he was a Senior Casualty Officer at the Royal Free Hospital, London.

From 1992 onwards, this medical practitioner-cum-politician started widening his intellectual horizon by attending several courses on financial management and political issues. In 1992, for example, he attended the London D. G. Gardner Advance Credit Analysis course; the following year, he was at the London American Express Executive Management Programme; while in 1997, he was at the Washington Course on Private & Public Sector Working Together. In 1998, he was in Malaysia for the Value & Vision: Socio-cultural Values and Implementation for Economic Development Course. In the same year, he was at the Lagos Business School for a course on "Nigeria in the Global situation".

Thereafter, Dr. Bukola Saraki began to take up management and political appointments in the private and public sectors, starting with the Societe Generale Bank (Nig) Ltd as Executive Director between 1989 and 1990. In 2000, he was appointed Special Assistant to the President on Budget, a position he held simultaneously with the chairmanship of the Presidential Committee on Non-oil Revenue Generation. In 2001, he was back at Societe Generale Bank (Nig) Ltd as Executive Vice Chairman.

In 2003, he contested the governorship election in Kwara State and won. Governor Saraki immediately brought to bear on governance his wide local and international exposure. To begin with, he introduced the Back-To-Farm programme especially to reduce youth unemployment in the state. In the same vein, when President Robert Mugabe started nationalizing white-owned farms in Zimbabwe as a result of which there was an exodus of whites out of that South African country, he

took advantage of the situation by inviting the white farmers to start commercial agriculture in Kwara State as a result of which the first farm in Nigeria with 2000 hectares of cultivated land was established.

He embarked on the construction of 350 housing units which he completed in a record time of two years while constructing more roads and rehabilitating many across the state. He has also rehabilitated the major dams in the state, viz Agba Dam & Asa Dam and all the waterworks in the state. Rural electrification and computerization of the civil service also had a pride of place in his scheme of things. He also made determined efforts to speed up the industrialization of the state within two years with the establishment of the Dangote Company and Tuyil Pharmaceutical and resuscitation of long-dormant Kwara Furniture.

In 2007, Governor Bukola Saraki ran for a second term and won. He was thereafter made the Chairman of the Nigeria Governors' Forum, a position which he holds to date. He belongs to several professional bodies. For examples, he is a member of the Nigeria Medical Council; British Medical Council; World Young Presidents Organisation; Board of Trustees John Kennedy Performing Arts Centre, Washington; and Financial Institutions Training Centre Governing Council. He is also a Director/Publisher, National Pilot, a national weekly newspaper and Director/Promoter All African On Line, a multimedia content service provider, systems technology developer and largest distributor of African news and information worldwide.

His performance has earned him four governance awards: This Day Newspaper Best Governor of the Year, 2004; City People Magazine Best Governor in North Central Zone, 2004-2005; City People Magazine Best Governor in Nigeria, 2004-2005; and Kenneth Kaunda Foundation Best Governor in Africa, 2006.