

Destiny Character & Leadership

The Abubakar O Sulaiman Story

Editors: J. Shola Omotola,
Fatai Dare & Mariam A Gbadamosi

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Above all, we return the glory to God, our all-in-all, for the success of this project.

J. Shola Omotola, Fatai Dare, and Mariam Gbadamosi
September 2025

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the life and impact of Alhaji (sheikh) Isiaka Sulaiman Ajimati, the immediate elder brother of Prof. Abubakar Sulaiman, who passed on the 10th of June 2025.

Foreword

It is a great privilege to write this foreword to a book that documents in some great details the breadth and depth of Professor Abubakar Sulaiman's life, impact and legacy. The book unearthed significant memories beginning from his early years, notably his birth, parentage and upbringing, education, religion and spirituality and how these shaped (and still shaping) his personality, worldview, spirituality, activism and career.

Moreover, the book contains important testimonies and tributes as well as reflections of his impact and legacies, all pointing to one inevitable conclusion; a life of purpose dedicated to the service of God and humanity.

This book enjoys the combined honors of celebrating Professor Abubakar Olanrewaju Sulaiman's 60th Birthday and more importantly, richly documenting his landmark contribution to humanity and society. A visionary and compassionate person, he has touched countless lives. Indeed, he has been a shining light illuminating the paths of others and inspiring hope among the hopeless. His life simply demonstrates the interplay of vision and discipline, of character and service, of courage and humility.

Prof. Abubakar is a true Nigerian patriot. He embraces and relates well with all irrespective of regional, ethnic and religious affiliations.

This is not just writing a foreword as it has become customary for a book of this nature, rather, it is about celebration of landmark success of a proud son of Ilorin Emirate, Kwara State, and Nigeria. Let me confess that I share a lot in common with Professor Abubakar. We are scholars of the same disciplinary background, political science and international relations.

Moreover, both of us belong to that small group of scholars that fate bestowed the honour to practice what we teach at the highest level as classroom teachers and Ministers of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

And we are also descendants of Ilorin Emirate with deep passion for Islamic values and virtues. These cultural and religious backgrounds have indeed shaped Abubakar's ideological positions and worldview.

Furthermore, I have been privileged to watch Abubakar grow over the years to become the giant that he is today. He has always been a source of inspiration to young minds, demonstrating that no barriers are insurmountable no matter how challenging. If Abubakar could make it, despite the mountains of artificial barriers deliberately created on his paths to block or slow him down, then you too can.

In this respect, the book represents a beacon of hope and example, demonstrating that if one person can truly make it, then others too can, no matter the circumstances.

Today, we celebrate Abubakar not only for his personal accomplishments and as our pride. He is also a national figure, an educationist, a scholar, public servant, politician, and seasoned administrator, whose impact reverberates beyond the shores of Nigeria. He is owed a debt of gratitude for making us so proud.

In the light of the foregoing, I have the pleasure to recommend this important book to all, irrespective of status and position. Leaders, politicians, academics, diplomats, public servants, students at all levels, will find inspiration and important lessons not only for navigating the challenges of life, but also living a remarkable and impactful life. This is the real essence and meaning of living.

Happy birthday my dear brother, Professor Abubakar Olanrewaju Sulaiman; I wish you many happy returns in good health and, yes, prosperity as well.

Professor Ibrahim Agboola Gambari CFR, OCORT,
Founder/Chairman Board of Directors,
Savannah Centre for Diplomacy, Democracy and
Development, Abuja

Preface

The growth of literature on different subject matters that pertain to lives and living is an unceasing one. This is because, as humans continually rumminate, assess and reassess the complex ecosystem in their quest to better understand and improve on the society in which they live, developmental breakthroughs are made. And the outcome of such diagnostic processes are continually put into records, not only for posterity but also to allow for further prognosis aimed at refinement. Suffice to say that documenting ground breaking achievements in any field of human endeavour as a way of ensuring an improved society, would remain a recurring trend.

Expectedly, in putting rare feats of achievement into permanent record, the individual brains behind such accomplishments would naturally be signposted. After all events don't just happen, they are caused. One of the outstanding individuals in the present Nigerian body politic is Prof. Abubakar Olarewaju Sulaiman, who has been blazing the trail of achievements since his emergence in the corridors of power, for more than a decade.

Evidences of his mid as touch on the National Planning ministry he superintended as minister and the unprecedented positive turn around he gave to the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies which he is still leading are considered too phenomenal to be left undocumented. Hence the decision to compile, produce and make them handy in book form, for the purposes of posterity. But, achievers don't just achieve, they first prepare, ahead of opportunity. And when opportunity meets preparations, success is inevitable. So, an insight into what put

Abubakar instead for the series of successes he is making is also adjudged necessary to be recorded to serve as motivation and inspiration for our future leaders.

This book is therefore two-prongs: his preparatory/formative stage and the stage of his rise to stardom. In this book, childhood friends and close family members who have ample insight into his phenomenal growth, made their contributions, while his associates in the academic, politics and public services who are witnesses and co- players with him also gave their accounts. Through this unique collection, they are saying in one voice: "This is the Abubakar that we know".

The book is about a rash youth; it is the story about an activist; and an academia.

It is a telltale about a grassrooter politician, playing on the field and in the boardroom. It is a story about a technocrat, who had traversed and still traversing across the executive and legislative landscape of the nation's body politic.

Readers, before you is an array of intellectual outputs on a benevolent, yet downright blunt statesman. So, flip open the pages and meet a quintessential leader, whose meteoric rise has proven him to be (by all standards), a man to watch, as the next political chapter unfolds, at both the national and sub-national levels.

Kabiru Tanimu Turaki, SAN

Former Minister of Special Duties

Prologue

In the annals of history, certain individuals rise beyond the confines of their names. They transcend titles, positions, and the fleeting applause of society to become something much greater, as a force of nature, a guiding light, a symbol of what is possible when intellect, integrity, and service converge. Professor Abubakar Olanrewaju Sulaiman is one such figure.

This book is not just a chronicle of a man who wields influence in government or academia. Rather, it is an exploration of how he view power not as a personal possession, but as a sacred trust. For him, power has always been an instrument for transformation, a divine responsibility to uplift communities, to strengthen institutions, and to inspire the next generation to walk the path of service.

Professor Abubakar's journey is defined not by comfort or ease, but by conviction and sacrifice. From his earliest years under the tutelage of revered clerics and grandparents who instilled in him the values of humility and devotion, to his later strides in academia and public administration, his path has been one of steady growth and purposeful impact. His life reminds us that true greatness is not measured by the number of offices one holds, but by the number of lives one touches.

As we probe into the chapters of his remarkable journey, we will encounter a man shaped by faith and fortified by knowledge; a leader who faced challenges yet turned them into stepping stones; a thinker who believed in the power of ideas; and a reformer who understood that service to humanity is the ultimate calling. His story is not one of self-glorification, but of an enduring belief that one individual, armed with vision and humility, can leave a mark on history.

It was Karl Marx who famously argued that men make their history, but they do not select the conditions. Objective circumstances condition the actions of men without doubt, but the outstanding individual in the historical process rises within those contexts, to post very valuable acts that impact the human condition in ways that ennoble people, change the trajectories of development for the better, and burn the types of imprimatur on institutions that we can all recognise and celebrate for a long time.

These are valuable realities arising from the life, conduct, and work of Professor Abubakar Olanrewaju Sulaiman.

Oyinlola Aishah Sulaiman

Chapter 1

Roots of Faith, Family, and Leadership

Professor Abubakar Olanrewaju Sulaiman life story is an intricate tapestry woven from the threads of deep faith, a rich family heritage, and a profound sense of leadership that emerged from his earliest days. Born on October 16, 1965, in the bustling city of Lagos, Nigeria, he entered a world defined by a legacy of unwavering Islamic scholarship and civic dedication. This beginning was not a matter of chance, but the continuation of a lineage steeped in knowledge and piety.

His family was not just a household but a revered institution, with his father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and brother all recognized as Shuyuk, a title reserved for learned Islamic clerics dedicated to nurturing spiritual and moral development in their communities. The Legacy of a Patriarch, his father, the late Alhaji Sulaiman Ajimati Keebe, embodied the devotion to faith and service. Beginning his journey in his early twenties as the Imam of Ejigbo Mosque on Lagos Island, he later became the Chief Imam of Alasooke Mosque in the Olowogbowo district, a role he fulfilled for an impressive fifty-four years.

His life revolved around guiding, teaching, and serving the community, establishing a moral compass that would

profoundly influence Abubakar. His father's dedication to his congregation was a constant lesson in the power of quiet, persistent service. He was a pillar of his community, a man whose wisdom was sought on matters both spiritual and mundane. For the young Abubakar, observing this life of devotion laid the groundwork for his own future, demonstrating that true authority is earned through humility and unwavering commitment to the wellbeing of others. This long-standing tradition of service and scholarship from his paternal side was the fertile ground from which his own life would spring, instilling in him a sense of purpose that transcended personal ambition.

A new beginning in Ilorin

At the tender age of two, a pivotal shift occurred in young Abubakar's life. He was relocated from the fastpaced life of Lagos to the scholarly heartland of Ilorin to be raised by his maternal grandparents, the late Sheikh Sulaiman Aminullahi Okeleru and Hajia Mariam Ibn Yahaya Tajudeen. This move was a deliberate act, designed to immerse him in an environment where knowledge was not just taught but lived. It was in Ilorin's rich scholarly environment that young Abubakar began absorbing lessons that would shape his character and worldview.

His maternal grandmother, in particular, took on the primary role of shaping his early childhood. The rigour of his religious education was relentless, but it was also a labour of love. By the age of nine, a remarkable testament to his dedication and discipline, he had completed his study of the Holy Quran. This

early achievement was followed by another life- altering event: his first holy pilgrimage to Mecca alongside his grandfather. The journey was more than a religious rite; it was an initiation into a world of profound spiritual contemplation and a deeper understanding of his faith's global community.

From an early age, Abubakar exhibited extraordinary abilities. His skill in reciting the Qur'an drew admiration far beyond his immediate environment. During a period in Saudi Arabia, Arabs who heard him recite were so impressed that they approached his grandfather, insisting that the boy should remain in the holy land, nurtured, and educated in their tradition. But his grandfather, fluent in Arabic and wise beyond his years, handled the situation with prudence, explaining that he was only the boy's grandfather and that the final decision would involve his parents in Nigeria. This early episode illustrates both the recognition of his innate talent and the careful guidance of his family, balancing opportunity with prudence.

Despite the allure of an early, prestigious path abroad, Abubakar returned to Nigeria, a journey that would prove pivotal in shaping his eventual path into Western education. During these formative years, he was privileged to interact with some of the most respected clerics of the time, including the late Sheikh Kamaldeen Al-Adaby and Sheikh Adam Al-Ilori. These interactions instilled in him a profound sense of discipline, a boundless intellectual curiosity, and a deep-seated commitment to ethical leadership that would define his life's work.

The enduring influence of Maternal Kin.

Abubakar's maternal family lineage, also contributed significantly to his formative development. His connection to the late Sheikh Yahaya Tajudeen of Adafila compound, Pakata, Ilorin, the pioneering Chief Imam of Ebiraland, anchored him in a rich legacy of faith, community service, and scholarship. His mother, Hajia Halima Sulaiman, and his maternal grandmother, Hajia Mariam Ibn Sheikh Tajudeen (affectionately known as Iya Omoda), played pivotal roles in his upbringing. From them, he learned the foundational principles of altruism, humility, and duty to kith and kin, values that would later influence both his personal life and public service.

The family home was a hive of activity, a constant lesson in kinship, respect for elders, and social responsibility. It was here that he earned the affectionate nickname "Uncle Lee" a short form of his name OLANREWAJU among the younger family members, a sign of the respect and camaraderie he inspired even as a boy. The lessons learned in these formative years, the value of education, the importance of mentorship, and the need for humility in positions of influence, laid the groundwork for his future successes in academia, governance, and civic leadership. His early life demonstrates that leadership is not merely about titles but about action, empathy, and service.

Early Education and the Seeds of Leadership

While Abubakar's childhood was steeped in the rich traditions of his family's Islamic heritage, his formal education would

chart an equally transformative course. This journey was not without its own unique challenges and pivotal moments that would further shape his character. He began his formal education at Alore LSMB Primary School, Ilorin, in 1973, after completing his elementary Arabic studies at Alawunyan and Ile Odoor Islamiyah school, both in Ilorin. He excelled academically and successfully completed his primary education in 1979.

This initial phase of Western education laid a critical foundation, but it was his entry into Community Secondary School, Ballah, that would represent a significant turning point in his life. This particular path was not his grandfather's initial vision. The late Sheikh Sulaiman Aminullahi Okeleru, a man of deep piety and traditional values, had planned for his grandson to focus exclusively on Arabic and Islamic education, in continuation of the family's legacy.

However, a different path was championed by Abubakar's uncle, Dr. A.B. Sulaiman, a respected figure in public service. The two men held different, yet equally valid, perspectives, on how best to prepare Abubakar for the future. The grandfather saw the timeless value of classical scholarship, while the uncle saw the necessity of navigating the modern world. In a moment of strategic foresight, Dr. Sulaiman made a compelling argument to the patriarch: if Abubakar were to become a truly impactful preacher, he would need to master the English language as well as Arabic.

This ability to communicate in both languages would allow him to reach a far wider audience, bridging the gap between traditional wisdom and modern society. The argument, a beautiful blend of respect for tradition and a pragmatic vision for the future, was successful. His grandfather agreed, and this pivotal decision set Abubakar on a dual educational track that would define his professional journey. Yet, the common entrance process for secondary school had already ended. Once again, intervention from family friends and respected figures changed his course.

With the help of the late Alhaji Saka Saadu, a respected public servant and former Minister of State for Education, Abubakar secured late admission into the newly established Community Secondary School, Ballah, in 1979. The move to Community Secondary School, Ballah, provided the young Abubakar with a new environment in which his innate leadership qualities could flourish. As a pioneer student, he was part of the first cohort, a position that demanded resilience, initiative, and the ability to build a community from the ground up.

It was here that he was elected President of the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN) Ballah Chapter. This role was far more than a ceremonial title; it was a hands on experience in organizing a community and advocacy. He was responsible for managing complex programs, mediating disputes among his peers, and inspiring them to participate actively in social, educational, and religious initiatives.

It was his first real lesson in balancing vision with action, a skill that would later define his academic and ministerial career.

He continued to hone these skills at Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin, where he served as secretary general of the MSSN Polytechnic Chapter.

In this capacity, he demonstrated a remarkable ability to organize and mobilize his peers. His work involved coordinating weekly prayer sessions, organizing open-air sermons, and hosting symposiums and debates that engaged students on matters of faith, ethics, and social responsibility. This period was a laboratory for his leadership, where he learned to navigate the intricacies of student politics and the dynamics of large-scale community initiatives. A defining moment in his early life came in 1983 with the establishment of the *Jaamatul Nashr Dawah ilallah* Society of Nigeria, a youth organization founded by his maternal aunt, Hajia (Barr.) Iyabo S. O. Muhammed (wife of the retired Grand-Khadi, Justice S.O. Muhammed). Abubakar's leadership abilities were recognized on a broader scale, and he was appointed President of the society.

This new role tasked him with guiding young men and women dedicated to pious service across Ilorin. The society's activities were extensive and impactful, including regular programs, debates, and media engagement through Radio Kwara and NTA Ilorin. He collaborated with prominent members of the association, as at then. These were, Haji

Abubakar Sulaiman himself, as the President, Abdulfatai Dare Magobon as the Secretary General, but later succeeded Haji Abubakar in the same capacity at the expiration of his tenure.

The society's advisory board included esteemed figures like Prof. A.Y. Abdulkareem, a former Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ilorin, and Hajia Ayinke Saka, a retired permanent secretary and former commissioner for health in Kwara State. Their guidance reinforced his appreciation for mentorship, collaboration, and accountability. The programs organized by the society left a lasting impression on the communities they served.

During Ramadan, Eid Al-Adha festivals, and other Islamic celebrations, Abubakar's leadership ensured that events were inclusive, educational, and spiritually enriching. He invited eminent Islamic jurists and scholars from within and beyond Kwara State, such as Hajia Aishat Lemu, to deliver lectures on Sharia and other aspects of Islamic jurisprudence. These early engagements taught him the importance of bridging religious scholarship with practical societal guidance, a lesson he carried into later public service and academic leadership roles.

In these formative years, Abubakar's character, resilience, and vision were cultivated through a unique combination of religious grounding, educational opportunities, and hands-on leadership experiences. Each phase of his youth contributed to a well-rounded understanding of responsibility, morality,

and service. His journey reflects a life guided by faith, family, and community, illustrating the transformative power of early mentorship, disciplined education, and opportunities for practical leadership. The foundation laid during these years became the springboard for a career characterized by integrity, intellectual rigour, and a commitment to societal progress; a trajectory that continues to inspire those who encounter his work, leadership, and vision.

Lessons from Parents and Mentors

Professor Abubakar's upbringing was a masterclass in discipline, faith, and the power of mentorship, lessons that would become the cornerstones of his character. Being born into the household of revered Islamic leaders, the shuyuk, a lineage that instilled in him from birth, the values of spiritual leadership, and civic responsibility. Abubakar, observing this life of quiet, persistent service, taught him that true authority is earned through humility and unwavering commitment to the wellbeing of others. The most profound lessons, however, came from his maternal grandparents, particularly his grandmother, Hajia Mariam Ibn Yahaya Tajudeen.

From the age of two, he was raised by her in a home described as a "crucible of Islamic values and discipline". His grandmother was a relentless disciplinarian. She rose every morning at 3 a.m. for prayers, a ritual Abubakar quietly observed, and this "consistency, that unwavering discipline, became my first lesson in faith and commitment". She was the one who taught him the Arabic alphabet and the Holy Qur'an. Her home was not just a place of residence but a mandatory

"Islamiyah school" where a rigorous routine was enforced with love and guidance.

His grandparents treated him with special affection, which he attributes to his unusual birth as an Òkẹ́, a child born enclosed in a cyst formed by the umbilical cord. This specialness, however, did not lead to him being a "spoilt child". For nearly twenty years, his mother prayed and longed for a child, and when her prayers were finally answered, she chose sacrifice over self-indulgence.

At just two years old, she placed him in the care of her own mother, not out of neglect, but out of love; a conscious decision to anchor his life in discipline, knowledge, and the timeless values of Islam, rather than pampering.

It was the kind of sacrifice that defined her motherhood, one she would repeat with the children born before and after him, always putting aside her own desires, so they could be shaped by the best hands, guided by wisdom, and given every chance to thrive. His maternal grandfather, was Sheikh Sulaiman Aminullahi Okeleru a "Jihadist" in the scholarly sense, a man of deep conviction and discipline who traveled widely to spread Islam. Guidance by his parents and mentors, established a powerful foundation for his future. They taught him that his life's path was not about titles but about action, empathy, and service to humanity.

A Fusion of Faith and Fuji: The Musical Path.

In a life defined by spiritual and academic rigour, Professor Abubakar's early years held a surprising, creative duality. While serving as the Imam and President of the Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN) at Community Secondary School, Ballah, he also led the school's Fuji music group.

Acknowledging that Fuji music evolved from the traditional Were music, he saw this role not as a contradiction, but as another form of leadership, one where he could inspire and rally his peers through performance. "Nobody could match me," he recalled with a laugh, confident in his musical talent. A standout moment in his brief musical journey came in 1980 or 1981, during the commissioning of his secondary school.

The school, which was established by the Ilorin Descendants Progressive Union, (as then was) invited the late Senate Leader, Senator Olusola Saraki, to grace the occasion. It was Abubakar who was chosen to lead the Fuji group to sing and welcome Saraki, a performance that captivated the audience and left a lasting impression on everyone present, including the Emir and other community leaders. His ability to compose and perform so uniquely earned him a spot in the finals of an annual singing competition in Ilorin, with a photo from the event said to be in the school's archives to this day.

Despite his talent and a strong desire to work with the legendary Fuji musician Sikiru Ayinde Barrister, his religious

upbringing and family background ultimately prevented him from pursuing a music career. However, this creative spirit found other outlets, such as writing and organizing plays for the Islamic group, one of which was even staged on NTA Ilorin. This period of his life demonstrates a youthful ability to balance his faith, leadership, and innate creativity, foreshadowing a career of multifaceted excellence.

Chapter 2

The Road Less Traveled

Professor Abubakar's journey into higher education was not a straightforward path but a testament to how destiny and determination intertwine to shape one's future. From a young age, his life was steered toward becoming an Islamic cleric, a path deeply ingrained in his family's heritage. However, the path to his formal education was a series of unexpected turns. The choice of Political Science for his university studies was, as he himself described, "accidental."

His first attempt at university admission was for Islamic Studies at Usman Dan Fodio University in 1985. Despite scoring well over 200 in the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB) examination, he was surprisingly denied admission. Frustrated by this unexpected turn of events, he decided to abandon his initial academic pursuit. With a deep seated interest in Law, he faced a new obstacle: a strong family belief that studying the discipline doesn't sit well with them. Out of respect for his parents and elders, he heeded their warnings and sought an alternative.

The closest discipline to Law, in his estimation, was Political Science, and that is how he ended up at Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) in Zaria. The pursuit of higher education led Abubakar to Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) Zaria,

where he studied Political Science. He was not alone; his fellow Ilorin Emirate brothers and sisters were also pursuing their studies there. In the Political Science Department, his contemporaries included Alh. G.B.O. Bello, Hajia Mulikat Usman, and Hajia Medina Yakub Manjo-Sholagberu Idi-Agbede. Meanwhile, friends like Dr. Garba Manjo and the late Shuiab Issa Adana, alias *Gomina*, were in the Institute of Administration, studying Public Administration, with Alhaji Lateef Sholagberu in the Faculty of Agriculture.

His time in Zaria was more than just academics. It was a period that further ignited his leadership qualities. In 1988, his peers recognized his potential by electing him National President of the Ilorin Students Union (ISU). The following year, he served as President of the Ilorin Youth Front, Samaru Campus, ABU, Zaria.

This historic academic and cultural hub exposed him to governance challenges, and radical intellectual debates. This early exposure to leadership, cultural engagement, and intellectual debates on governance, would prove to be a foundational experience, shaping his later academic and professional focus on international relations and public administration. His academic brilliance and leadership qualities stood out during his time at ABU Zaria, setting the stage for his future endeavors.

Postgraduate Studies and the Pursuit of a Doctorate

For Abubakar, the pursuit of higher knowledge was never a destination but a lifelong journey, woven into the very fabric

of his existence. If Ilorin provided the foundation of faith, discipline, and early leadership, then Jos became the stage on which his intellectual vision and personal commitments began to mature in profound ways. Jos was not unfamiliar territory. He had first encountered the city during his National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) assignment, between 1990 and 1991, when he served with the Department of Customs and Excise. That year of service was formative in more ways than one.

Beyond discharging his duties with diligence, the experience gave him a panoramic view of Nigeria's diversity. Jos, with its cosmopolitan environment and rich blend of cultures, left a deep impression on him. He interacted with fellow corps members from different ethnic, religious, and regional backgrounds, sharpening his appreciation for Nigeria's unity in diversity. These interactions would later serve as a subtle but enduring influence on his worldview, as a political scientist and advocate for national integration.

After NYSC, his intellectual curiosity and insatiable hunger for deeper knowledge, compelled him to return to Jos, this time as a postgraduate student at the University of Jos. He enrolled in the Master's program in International Relations and Strategic Studies, a field that resonated with his long-standing interest in governance, diplomacy, and global affairs. The program demanded rigor, discipline, and clarity of thought, qualities he had cultivated since childhood. For him, international relations was not just an academic subject but a lens through which to interpret Nigeria's place in the world and Africa's evolving role in global politics.

During this period, he was exposed to leading scholars, thinkers, and practitioners, whose teachings expanded his intellectual horizon. Long hours spent in libraries, seminars, and debates, helped refine his analytical skills, enabling him to connect theoretical frameworks, with practical realities. He was not content with abstract knowledge; rather, he sought to understand how governance, diplomacy, and leadership, could directly impact the lives of ordinary citizens. His Master's thesis reflected this blend of intellectual rigor and practical concern, laying the groundwork for his later research interests in governance, democracy, and development.

Yet Jos was more than just an academic crucible it was also the backdrop of significant personal milestones. It was in this city that he met and married Hajia Hajararat Sulaiman, his first wife. Their union symbolized a convergence of shared values, mutual respect, and a commitment to building a family grounded in faith and service. Marriage at this stage of his life did not distract from his academic pursuits; instead, it offered him a sense of balance, stability, and emotional support. With Hajararat by his side, he was able to navigate the demands of postgraduate study while building the foundations of a family life rooted in love and partnership.

By 1995, he had successfully completed his Master's degree in International Relations and Strategic Studies. This achievement was not merely an academic milestone but also a personal triumph, reinforcing his belief in the transformative power of education. The degree widened his career options, positioning him for both academic and public service

opportunities. More importantly, it deepened his conviction that leadership in Nigeria required a blend of intellectual sophistication, moral grounding, and practical experience. His academic journey did not stop at the Master's level.

With characteristic determination, he pressed on toward the pinnacle of scholarship: the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). The decision to pursue a doctorate was fueled not by the lure of titles but by an inner compulsion to contribute meaningfully to the intellectual and policy discourse shaping Nigeria and Africa.

The doctorate became the natural continuation of a journey that had begun in the Quranic schools of Ilorin, refined in the classrooms of Ahmadu Bello University, and deepened in the seminar halls of the University of Jos. The path to a PhD is rarely easy, and his was no exception. It required years of patient research, intellectual discipline, and the resilience to overcome obstacles. His doctoral studies demanded a mastery of theory and methodology, but more importantly, they required him to develop original insights that could advance knowledge in political science and international relations. He embraced the challenge wholeheartedly, seeing in it not just an academic task, but a responsibility to contribute to society.

Through his doctoral work, Abubakar began to establish himself as a voice of clarity on issues of governance, democracy, and Nigeria's place in the global order. His research and publications reflected a deep concern for how African states could navigate the challenges of modernization,

democratization, and international engagement. By the time he attained the rank of professor, his body of work had already begun to influence both scholarship and policy, marking him as not just a teacher of politics, but a practitioner of ideas that shaped the national conversation.

Looking back, Jos holds a special place in his life story not just as a city, but as a metaphor for growth, resilience, and transformation. It was where he served his nation as a young graduate, where he sharpened his intellectual tools as a postgraduate student, where he built a family, and where he laid the foundations for a career that would straddle academia, governance, and public service.

For Abubakar, the pursuit of knowledge was never a solitary act; it was always intertwined with service, community, and personal growth. His postgraduate studies and doctorate journey, embody this truth that scholarship, when pursued with sincerity and discipline, becomes not just a personal achievement, but a public good, equipping one to lead, inspire, and transform society.

Early Teaching Experience

After completing his Master of Science degree, Abubakar embarked on what would become a defining chapter of his life: a career in academia. His first appointment was at the University of Abuja, where he joined the Department of Political Science, as a young lecturer. From the very beginning, he approached teaching not as a job, but as a vocation. For him, the classroom was more than four walls

and desks, it was a laboratory for ideas, a forum for dialogue, and a training ground for the next generation of Nigerian leaders.

It was during this period that he also enrolled for his doctoral degree in International Relations, a pursuit that demanded long nights of research, countless drafts of chapters, and the patience to defend his ideas before panels of seasoned scholars. In 2003, after years of rigorous study, he successfully earned his Ph.D., a milestone that marked him as one of the rising intellectuals in his field. Throughout this demanding period, he benefited from the mentorship of a remarkable figure, the late Professor Umar Birai, who in particular, invested in his growth, often guiding him beyond academic matters to the broader responsibilities of scholarship and public service. Their bond went far beyond the typical student-supervisor relationship; it was a mentorship rooted in genuine care and belief in his potential.

As a lecturer, he quickly distinguished himself by his clarity of thought, his ability to simplify complex concepts, and his insistence on linking theory to real-world governance issues. Students often remarked on his engaging teaching style, one that combined academic rigour with practical illustrations from Nigeria's political landscape. He was not content with producing graduates who merely memorized theories; he wanted them to think critically, question structures, and imagine solutions for the nation's challenges. Alongside teaching, he pursued research with zeal.

His work focused on political science, international relations, and development studies, areas where he believed scholarship could directly inform policy and governance. He authored and co-authored books that became reference points for both students and practitioners, establishing himself as a serious voice in Nigeria's academic community. His publications reflected a consistent theme: the interplay between governance, democracy, and development in Africa.

By the turn of the millennium, Abubakar's influence was no longer confined to lecture halls or academic journals. He had begun to step boldly into the arena of public discourse. Through lectures, seminars, and workshops, he presented his ideas to broader audiences, earning recognition as a thoughtful and articulate scholar. But it was the media that amplified his voice. By the year 2000, he had become one of Nigeria's most recognizable public affairs analysts, frequently invited to weigh in on pressing national issues. Newspapers and magazines sought his opinions, valuing his ability to dissect political developments with objectivity and foresight.

Radio and television stations such as AIT, NTA, and Channels Television made him a regular guest, where his calm demeanor, sharp analysis, and balanced perspectives, earned him a loyal audience.

In a country often polarized by politics, Abubakar's contributions stood out for their depth and fairness. He became a household name among Nigerians who tuned in to

make sense of the nation's turbulent political climate. What set him apart was not only his knowledge, but also his courage. He was never afraid to speak truth to power, yet he did so with respect and diplomacy.

This ability to balance critique with constructive engagement gained him the respect of colleagues, students, policymakers, and the public alike. By combining his roles as teacher, researcher, author, and media commentator, Abubakar crafted for himself a unique identity: that of a public intellectual who bridged the gap between academia and society. His early years at the University of Abuja were not merely about building an academic career, they were about planting seeds of influence that would later blossom into national and international recognition.

Development of Academic Philosophy

Abubakar's academic philosophy did not emerge in isolation; it was the product of lived experiences, intellectual mentorship, and his constant search for ways to connect knowledge with national progress. From the earliest stages of his career, he resisted the idea of scholarship as a detached, ivory-tower pursuit. Instead, he embraced the belief that research and teaching must engage directly with society's realities. Mentorship played a pivotal role in shaping this outlook.

Under the guidance of the late Professor Nuhu Ya'qub, former Vice Chancellor of the University of Abuja, Abubakar learned

that academic excellence is measured not only in publications and promotions, but also in how effectively knowledge can influence governance and improve people's lives. Professor Ya'qub often emphasized that "ideas have consequences," a maxim that resonated deeply with Abubakar, and became a touchstone for his career.

His relationship with late Alhaji Daud Imam AbdulRahim further reinforced this conviction, teaching him the value of discipline, humility, and a sense of responsibility in the pursuit of intellectual goals. In his role as lecturer and research fellow, Abubakar began to refine a teaching style that combined academic rigour with real world application. He encouraged students to see political science not merely as abstract theory, but as a lens through which to understand Nigeria's turbulent transitions, policy failures, and democratic experiments.

His lectures were known for weaving contemporary political debates into classroom discussions, challenging students to think critically about how the theories they studied could be used to shape governance and public policy. At the heart of his philosophy was the conviction that education should serve as a tool for empowerment and social transformation. He often emphasized that Nigeria's greatest challenges: poverty, corruption, weak institutions, and poor leadership, were not insurmountable, if informed by sound scholarship and ethical leadership. His writings in political science, international relations, and development studies, reflected this perspective,

focusing on how democracy could be deepened and governance made more accountable in Africa.

Over time, this philosophy earned him recognition as more than just a teacher or researcher. He became known as a public intellectual, a scholar who could bridge the worlds of theory and practice, classrooms and communities, policy and implementation. This reputation opened doors for him in policy circles, and laid the groundwork for his later roles in government, where he would carry forward the same guiding principle: that knowledge must always serve the people. In essence, Professor Abubakar's academic philosophy was a marriage of intellectual curiosity and civic duty. He believed that every research paper, lecture, or media commentary, was part of a larger mission to illuminate, to challenge, and to contribute to the betterment of Nigeria and Africa as a whole. This conviction would become the compass guiding his journey through academia, governance, and public service.

Chapter 3

Personal Life and Values: *Family Life*

From his boyhood, Abubakar imbibed the spirit of communality, having been nurtured in a harmonious, polygamous home, where deep-rooted love and affection, defined relationships. His upbringing was marked by mutual respect and unity between his mother and stepmother, as well as among his full and half-siblings. **Among his full siblings were the late Alhaji Sheikh Is’haq Ajimat Sulaiman, whose passing remains a profound loss, and Hajia Engineer Zafirat Atinuke Ajimat Sulaiman, who retired as Director of Works at the Kwara State College of Education, Oro. His half-siblings include the late Alhaji Ameen Tunde Sulaiman Ajimati, the late Alhaji Ismail Sulaiman Ajimati, Hajia Fatimoh Sulaiman Ajimati, Hajia Kubrat Sulaiman Ajimati, Hajia Ramat Sulaiman Ajimati, and Alhaji Tajudeen Sulaiman Ajimati.** Together, they formed a large but close-knit family that deeply influenced his values of tolerance, patience, and love for kinship. In his own family life, Professor Sulaiman is married to three wives: **Hajia Hajarar Iyabo Sulaiman, a successful businesswoman; Hajia Zainab Arinola Sulaiman and Hajia Aishah Oyinlola Sulaiman, both of whom are currently pursuing Master’s degree programmes.**

His children, who stand as a reflection of his devotion to education and discipline, include Dr. Aishat Sulaiman, a UK-based medical doctor; Mr. Sulaiman Abubakar Sulaiman, who holds a Master of Science in International Relations, from Aston University in the United Kingdom; Miss Ameenat Sulaiman; Miss Haleemat Sulaiman, a graduate of the University of Wolverhampton, UK, with a Master of Science in Business Administration; the twin sisters, Miss Maimunat and Miss Maryam Sulaiman, both pursuing university education in Nigeria—one in Law and the other in ICT; as well as Miss Muinat and Miss Hafsat Sulaiman, who are also advancing their studies in Nigeria.

When reflecting on his marriages, Professor Abubakar often emphasised that his choices were never based on social status or material wealth. He explained that although one of his wives is the daughter of the ninth Emir of Ilorin, who is also the father of the current Emir, her family's royal background, was not a determining factor in his decision. For him, wealth and privilege were not prerequisites for marriage. Instead, he valued modest backgrounds and fairness, believing that marriage should transcend status.

In his words, the distribution of wealth and opportunity should not be confined to the privileged alone.

This perspective not only reflects his humility, but also underscores his guiding principles of simplicity, fairness, and a strong sense of responsibility in family life.

Approaches to Unwinding and Social Interaction

Professor Abubakar leads a life marked by discipline and intentional simplicity, extending even to how he unwinds. His staff often attests to his limited social engagements; he is not drawn to clubbing or recreational outings, and when traveling for work, he prefers the quiet of his hotel room over exploring nightlife. His primary form of relaxation is shopping, an activity he enjoys with remarkable endurance. In addition, he maintains a consistent daily exercise routine, which not only supports his health, but also serves as a form of mental refreshment.

Despite keeping a low profile in terms of social activities, Professor Abubakar values human connection. When asked how he relaxes, he often notes that beyond his exercise and shopping, he finds true ease in simply sitting down and engaging in meaningful conversations with people.

Daily Routine, Discipline, and Health Practices

Professor Abubakar's life is anchored in discipline, a quality that is evident in his daily routine and health practices. He is a firm believer in structure, balance, and intentional living, and he maintains habits that reflect both his professional demands, and personal values. Each day begins early, often before dawn, with prayers and reflection, setting a spiritual tone for the hours ahead.

He is deliberate about maintaining physical well-being, and incorporates regular exercise into his routine, treating it as a non-negotiable part of his day. This commitment to fitness not

only supports his health, but also sharpens his mental clarity and resilience, in the face of demanding responsibilities. Equally important, is his approach to diet and moderation. Though his schedule is often filled with official engagements, he makes conscious choices about what he consumes, balancing simplicity with nourishment.

His discipline extends beyond health into time management. He approaches his daily activities with focus and prioritization, ensuring that his duties are attended to efficiently, while preserving moments for rest and family connection. Even in relaxation, he avoids excesses, preferring simple activities.

In Loving Memory of Sheikh Ishaq sulaiman Ajimati (Sheikh Al-Bayan)

On the 10th of June, 2025, our hearts were shattered by the passing of **Sheikh Ishaq Sulaiman Ajimati**, beloved elder brother of Professor Abubakar. His departure, coming in the midst of this book's writing, felt like losing a piece of our identity, our shared past, and the future we thought we would walk together.

The grief was sharp, the shock unbearable, yet we bow to the will of Allah: *"Verily, to Allah we belong and to Him we shall return."*

Sheikh Ishaq Sulaiman, was a guide, a teacher, a light to the Muslim Ummah, and the Ilorin Emirate. His scholarship reached beyond Nigeria, touching lives in the Cote d'Ivoire,

the Benin Republic, and far beyond. The tributes that flowed in his honour, the prayers lifted in Ilorin, Okene, and Abuja, and the countless condolence visits from near and far, were a testament to a life lived in the service of God and humanity

Chapter 4

The Battles Within

Professor Abubakar's life, though marked by continuous ascent, was not without trials and internal battles.

These challenges, far from hindering him, became the crucible in which his character was refined. His journey affirms that true success is not measured by the absence of obstacles, but by the courage and conviction with which one confronts them. From professional struggles to the quiet tests of integrity, justice, and personal loss, his life reflects a man whose principles served as his shield, and whose perseverance remained his strongest weapon.

University of Abuja Experience

Upon completing his Master's degree, Abubakar commenced his academic career at the University of Abuja, where he would mentor and inspire students for more than two decades. During this period, he obtained his Ph.D. in International Relations in 2003, and rose to hold key leadership positions, including Director of the Centre for Peace, Leadership, and Development Studies (2009-2011). Beyond administrative responsibilities, he was an active and vocal member of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), where his

advocacy for truth and justice often placed him at odds with higher authorities.

For his principled stance, he endured harassment and denial of privileges, yet remained undeterred, pursuing redress through legal and legitimate means. Known for his integrity and uncompromising discipline, Professor Abubakar resisted undue pressures, and consistently upheld fairness. He personally marked examination scripts to ensure transparency, thereby earning the trust and admiration of his students.

Unpaid Labor and Early Persecution as a Professor

Abubakar's academic journey at the University of Abuja began under circumstances that would have discouraged many. For seven years, he served as a part-time lecturer in the Department of Political Science and International Relations, discharging his duties with the commitment of a fulltime academic. He taught, mentored, and even took on administrative responsibilities, rising to the role of Examination Officer, yet throughout this entire period, he was not paid a single kobo. Balancing these responsibilities while simultaneously pursuing his Ph.D., he displayed uncommon discipline, resilience, and devotion to his calling. His story during these years reflects not only a passion for knowledge, but also a rare willingness to sacrifice for the ideals of education and mentorship. Despite his evident competence and visible contributions to the growth of the department, every attempt to regularize his appointment was deliberately frustrated.

Administrative decisions, driven more by regional bias than merit, created an atmosphere of systemic discrimination and professional persecution. In contrast, what would have broken the resolve of many, steeled his determination, laying the foundation for the fortitude and resilience with which he would later confront greater battles in academia.

A Long Awaited Breakthrough

The arrival of the late Professor Nuhu Ya'qub as Vice Chancellor of the University of Abuja marked the first major turning point in Professor Abubakar's academic career. For years, his contributions as a part-time lecturer had gone unrewarded. He had taught with rigour, mentored with dedication, and shouldered administrative responsibilities with a commitment that equaled, if not surpassed that of many full-time staff. Yet, he was consistently denied regularization, not because of a lack of merit, but due to entrenched politics and deep-seated biases within the system.

Professor Ya'qub, a man known for his keen eye and sense of fairness, observed the internal workings of the institution for about a year. He was well aware of the silent injustice that plagued individuals like Abubakar, whose competence was evident but whose progress was deliberately obstructed. In 2005, he initiated a mass recruitment exercise, creating a rare window of opportunity for part-time lecturers to apply for permanent roles.

But even this opportunity did not come without resistance. Within the Department of Political Science, where Abubakar

had laboured for years without pay, attempts were made once again to thwart his advancement. In a shocking move, the registry declared him “not suitable,” citing a supposed offense that allegedly occurred three years earlier. The accusation was flimsy, clearly fabricated, and timed to discredit him at a moment when justice was finally within reach. It was at this point that Professor Ya’qub intervened directly. In a meeting with the Acting Registrar, he posed a question that cut through the layers of bureaucracy and exposed the hypocrisy behind the resistance:

“You said he committed an offense three years ago. Then what did you do about it all this while?”

The question was rhetorical yet powerful. It highlighted the injustice of punishing a man retroactively for an offense that had never been raised, investigated, or proven. More importantly, it revealed the political undertones that had kept Abubakar on the margins, despite his undeniable contributions. Confronted with this logic, the opposition crumbled. The baseless charges were dismissed, and Abubakar’s appointment was finally regularized. This moment represented more than the signing of a contract or the formalization of a role.

It was the vindication of years of unpaid labour, sacrifice, and perseverance. It was proof that integrity, though often tested, can withstand the weight of systemic injustice. For Abubakar, it marked the beginning of a new chapter not only as a recognized academic but also as a man whose resilience had been tested and proven. In the years that followed, this

breakthrough paved the way for additional responsibilities and leadership positions within the University. His commitment and discipline saw him rise to become Director of the Centre for Peace, Leadership, and Development Studies (2009-2011), where he played a pivotal role in shaping conversations around peace-building and leadership in Nigeria.

The story of his regularization is not just a tale of personal triumph; it is a reflection of the broader struggle for fairness in Nigerian institutions. It illustrates the quiet battles that many professionals endure in systems where merit is often overshadowed by politics. Yet, for Professor Abubakar, it became the fulcrum in which his resilience was refined, preparing him for even greater responsibilities and challenges that lay ahead. The death of Professor Nuhu Ya'qub, was excruciating for Prof. Abubakar.

Beyond being an administrator, Professor Nuhu Ya'qub had played a pivotal role in regularizing his appointment after years of unpaid service and institutional resistance. His passing was not just the loss of a colleague, but the departure of a mentor, and a man whose courage and fairness had left an indelible mark on Abubakar's life.

The Fight for the University

Yet the battles did not end with his appointment. A second and more intense phase of persecution unfolded under the leadership of Professor Sunday Adelabu, who succeeded Professor Nuhu Ya'qub as Vice Chancellor. Unlike his predecessor who had introduced landmark reforms such as the establishment of the Faculty of Medicine, the Faculty of Engineering, and the University's radio station Adelabu's administration became synonymous with stagnation and retrogression. For five years, the University of Abuja did not hold a single convocation, symbolizing the paralysis that had gripped the institution.

Professor Abubakar, by then serving as a director, emerged as one of the most vocal critics of this decline. Through his active role in the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), he consistently challenged maladministration. He granted press interviews, and brought the University's plight into the public square. In doing so, he became the visible face of resistance against what he considered the betrayal of academic ideals. This visibility, however, came at a steep cost. The administration targeted him personally in an effort to silence his voice.

The most shocking of these attacks occurred when the Vice Chancellor's Special Assistant, allegedly attempted to run him down, with a vehicle! A brazen assault on his life. Abubakar responded with characteristic resolve; he formally reported the incident to the Inspector General of Police, resulting in the temporary detention of both the Vice Chancellor and his aide.

But the threat escalated further. Adelabu was said to have openly vowed to “deal with Abubakar both physically and spiritually,” words intended to instill fear. Instead, they only deepened his determination to fight for justice.

When physical intimidation failed, administrative persecution followed, Adelabu constituted a witch hunting committee that denied Abubakar sabbatical leave and sought to isolate him professionally. What might have broken the spirit of a lesser man, only reinforced his conviction. Refusing to accept injustice, Abubakar turned to the courts. At the Federal High Court, he challenged the administration in the landmark case **The Federal High Court matter details are: FHC/ABJ/CS/169/2013 DR. SULEIMAN ABUBAKAR. VS. PROF. ADEBOWALE ADELABU (VICE CHANCELLOR, UNIABUJA & 7 OTHERS.** The injunction he secured not only halted the administration’s schemes, but also stood as a public reaffirmation of his belief that the rule of law must prevail over tyranny. This battle was more than a personal struggle, it was a fight for the very soul of the University of Abuja.

By confronting intimidation with courage, injustice with legality, and stagnation with advocacy, Professor Abubakar proved that leadership is not measured only by titles held, but by the willingness to defend principles in the face of adversity. The struggle cemented his reputation as a man of integrity, unafraid to sacrifice personal comfort for the greater good of the academic community.

Integrity, Mentorship, and the Human Impact

Through the storms of persecution and institutional resistance, Professor Abubakar never allowed his devotion to students or his integrity as a scholar to waver. He became widely known as a lecturer who maintained strict academic discipline, especially in his uncompromising stance against examination malpractice. Yet behind this rigour was a deep sense of fairness and responsibility.

His classes were demanding but never unjust, and he made himself accessible to students, encouraging them to engage him openly about their academic progress and personal struggles.

Perhaps the most extraordinary testament to his character lies in what he accomplished during the seven long years he worked without pay. Far from being discouraged, he poured his energy into mentoring a remarkable cohort of students who would later emerge as prominent figures in Nigeria's public life. Today, many of his former students serve as senators, governors, permanent secretaries, senior military and police officers, and top civil servants. Among them are Senator Fatai Buhari, Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, Senator Ahmad Maidori, Senator Abdul Ningi, Senator Biodun Olujimi, former Inspector General of Police Suleiman Abba, DIG Danmalam, and former Governor Ibrahim Idris, Honorable Ali Isa, Senator Ibrahim Idah, Senator Francis Fadahunsi, Senator Ali Attai idoko, Honorable Abudullahi Mahmood, among many others.

For these individuals, Abubakar was more than a lecturer. He was a mentor and a living example of what it means to hold fast to principles, in the face of overwhelming odds. They often recall not only his intellectual mastery, but also his fairness, consistency, and ability to guide with firmness and compassion. His resilience was tested further, when he received offers of higher appointments outside the university. At different times, opportunities arose for him to serve in the Ministry of Petroleum, and the National Assembly Service Commission. Each was a position that promised influence, financial security, and prestige. Yet he declined them all.

To him, the struggle at the University of Abuja was not just about personal advancement, it was a moral obligation. He chose to remain, to see the fight for justice through to its conclusion. That perseverance bore fruit. After serving his country as a Minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Abubakar returned to his academic roots, where his elevation to the rank of full Professor became both a professional milestone, and a symbolic victory. It underscored the truth he had lived by all along: that recognition and honor, when earned through integrity and endurance, carry a weight far greater than titles bestowed for convenience.

Principles Forged in Fire

The long battles within the University of Abuja did more than shape Abubakar's career; they forged the principles that would define his leadership and public service. Out of adversity, he developed a resilience that allowed him to confront professional and personal persecution without

compromise. His unwavering commitment to justice pushed him to challenge institutional oppression through lawful and ethical means, never succumbing to bitterness or shortcuts. He nurtured his students with the same conviction, mentoring them into future leaders, while upholding the highest standards of academic integrity.

Above all, he demonstrated that true service requires loyalty to principle, and to the institution one serves, even when personal gain or comfort beckons elsewhere. These values were not abstract ideals but living convictions tested in fire. They became the pillars upon which his career rested, revealing that leadership is not measured by titles or accolades, but by integrity under pressure. His perseverance and moral clarity gave rise to a legacy that transcended the university gates, inspiring students, colleagues, and peers alike.

It was this utopian and disciplined character, earned through positive obstinacy, and tenacious positivity, that prepared him for the larger stage of national politics and governance. When the call came to serve the nation beyond the university, Abubakar carried with him the lessons of resilience, justice, and service, the hallmarks of his existence, ready to translate personal trials into public leadership. The tempest of the University of Abuja had tested and tempered him, but it never broke nor defeated him. The battles he fought within the academia were truly the rehearsals for the larger contests awaiting him on the national stage.

In the lecture halls and courtrooms, he had learned the discipline of patience, the necessity of courage, and the unshakable value of principle. These were not just professional lessons, they were the foundations of statesmanship. So when the call came to serve beyond the university walls, Professor Abubakar was not a novice stepping into unfamiliar terrain. He carried with him scars that told stories of resilience, victories that testified to justice won against the odds, and a reputation as a man who could not be bought or silenced. Nigeria, with its turbulent politics and complex governance challenges, would prove a far greater battlefield, but it was one for which his earlier struggles had quietly prepared him.

At the University of Abuja, where he served as a faculty member for over two decades, Professor Abubakar had already distinguished himself as a teacher, mentor, and researcher.

Raised by his grandparents, he often reflects on how he escaped the trappings of indulgence that such an upbringing might have invited, shaping instead a life of discipline and humility. In gratitude, he frequently echoes the Qur'anic reminder: "Which of your Lord's favours will you deny?" Over time, he cultivated tremendous goodwill across political, academic, and traditional circles, a reputation built on integrity and consistent service. This reservoir of goodwill was vividly displayed during the wedding ceremony of his daughter, Dr. Aishat Sulaiman, in Ilorin.

The occasion drew a remarkable convergence of Nigeria's foremost leaders and dignitaries: Former Vice President Namadi Sambo; Senate President Dr. Ahmad Lawan; Chief of Staff to the President, Rt. Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila; Governor of Bauchi State, Bala Mohammed; Governor of Kwara State, AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq; the Ooni of Ife, Oba Enitan Adeyeye Ogunwusi; Former Senate President Dr. Abubakar Bukola Saraki; Senator Musiliu Obanikoro; Former Minister of Sports and Youth Development, Bolaji Abdullahi; Hajia muinat Shagaya, Hon.Mulikat Adeola, Yusuf Ali SAN, Oba Adelodun SAN, Jawondo Salman SAN, Kehinde Eleja SAN, Senator Orji Kalu, Senator jibril Barau, senator Nanadi Usman, kabiru Turaki SAN, Former Speaker of the Kwara State House of Assembly, Prof. Ali Ahmad, former ministers, senators, members of House of Representatives, members of diplomatic community among others.

Their presence was not merely ceremonial, but a resounding testament to the breadth of respect and influence he had garnered over the years. Fortified by academic excellence, sustained by faith, and guided by goodwill, Professor Abubakar's journey took him into the often-turbulent world of Nigerian politics, where leadership is proven and ideals are put to test. Yet, he displayed uncommon dedication, outstanding commitments to due process, unwavering loyalty to the national ideals, and altruistic in all ramifications.

Chapter 5:

Evidence-Based Governance and Policy: Appointment as Honorable Minister of National Planning (2014–2015)

In July 2014, Professor Abubakar was appointed as Minister of National Planning and Deputy Chairman of the National Planning Commission (NPC), a position that placed him at the heart of Nigeria's economic management and long-term development strategy. His appointment, though unexpected, was providential. At the time, he had never met President Goodluck Jonathan in person. His name was, however, recommended by his former student, Mrs. Lola Thomas to Hajiya Muinat Bola Shagaya, an influential business mogul from Ilorin.

Remembering the noble legacy of Professor Abubakar's maternal grandfather, the late Sheikh Sulaiman Aminullahi Okeleru, and reflecting on the values he had instilled in her life, Shagaya threw her weight behind his nomination, and actively championed his candidacy. This appointment was more than a political elevation; it was a divine trust. He often described it as an opportunity to serve his country at its moment of great need, guided by faith, humility, and an unshakable commitment to the public good.

A Nation in Crisis

The timing of his appointment was critical. Nigeria was facing its most severe economic shock in years. By mid-2014, global oil prices had collapsed, and as an oil-dependent economy, Nigeria was quickly thrown into fiscal distress. Federal revenues plummeted, the naira came under intense pressure, remittances fell, and GDP growth slowed. At the same time, the 2015 general elections loomed large, creating political uncertainty, and reducing appetite for long-term reforms.

Internally, the National Planning Commission itself was under pressure. Decades of underfunding and the dominance of short-term budgetary politics, had eroded its capacity to drive coherent development planning. The challenge before Professor Abubakar was therefore two-fold: to stabilize Nigeria's economy in the short term, while rebuilding institutional capacity for long-term strategic planning.

Key Contributions, Achievements, and Innovations as Minister of National Planning

Although Professor Abubakar's tenure as Minister of National Planning was brief, it was marked by intensity, innovation, and lasting impact. Within less than a year, he distinguished himself as a reformer who understood that national planning was not merely about producing documents, but about creating frameworks capable of withstanding political turbulence, while delivering tangible benefits to the Nigerian people.

One of his most significant contributions was the introduction of medium and long term planning mechanisms deliberately designed to outlive electoral cycles. In a political culture where new administrations often discard the policies of their predecessors, his insistence on continuity was groundbreaking.

By embedding critical projects whether in infrastructure, governance, or social development within broader national frameworks, he created a culture where progress was measured not by election seasons but by the long term arc of national transformation.

Equally notable was his effort to reposition the National Planning Commission (NPC) as the nerve center of policy coordination. He emphasized the alignment of federal budgets with long-term development priorities, ensuring that annual spending was integrated into a coherent national vision. Through evidence based planning, realistic projections, transparency, and synergy across ministries, he earned the respect of colleagues, long frustrated by fragmented processes. His reforms laid the foundation for the NPC's eventual transition into the Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning, giving Nigeria an institution capable of not only reacting to economic shocks, but also charting strategic paths for decades.

Professor Abubakar also strengthened Nigeria's international partnerships at a time of fiscal constraints and falling oil prices. Recognizing that the country could not tackle poverty

reduction, infrastructure development, and governance reforms alone, he actively advanced collaborations with institutions such as the World Bank, the African Development Bank, and the United Nations Development Programme. These engagements went beyond routine consultation, positioning Nigeria as a credible, proactive partner capable of absorbing technical assistance and maximizing concessional financing. His diplomacy ensured that international support was strategically leveraged to sustain long term development projects that continued to impact communities well beyond his tenure.

These achievements were the embodiment of Professor Abubakar's core philosophy: public policy must transcend political cycles to have a lasting impact. He worked deliberately to create frameworks capable of enduring beyond partisan boundaries, demonstrating that true leadership lies not in short-term visibility, but in planting seeds whose benefits unfold over time. Through continuity, institutional strengthening, and international cooperation, his ministerial legacy left a mark far greater than the brevity of his tenure might suggest.

Challenges and Resistance

Naturally, his time as minister was not without opposition. Navigating entrenched interests within the bureaucracy, managing scepticism from political actors wary of reforms, and balancing expectations in the heat of an election season required tact, resilience, and patience. There were moments of pushback, when colleagues or stakeholders resisted his

insistence on transparency and long-term thinking. Yet, he remained steady, often returning to his guiding principle: *what will be will be, as long as God is at the center of it.*

His ability to engage stakeholders with humility, while never compromising on integrity, set him apart. Staff who worked closely with him observed that he never carried himself with arrogance, even in the corridors of power. He maintained the same openness he had shown as a lecturer and public intellectual, listening attentively, consulting widely, and grounding decisions in evidence.

A Lasting Impact

Though his ministerial tenure lasted less than a year, its impact was enduring. The survival of his policies through subsequent administrations demonstrated that they were not built on politics, but on sound planning and national interest. In retrospect, his time at the helm of the National Planning Commission, symbolized his lifelong mission: to blend scholarship with service, ideas with action, and integrity with leadership. For Professor Abubakar, becoming Minister was not the peak of ambition but rather another platform to serve Nigeria. He carried into government the same humility and godliness that guides his life.

The National Integrated Infrastructure Master Plan (NIIMP)

One of Professor Abubakar's most enduring achievements as Minister of National Planning was the successful completion and formal launch of the **National Integrated Infrastructure**

Master Plan (NIIMP). This landmark document represented Nigeria's first truly integrated 30-year development blueprint, covering the period 2014–2043. With an estimated investment requirement of about **\$3 trillion**, the NIIMP provided a coherent roadmap for bridging the country's vast infrastructure deficit.

The plan prioritized critical sectors such as **energy, transport, information and communication technology, and water**, bringing together previously fragmented sectoral strategies into a unified national vision. A major innovation of the NIIMP was its strong emphasis on **public-private partnerships (PPPs)** as vehicles for financing, thereby reducing over-dependence on public expenditure and encouraging private sector participation in national development.

Beyond its conceptual strength, the NIIMP quickly proved its practical relevance. It became the **foundation upon which subsequent administrations anchored their infrastructure agendas**. Notably, flagship projects such as the **Abuja–Kaduna railway line development**, the **Lagos–Ibadan expressway expansion**, and the **Zungeru hydroelectric project**, were executed in line with the strategic direction the master plan had articulated.

The plan also had clear employment targets, projecting the creation of nearly **25 million jobs in agriculture and mining**, alongside an additional **600,000 jobs in construction within five years** of its rollout. Recognizing the importance of

institutional backing for such an ambitious plan, Professor Abubakar spearheaded the establishment of the **Infrastructure Development Coordination Unit (IDCU)** within the National Planning Commission. This unit was designed to strengthen coordination between federal and state governments, working closely with institutions such as **The Infrastructure Bank (TIB)** to harmonize financing and implementation efforts.

Importantly, Abubakar emphasized that governance is a continuous process and personally urged the incoming administration to sustain and support the NIIMP, underscoring his conviction that national progress depends on **policy continuity rather than political expediency**.

Facilitating the Approval of Nigeria's Official Development Assistance (ODA) Policy

Another transformative achievement of Professor Abubakar's tenure was the successful drafting and facilitation of the **Official Development Assistance (ODA) Policy Framework**, which was formally adopted by the Federal Executive Council in **May 2015**.

For decades, Nigeria had been one of the largest recipients of foreign aid and technical assistance in Africa, yet the absence of a coherent framework often led to fragmented interventions, duplication of efforts, and misalignment between donor priorities and Nigeria's own development agenda.

The ODA Policy addressed these long-standing gaps by **institutionalizing donor coordination** and providing a clear mechanism through which aid flows would be streamlined. It ensured that external assistance was no longer dictated solely by donor interests but was **anchored to national priorities** as articulated in Nigeria's medium and long term development plans. In practical terms, this meant that partnerships with agencies such as **USAID, DFID, the World Bank, and other multilateral and bilateral donors** were now required to align their programs with Nigeria's broader economic and social objectives.

By reducing duplication, enhancing transparency, and strengthening accountability, the policy laid the foundation for more effective aid management and maximized the developmental impact of donor resources. It also sent a strong signal to the international community that Nigeria was taking ownership of its development process, creating a framework that encouraged synergy rather than fragmentation. For Professor Abubakar, this achievement reflected a core part of his philosophy: **development must be owned and led by Nigerians, with external partners playing a supportive rather than a directive role**. The approval of the ODA Policy by the highest decision-making body in the country marked a major institutional milestone, ensuring that aid would serve as a complement to rather than a substitute for national planning and implementation.

Response to the Decline in Oil Prices

The sudden collapse of global oil prices in 2014 exposed Nigeria's structural weakness as a mono-economy heavily dependent on crude oil exports for government revenue and foreign exchange. For decades, successive governments had spoken about diversification, but little progress was achieved in building resilience against external shocks. When the crisis struck, Professor Abubakar rose to the challenge by championing policies that sought to mitigate the fiscal and economic fallout while laying the groundwork for long-term structural transformation.

He advocated for **deepening economic diversification**, particularly through increased investment in **agriculture, manufacturing, and the services sector**. His approach was not merely rhetorical; he initiated collaborations with relevant ministries, private sector stakeholders, and development partners to design strategies that would stimulate growth in non-oil exports, encourage domestic production, and reduce dependence on imports. These measures were complemented by his persistent calls for **structural reforms within the public sector**, aimed at addressing inefficiencies that drained government resources and undermined competitiveness.

His policy push contributed to improving confidence in the economy at a time of uncertainty, and his advocacy reinforced the urgency of building resilience. The fact that Nigeria's currency, the naira, experienced phases of appreciation during this turbulent period underscored the relevance of his interventions and the positive signaling effect of policies

rooted in diversification and fiscal prudence. For Abubakar, the oil-price shock was not just a crisis, it was an opportunity to remind the nation of the need to rethink its economic foundations and embrace a sustainable growth model.

Macroeconomic Stabilization and Fiscal Strategy

Alongside his efforts on diversification, Professor Abubakar paid close attention to Nigeria's **macroeconomic stability**. He recognized that without disciplined fiscal management, policy innovations would be undermined by short-term imbalances and loss of investor confidence. His fiscal strategy emphasized **prudence, evidence-based planning, and inter-agency coordination**.

He became one of the foremost advocates of the **oil-price threshold rule**, insisting that when oil revenues exceeded the benchmark price, the surpluses should be saved in the **Excess Crude Account** as a buffer against future shocks. His tenure also reinforced the alignment of fiscal instruments such as **Treasury Single Account (TSA)** and the **Government Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS)**, both of which were vital in curbing leakages, improving transparency, and ensuring better accountability in public finance.

He further urged the **unification of exchange rate mechanisms**, a position that was later recognized in the **IMF's 2015 assessment of Nigeria's economic challenges**.

Under his stewardship, the **Macroeconomic Analysis Department of the NPC** was revitalized. For the first time in years, it began producing **quarterly macroeconomic outlook reports** that provided forecasts on growth, inflation, unemployment, and fiscal balances. These reports did not remain on shelves; they fed directly into the **Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF)** and the 2015 federal budget.

He also encouraged the department to play an active role in **national economic summits and policy dialogues**, ensuring that evidence based insights informed discussions between government, private sector leaders, and development partners.

A major highlight of this period was the aftermath of Nigeria's **2014 GDP rebasing exercise**, which revealed that the country had overtaken South Africa to become Africa's largest economy with a GDP of \$510 billion. Rather than allow complacency to set in, Abubakar emphasized that this new status carried responsibilities: the need for stronger fiscal coordination, accurate data management, and policies that would convert Nigeria's statistical size into tangible improvements in employment and living standards.

Through these interventions, Professor Abubakar demonstrated that even in the face of external shocks and political uncertainty, disciplined planning and institutional coordination could provide a pathway to stability.

Deepening Multilateral and Bilateral Economic Cooperation

Another striking feature of Professor Abubakar's ministerial leadership was the way he expanded Nigeria's presence on the global stage by deepening partnerships with multilateral organizations, bilateral partners, and international non-governmental organizations. Under his watch, the National Planning Commission became not just a domestic coordinating body but also a hub for forging global cooperation.

He was deliberate in ensuring that Nigeria's development agenda aligned with international frameworks, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a focus on poverty reduction, education, gender equality, and inclusive economic growth.

During his tenure, he prioritized technical cooperation and international training programs, sending Nigerian public servants, NPC officials, allied agencies, and even university lecturers abroad to countries such as China, Korea, Japan, and India.

These training exchanges exposed Nigerian professionals to global best practices in infrastructure planning, macroeconomic modeling, ICT, and public administration, thus equipping them with skills that could be applied back home. His approach was clear: by embedding Nigerians in world class training environments, the country would gradually strengthen its capacity to plan, manage, and

implement transformative projects. The results of this international engagement were tangible.

Cooperation with China expanded rapidly, leading to more than 300 training and technical assistance programs in agriculture, ICT, vocational education, and governance. Korea, through KOICA, committed over \$15 million in new projects, with a special focus on ICT and education. Japan, through JICA, grew its portfolio by more than 30%, supporting projects in power, rural health, and water supply. At the same time, European Union programs and UN agencies collectively disbursed over €500 million in development assistance, channeled into key sectors of Nigeria's economy. For Abubakar, these partnerships were not abstract diplomatic exercises; they were carefully structured collaborations that directly supported Nigeria's development aspirations.

Strengthening Donor Coordination

Alongside these efforts, Professor Abubakar introduced a new level of order and transparency in Nigeria's engagement with its development partners. Prior to his leadership, donor interventions often suffered from duplication, fragmentation, and poor alignment with Nigeria's actual priorities. He restructured the Donor Coordination Forum, transforming it into a more coherent and predictable platform for harmonizing international assistance. By strengthening this mechanism, he ensured that donor financing and technical support were not scattered across disconnected initiatives, but instead systematically tied to the country's national development plans.

This reform had significant consequences. Development partners found greater confidence in Nigeria's systems, leading to more sustained and coordinated commitments of resources. Donor interventions became more transparent, more accountable, and most importantly, more impactful in the lives of Nigerians. What Professor Abubakar achieved in this regard was not only the attraction of resources, but also the institutionalization of a culture of alignment, predictability, and shared accountability. It was yet another example of how his tenure, though brief, set down structures that outlived the administration and shaped Nigeria's development trajectory long after he left office.

Strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation of National Programmes

One of the defining features of Professor Abubakar's tenure as Honourable Minister and Deputy Chairman of National Planning, was his leadership in strengthening the monitoring and evaluation of government programmes, particularly the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P). Designed as a federal government initiative to reinvest savings from the partial removal of petroleum subsidy into infrastructure and social safety nets, SURE-P was, by its nature, politically sensitive and financially significant. Many Nigerians were skeptical about whether the funds would truly be put to use for the people. It was under Abubakar's direction that the National Planning Commission assumed a pivotal role, not only in coordinating the programme but also in tracking and evaluating its

performance. He ensured that SURE-P did not become a hollow promise. Instead, the NPC under his stewardship introduced systematic monitoring mechanisms that enhanced transparency and made progress visible. Projects were tracked nationwide to verify that investments were directly tied to national development priorities.

Regular progress reports were presented to the Federal Government, creating an environment of accountability rarely associated with subsidy management in Nigeria. For every naira earmarked, there was an effort to show traceable outputs: roads rehabilitated, health facilities strengthened, and social welfare initiatives launched. In this way, Abubakar safeguarded public confidence in the programme by positioning the NPC as the central hub for monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. His oversight was both administrative and strategic, setting a precedent for how subsidy savings could be transformed into visible projects that touched lives.

Crisis Response: The Ebola Outbreak

Perhaps the greatest test of his leadership in public service came not from economics or infrastructure but from an unexpected public health emergency. In 2014, Nigeria, like much of West Africa, faced the terrifying threat of the Ebola Virus Disease outbreak. The crisis demanded swift, coordinated, and decisive action. While the Ministry of Health was at the frontline, Professor Abubakar recognized the critical role of national planning in managing the cross-sectoral implications of the epidemic.

He mobilized the NPC to support coordination between ministries, state governments, and international health agencies, ensuring that the national response was coherent and not fragmented.

Through his office, resources were redirected toward strengthening health surveillance systems, while development partners were engaged to provide technical support. His leadership emphasized transparency and coordination, which proved critical in mobilizing both domestic and external confidence in Nigeria's ability to respond. The Ebola outbreak could have easily spiraled into a national disaster, but Nigeria's handling of it was later celebrated globally as a model of rapid response.

Professor Abubakar's contribution lay in recognizing that crises of this magnitude were not just medical, but developmental challenges requiring cross-sectoral planning and inter-agency collaboration. His ability to integrate crisis management into the broader framework of national planning ensured that the Ebola scare became a lesson in resilience, rather than a story of tragedy. This way, the **SURE-P monitoring reforms** and the **Ebola crisis response** are seen as **two pillars of his ministerial legacy**: one proving his commitment to accountability, and the other demonstrating his capacity to lead in national emergencies.

Yet, for Professor Abubakar, leadership was not only about producing policies or coordinating national responses. It was equally about building the institutions and people that carried

those policies forward. He believed that without strengthening the capacity, morale, and professionalism of the National Planning Commission itself, no reform could endure. Thus, even as he grappled with macroeconomic challenges and international negotiations, he turned inward, investing in the Commission and its people, ensuring that they could stand as pillars of Nigeria's development journey

Chapter 6:

Administrative Achievements

Professor Abubakar's time as Minister was not only about responding to external shocks or negotiating international partnerships. At its core, his leadership was about strengthening the very institution responsible for charting Nigeria's economic future, the National Planning Commission (NPC). He believed that policies and master plans could only be as effective as the people and systems implementing them. Thus, while he was spearheading national reforms, he was equally committed to institutional strengthening, capacity development, and staff welfare within the NPC itself.

One of his foremost initiatives was to improve inter-agency collaboration. He recognized that fragmented planning between the Federal, State, and Local Governments had often led to duplication of efforts, inefficiencies, and wasted resources. Under his guidance, the NPC worked tirelessly to align State Development Plans with the overarching National Development Plan, thereby creating a unified framework for growth. This approach not only streamlined economic planning but also gave sub-national governments a clearer sense of their role in national development. For Professor Abubakar, effective planning meant cooperation not competition between the different arms of government.

Closely tied to this was his insistence on evidence-based policymaking. In a country where decisions were often clouded by political expediency, he stressed the importance of grounding every plan and projection in verifiable data. To this end, he elevated the role of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), ensuring that its data informed the Commission's strategies and reports. For him, statistics were not just numbers on paper; they were the foundation upon which policies that affected millions of Nigerians were built. By institutionalizing data-driven decision-making, he sought to inject a culture of rigor, accuracy, and accountability into national planning.

But perhaps the most personal and human dimension of his reforms was his attention to staff welfare. Professor Abubakar understood that the Commission could not function at its best if its workforce felt neglected, unmotivated, or disillusioned. He therefore invested in staff morale, addressing grievances, ensuring fair promotions, and creating an environment where hardwork was recognized and rewarded. Beyond formal policies, his own leadership style: accessible, humble, and approachable, endeared him to his staff. Many would later testify that his tenure marked a period when they felt both valued and inspired.

In all of this, his philosophy was clear: an institution cannot deliver excellence unless the people within it are empowered and motivated to do so. By enhancing collaboration, institutionalizing evidence-based planning, and prioritizing staff welfare, Professor Abubakar laid a foundation that

outlived his ministerial term. His efforts demonstrated that real reform begins within, and that building a strong institution is the surest path to sustaining national development.

Beyond his policy initiatives and international engagements, one of Professor Abubakar's most notable legacies was his unwavering commitment to staff welfare and cultivating a positive workplace culture within the National Planning Commission.

Recognizing that the effectiveness of the Commission hinged on the skills and morale of its personnel, he championed comprehensive training and capacity building initiatives, equipping over 200 technical officers with the knowledge and tools necessary for effective planning and policy implementation. These efforts not only strengthened the NPC's operational capacity but also positioned it as the central coordinating body for Nigeria's development agenda, laying the groundwork for its eventual transformation into the Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning.

In addition to training and capacity building, Professor Abubakar cultivated a leadership style characterized by an open-door policy, encouraging staff at all levels to share concerns, insights, and suggestions freely. This approach fostered a culture of transparency, inclusivity, and collaboration, empowering personnel to contribute meaningfully to the Commission's mission, while reinforcing

their sense of ownership and accountability in driving Nigeria's development agenda.

Despite the constraints of a tight fiscal environment, Professor Abubakar made a direct and lasting contribution to employment during his tenure, facilitating the recruitment of more than eighty Nigerians into the federal service. His vision extended beyond mere numbers, encompassing improvements to the working environment for public servants, and creating meaningful opportunities for professional growth. By coupling recruitment with capacity building initiatives, and a supportive workplace culture, he ensured that these new employees were not only onboarded effectively, but also positioned to contribute productively to national development goals.

The achievements of Professor Abubakar as Minister were undeniably significant, yet they unfolded within a context of considerable challenges that tempered the full potential of his reform agenda. The sharp decline in global oil prices eroded projected revenues by over \$20 billion in less than a year, while the depletion of external reserves by nearly \$14 billion, placed immense pressure on monetary stability. Politically, the period leading up to the 2015 general elections created an environment of uncertainty that constrained policy continuity and complicated the implementation of structural reforms.

At the same time, national security crises, most notably the abduction of the Chibok girls, brought with them a mix of politicization, commercialization, and international attention,

all of which further complicated governance. Despite these formidable obstacles, Professor Abubakar navigated these difficulties with strategic foresight and resilience, ensuring that critical initiatives endured and left a lasting imprint on Nigeria's development trajectory. Despite the brevity of his tenure and the formidable challenges that confronted the nation, Professor Abubakar left an indelible mark on Nigeria's development planning landscape. Under his leadership, the National Integrated Infrastructure Master Plan (NIIMP) emerged as the country's most comprehensive long-term infrastructure roadmap, providing a coherent vision that continues to guide strategic investments in energy, transport, water, and ICT. His insistence on evidence-based planning enhanced the credibility of the National Planning Commission, reinforcing its role as a key institution in economic governance and policy formulation.

During this period, Nigeria's global partnerships expanded significantly, with technical assistance and capacity-building programs strengthened through collaborations with China, Korea, Japan, and multilateral organizations. These engagements improved the country's access to concessional financing and advanced the adoption of global best practices in infrastructure planning, public administration, and economic management.

Simultaneously, Professor Abubakar's leadership in monitoring and evaluation, particularly of the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme (SURE-P), ensured greater transparency, accountability, and measurable

impact in national welfare initiatives. His vision extended to institutional reform as well, laying the groundwork for the eventual transformation of the National Planning Commission into the Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning.

His commitment to transparency, data-driven decision-making, and strategic international engagement, left a foundation that continues to shape Nigeria's development trajectory, proving that principled, visionary leadership can endure well beyond the office held.

Transition to Post-Ministerial Challenges

Professor Abubakar's tenure as Honourable Minister and Deputy Chairman of National Planning, though brief, was marked by remarkable foresight, strategic reforms, and lasting impact.

Through the National Integrated Infrastructure Master Plan, the establishment of Nigeria's Official Development Assistance policy, strengthened monitoring of national programs like SURE-P, and deepened international partnerships, he demonstrated that even a short period in office could yield transformative results. His emphasis on evidence-based policymaking, institutional reform, and staff development not only enhanced the effectiveness of the National Planning Commission but also laid a durable foundation for its evolution into the Federal Ministry of Budget and National Planning.

Yet, the ministerial achievements, as significant as they were, existed within a complex and challenging environment. The oil price collapse, fiscal constraints, security threats, and political tensions surrounding the 2015 elections, all tested the durability of his reforms. While many of his policies endured beyond his tenure, these systemic and external pressures highlighted the fragility of reform in Nigeria's political and economic landscape, underscoring the reality that effective governance requires both vision and the ability to navigate persistent obstacles.

As this period of his journey concludes on his ministerial accomplishments, it sets the stage for the next phase of his journey, one defined not only by the continuation of his leadership in development planning, but also by the challenges, controversies, and struggles that arose in the aftermath of his time in office. These post-ministerial experiences would further test his resilience, strategic thinking, and commitment to public service, ultimately shaping his enduring legacy in Nigeria's political and economic sphere.

Challenges After Ministerial Tenure and the Strength of Service

Leaving the ministerial office marked a profound shift in Professor Abubakar's life. After a year as Nigeria's Minister of National Planning, where he oversaw critical frameworks like the National Integrated Infrastructure Master Plan and the regulation of donor activities, he returned to a quieter existence, one that demanded a new kind of resilience. The

adjustment from the bustling corridors of power to a more subdued life was not as straightforward as it might appear. In the ministry, every day brought new challenges, decisions, and responsibilities; people's expectations were high, and the weight of accountability was heavy. Once he stepped out of that office, the world seemed suddenly smaller, less attentive, and, in many ways, indifferent.

The first visible challenge came in the form of public and private commentary about his lifestyle. Having relinquished all official vehicles, as protocol demanded, he chose to purchase a modest Toyota Avensis for himself. To some, the gesture was a sign of humility; to others, it became fodder for jest. Friends in Abuja would laugh at him, remarking, "See your friend now, na Avensis e dey drive!" The amusement, though lighthearted, carried an undercurrent of misunderstanding. Many could not see that his choice was guided not by pride or spectacle, but by principle.

Public service, he believed, was about responsibility, not indulgence; fulfillment came not from vehicles or titles, but from the tangible impact of one's work. Yet, the laughter of friends reminded him that recognition and respect often lag behind genuine effort, and that those we help or lead may not always understand or appreciate the sacrifices made.

This period also illuminated the complex relationship between leaders and followers. Professor Abubakar often reflected on how much of the criticism aimed at leaders originates not from leaders' shortcomings, but from the

pressures and expectations of those they serve. People call leaders corrupt or underperforming, yet, more often than not, the followers themselves are complicit in the very issues they condemn.

He recalled a personal example from 2014: as minister, his salary was just over nine hundred thousand naira, yet when he sent a friend one hundred thousand naira to celebrate a newborn child, he was met with the remark, “You are useless.” He had given a significant portion of his income, yet the act was undervalued and even derided. Experiences like this illuminated a broader truth: leaders often confront pressure not only from their formal responsibilities, but also from the unrealistic expectations and values of those around them. The temptation to seek extra resources or shortcuts is, in many ways, a reflection of these pressures.

Personal relationships, too, became a test of character during this transitional period. His desire to remain accessible was constantly challenged by staff protocols, the formality of bureaucratic processes, and the natural retreat from social engagement that accompanies high office. For instance, while serving as Director- General, his Personal Private Secretary, Joy, once brought a memo stating that staff could no longer see him directly.

This restriction struck him as almost fatal to the small moments of human connection that kept him grounded. He insisted, however, that at least two staff members, Hassana and Mariam, always have access. These interactions, brief as

they might be, became his way of unwinding, sitting with people, listening, sharing, and understanding their perspectives. It was these simple, grounded moments that provided relief from the pressures of leadership, and reminded him that service is relational as much as it is structural.

Yet even as he sought to maintain meaningful connections, the experiences of loyalty and betrayal weighed heavily on him.

These moments taught him discernment as an essential leadership skill, where knowing whom to trust is as critical as knowing what to do.

Despite the mockery, criticism, and occasional betrayal, Professor Abubakar remained committed to service. The ridicule over his modest car, the whispers about his choices, and the public's occasional misunderstanding did not dissuade him from helping others. If anything, these experiences reinforced his resolve to act with integrity and humility. The act of service, he believed, is independent of applause; it is measured by the lives touched, the opportunities created, and the principles upheld. He continued to engage deeply with communities, supporting education, healthcare, and social development, even if recognition was limited or uneven.

Return to Academia and new pursuits

After completing his tenure as Minister on May 28, 2015, Abubakar returned to the University of Abuja to continue his

teaching and research. This decision was not merely a professional fallback, but a deliberate choice rooted in his passion for imparting knowledge and mentoring the younger generation. For him, the classroom represented a sacred space where ideas could be exchanged, futures could be shaped, and values could be instilled.

In 2016, he took up a sabbatical engagement at Baze University, Abuja. The experience expanded his academic responsibilities, exposed him to new perspectives in higher education management, and allowed him to deepen his intellectual contributions outside his home university. Upon completing the sabbatical, he returned once again to the University of Abuja, resuming his role as a teacher and mentor with renewed energy.

It was during this period that Abubakar set his sights on a different path of service: the governorship of Kwara State. His decision was driven by a genuine desire to translate his academic, ministerial, and administrative experience into practical governance at the state level. However, when his ambition did not materialize, he faced the disappointment with humility and resilience. Rather than being deterred, Abubakar embraced the outcome with equanimity, a mark of his character and belief that every setback carries within it's seed of a greater opportunity.

Chapter 7:

Building legislative and democratic institutions

The National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS), formerly the National Institute for Legislative Studies (NILS), was established by an Act of the National Assembly in 2011, with a mandate that was later expanded in 2017 to include the promotion of democratic studies and capacity building for democratic institutions across Nigeria. Over the years, the Institute has made significant strides as a center for legislative capacity building, contributing meaningfully to the consolidation of democracy in Nigeria and beyond. Yet despite its achievements, NILDS remained relatively under-recognized, both nationally and continentally, as an institution capable of shaping legislative excellence and democratic governance.

The appointment of Professor Abubakar as the second Director-General of NILDS marked a turning point. He assumed office in May 2019, at a moment of considerable political transition, coinciding with the re-election of President Muhammadu Buhari and the inauguration of the 9th National Assembly, led by Senate President, Dr. Ahmad Lawan and Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rt. Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila. This juncture presented an opportunity to

not only consolidate existing achievements but to redefine the Institute's role as a driver of democratic capacity and legislative professionalism.

From the outset, Professor Abubakar articulated a vision centered on expansion, visibility, and excellence. He prioritized broadening NILDS's reach to include sub-national democratic institutions, strengthening research and academic initiatives, and fostering both regional and international partnerships. His leadership was characterized by a deliberate push for institutional reforms, structural innovations, and strategic engagement with stakeholders at all levels of governance.

Under his stewardship, NILDS became more than a training hub; it evolved into a thought leadership institution that provided research based legislative support, advanced the understanding of democratic processes, and built a robust framework for professional development for lawmakers and civil servants alike.

His tenure reflects a period of strategic transformation, where institutional capacity, global collaboration, and legislative support were seamlessly integrated to position NILDS as a recognized authority in democratic studies and governance.

Key Innovations of NILDS under Professor Abubakar as Director-General

Under the leadership of Professor Abubakar, NILDS has achieved unprecedented milestones across all areas of its mandate.

Central to his administration was the recognition that a strong institutional framework and clear administrative guidelines are essential for the effective functioning of any organization. With this in mind, he prioritized a comprehensive review and reform of the Institute's Conditions of Service, Administrative Manual, and organizational structure.

Professor Abubakar initiated a strategic reorganization of NILDS, streamlining the existing four departments, and creating an additional eight departments and units to reflect the Institute's expanded mandate. This restructuring was designed to improve internal efficiency, foster innovation, and enhance the delivery of services across academic, research, and legislative support functions. A critical component of this process was the holistic review and update of the Scheme of Service and Administrative Manual in 2021, ensuring alignment with both best practices in the Nigerian public sector and recognized international standards.

To oversee these reforms, a seven-member committee chaired by Dr. Hakeem Baba Ahmed, a respected bureaucrat, was tasked with implementing the changes. Their recommendations laid the foundation for a standardized framework to guide the Institute's operations, offering clear

protocols and performance expectations for staff at all levels. In keeping with his commitment to continuous improvement, Professor Abubakar inaugurated another seven-member committee led by Honorable Hakeem Olabode Akamo, a former National Commissioner with the National Assembly Service Commission, to undertake ongoing reviews of the Conditions of Service. This initiative ensures that the Institute remains responsive to emerging trends in public administration while effectively integrating new departments, divisions, and units into its operational structure.

Through these strategic reforms, Professor Abubakar strengthened the internal architecture of NILDS, creating an environment conducive to efficiency, innovation, and sustained institutional growth. His administration not only addressed existing gaps in governance and administration, but also positioned NILDS for greater national and international recognition in democratic studies and legislative capacity building.

Enhancing Legislative Support Services

Under Professor Abubakar's leadership, NILDS significantly strengthened its capacity to provide critical legislative support services, encompassing bill drafting, policy analysis, and the preparation of issue briefs. Recognizing that effective lawmaking requires timely and accurate information, he spearheaded the restructuring of the Institute's Liaison Office at the National Assembly to ensure that lawmakers' requests were met efficiently and responsively. This restructuring transformed the services rendered by NILDS into a demand-

driven system, directly aligned with the needs of legislators and the legislative process.

A cornerstone of these reforms was the digitization of legislative support through the introduction of the **LegiPro Platform**, a cutting-edge digital system that allows legislators to submit requests directly to NILDS and receive prompt, research-backed responses. This innovation not only enhanced efficiency but also brought the Institute's operations in line with global best practices in legislative support and governance.

The impact of these improvements is evident in the data collected by NILDS's Monitoring and Evaluation Unit. Between 2011 and 2018, the Institute analyzed a total of 858 Bills. Under Professor Abubakar's administration, from 2019 to 2024, this figure rose to 1,388 Bills, reflecting a remarkable increase in both the volume and quality of legislative analysis. This surge underscores the effectiveness of the reforms he implemented, demonstrating how institutional innovation and leadership can directly enhance the legislative process, ensuring that laws enacted are informed, well-researched, and responsive to national needs.

Staff Development and Capacity Building

Recognizing that the success of any institution depends on the quality and development of its human resources, Professor Abubakar placed staff training and welfare at the forefront of his administrative agenda. He introduced a structured training calendar, ensuring that every staff member had access to

professional development opportunities designed to enhance their skills and effectiveness. By the end of his tenure, an impressive 95% of the Institute's workforce had participated in either local or international training programs, reflecting his commitment to continuous learning and capacity building. In addition to training, he prioritized staff welfare and institutional harmony.

A Staff Audit Committee was established to address long-standing grievances related to promotions, placements, and other welfare concerns, fostering a more supportive and transparent workplace culture. These initiatives not only improved morale but also enhanced productivity, creating an environment in which staff could perform at their best. Documented testimonials and records within the Institute attest to the tangible impact of these reforms under Professor Abubakar's leadership, highlighting a legacy of empowered, skilled, and motivated personnel driving the Institute's expanded mandate.

Training Initiatives

Since assuming office as Director General of NILDS, Professor Abubakar has reinforced the Institute's reputation as a premier legislative training institution through a series of targeted capacity building programs. Training and professional development have been among the areas where his leadership has had the most visible impact. Under his administration, NILDS conducted tailored workshops, seminars, round tables, and conferences, designed to strengthen the capabilities of federal and state legislators,

legislative staff, legislative aides, and other democratic stakeholders, including participants from the executive branch and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) between 2019 and the first quarter of 2025.

These programs were meticulously customized to address the specific needs of each participant group and were driven by Professor Abubakar's strong commitment to rapidly enhancing democratic institutions, nurturing civic political culture, and promoting good governance. Data from NILDS's Monitoring and Evaluation Unit demonstrates the scale and reach of these initiatives; a total of 121 capacity building programs were conducted for federal legislators, 76 for state legislators, 267 for federal legislative staff, 83 for state legislative staff, and 39 for legislative aides. In addition, 67 programs targeted CSOs, while 56 catered to the executive branch.

The remarkable increase in training programmes compared to previous administrations, can be directly attributed to Professor Abubakar's expansion of the Institute's organizational structure and departments, which facilitated broader and more specialized training offerings. Furthermore, many of these initiatives were implemented in collaboration with development partners who joined forces with NILDS under his leadership, amplifying the quality, scope, and impact of the training programs. Through these strategic efforts, Professor Abubakar has strengthened the capacity of Nigeria's democratic institutions and contributed significantly to the professional growth of political actors and

civil society participants, leaving a lasting imprint on the country's legislative development landscape.

Strengthening Linkages with Sub-National and International Institutions

A central pillar of Professor Abubakar's vision for NILDS has been to deepen its engagement with both state legislatures and international partners, ensuring that the Institute's mandate extends beyond the federal level to strengthen democratic governance across Nigeria and the ECOWAS sub-region.

Through strategic advocacy visits to several state governments, he encouraged investments in legislative capacity development, resulting in strengthened partnerships with numerous State Assemblies and the successful training of state legislators and assembly staff across multiple states.

At the international level, Professor Abubakar actively renewed and expanded collaborations with key legislative and democratic institutions. These included the ECOWAS Parliament, the liberian Parliament, the parliament of benin republic, the Parliaments of Uganda, The Gambia, Ghana, and Malawi, as well as renowned institutions such as Johns Hopkins University, the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy. Additional partnerships were forged with organizations like UN-Women, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, YIAGA Africa, and the CLEEN Foundation, among many others.

Through these engagements, NILDS has strengthened its position as a leading legislative research and training hub, extending its influence and capacity-building initiatives to legislators, legislative staff, and other democratic actors not only within Nigeria, but across the West African sub-region. The breadth of these partnerships, reflects Professor Abubakar's commitment to fostering collaboration, sharing best practices, and promoting sustainable democratic development. Records of the numerous engagements and collaborative programmes are maintained in the Institute's archives, underscoring the extensive and far-reaching impact of these efforts.

Advancements in Research and Teaching

Leveraging his academic background, Professor Abubakar placed significant emphasis on enhancing research and postgraduate training. The Institute undertook ground breaking studies, such as the "Public Perception of the Legislature and Expectations of the 9th National Assembly," which provided critical insights to lawmakers. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, NILDS established a technical committee to develop legislative frameworks for health emergencies. Additionally, a comprehensive book project was commissioned to analyze the pandemic's impact and inform future policy decisions. A comprehensive publication on Nigeria's twenty-five (25) years of democracy was also published. A publication on the history of NILDS and that on Women representation in governance in Nigeria were also edited and published.

In the area of education, Professor Abubakar oversaw the expansion of NILDS's postgraduate programmes in partnership with the University of Benin. The institute also initiated and commenced a new academic program, with an emphasis on the award of a Ph.D. in collaboration with Federal University Lokoja.

The Institute witnessed a marked increase in student enrollment, with over 200 candidates participating in specialized programmes, including Legislative Drafting, Parliamentary Administration, and Elections and Party Politics.

Infrastructure Development and the Completion of the Permanent Site Project

A cornerstone of Professor Abubakar's tenure at NILDS has been the strategic focus on infrastructure development, particularly the completion of the Institute's permanent site in Piwoyi District, Abuja. Fully aware of the critical role that a purpose-built, state-of-the-art facility would play in advancing the Institute's mandate, he proactively engaged with the leadership of the National Assembly to secure the necessary political, financial, and logistical support for its timely completion.

Spanning over 81,200 square meters, the ultra-modern complex was designed to serve as a hub for legislative research, democratic studies, and capacity-building programs. Beyond mere construction, the project represented a vision for NILDS to operate as a center of excellence capable of

accommodating the growing demands of legislators, legislative staff, researchers, and other stakeholders from across Nigeria and the ECOWAS region.

Within weeks of his reappointment in 2023, Professor Abubakar successfully oversaw the culmination of this long-stalled project.

The permanent site, which had languished in limbo for nearly half a decade, was finally completed and commissioned by former President Muhammadu Buhari on May 25, 2023. The successful completion of the facility was more than an infrastructural achievement; it was a testament to Professor Abubakar's leadership, strategic planning, and unwavering commitment to the institutional growth of NILDS. This milestone significantly strengthened the Institute's capacity to deliver on its mandate, providing a modern, functional environment that supports research, training, and legislative excellence, and positioning NILDS as a leading institution for democratic development in Nigeria and beyond.

Establishment of the NILDS Academic Advisory Board

Under Professor Abubakar's leadership, NILDS saw the establishment of an **Academic Advisory Board**, designed to serve as the Institute's policy organ on academic matters.

This board was tasked with overseeing the quality and strategic direction of all academic programmes, ensuring that NILDS's curriculum, research, and capacity-building initiatives, adhered to the highest standards.

The Board comprises twelve distinguished members, initially chaired by the late Professor Nuhu Yaqub, a former Vice Chancellor of the Universities of Abuja and Sokoto State University. Following his passing, Professor Attahiru Jega, former Vice Chancellor of Bayero University Kano and former Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), assumed the chairmanship. Members were drawn from across Nigeria's geopolitical zones, and included senior academics who had distinguished themselves in various fields, including former Vice Chancellors and Deputy Vice Chancellors.

Beyond providing academic oversight, the Board ensures institutional representation for universities, collaborating with NILDS, with each partner university such as UNIBEN, FULOKOJA, and UNIABUJA represented by one member.

Through this structure, Professor Abubakar reinforced NILDS' academic credibility, created a formal platform for external scholarly input, and strengthened the Institute's engagement with Nigeria's wider academic community, further positioning NILDS as a center of excellence for legislative and democratic studies.

Strengthening Legislative Oversight on National Security

A key milestone during Professor Abubakar's tenure at NILDS was the establishment of the Legislative Centre for Security Analysis, officially commissioned in May 2023 by the President of the 9th Senate, Senator Ahmad Ibrahim Lawan, GCON. This initiative underscored NILDS'

expanding role in equipping the National Assembly with the knowledge, analytical tools, and strategic insight required to engage effectively on security matters. The Centre was designed to bridge the existing knowledge and skill gap between the legislative and executive branches, particularly in the critical domain of national security.

As a specialized organ of NILDS, the Centre's mandate is multifaceted. It conducts evidence-based research, provides policy recommendations, and collaborates closely with the Defence, Law-Enforcement, Security, and Intelligence Agencies (DeLESIA), the Security Committees of the National Assembly, and other relevant national institutions. It also organizes conferences, roundtable dialogues, and targeted training programs, all aimed at enhancing the oversight capabilities of lawmakers while generating actionable insights for national security policy formulation.

Since its inauguration, the Centre has implemented several significant initiatives. Notably, it organized a Roundtable Dialogue on "Enhancing the Oversight Role and Capacity of National Assembly Security Committees in Strengthening Civil-Military Relations through Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding in Nigeria" and a Public Dialogue themed "Building a Resilient National Security Framework through Legislative Intervention." Both sessions attracted robust participation from security agencies, though legislator attendance varied, reflecting the ongoing challenge of engaging elected officials directly. Beyond events, the Centre has contributed to national security debates, producing

research briefs, policy analyses, and working papers that inform legislative deliberations.

One of its flagship projects, the **Legislative Journal of Security Analysis**, continues to provide a platform for rigorous scholarship and policy discourse in the security sector. Through this initiative, Professor Abubakar not only strengthened NILDS' institutional capacity but also reinforced the National Assembly's ability to exercise effective oversight on security matters, ensuring that legislative interventions are informed, strategic, and aligned with Nigeria's broader national security objectives.

Launch of NILDS Democracy Radio (104.9FM)

On the same day, **NILDS Democracy Radio** was officially commissioned, marking the realization of one of Professor Abubakar's visionary projects since assuming office in 2019. The radio station was conceived to amplify legislative discourse and deepen democratic awareness among Nigerians. Professor Abubakar recognized a critical gap in public understanding, since the return to democracy in 1999. The legislature had been the branch of government closest to the people, yet it remained widely misunderstood and misrepresented.

In Nigeria's presidential system, modeled after that of the United States, each arm of government: the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary, has distinct responsibilities under the principles of separation of powers, and checks and balances. Over time, however, the legislature became

burdened with public expectations to deliver direct services, such as roads, hospitals, and social amenities, rather than focusing on its core constitutional functions of legislation, oversight, and representation. Meanwhile, the executive maintained control over the media and other communication platforms, leaving the legislature largely dependent on traditional media, which often lacked understanding of its constitutional role.

To address this challenge, Professor Abubakar initiated **Democracy Radio**, providing the legislature with a dedicated medium to communicate directly with citizens from an informed and authoritative perspective. With the support of the NILDS Governing Council, led by Senator Ahmad Lawan as Chairman and Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila as Alternate Chairman, the project was successfully executed. Since its inauguration in 2023, Democracy Radio has become an essential platform for legislative experts and practitioners to engage with the public on the activities of both national and sub-national legislatures.

While the station does not absolve the legislature of its accountability to fill governance gaps left by the executive, it has significantly enhanced public understanding of the legislature's constitutional role. Citizens now better appreciate that functions such as road construction, bridge building, and the provision of social services fall within the executive's remit, while the legislature's responsibility is centered on lawmaking, oversight, and representation. In this way, Democracy Radio has emerged as a leading platform for

democratic education, civic engagement, and informed citizen participation in the Federal Capital Territory and beyond.

International Collaborations and Recognition

Since assuming office in 2019, Professor Abubakar has significantly raised the profile of NILDS, both nationally and internationally. Under his leadership, the Institute hosted a high profile delegation led by the Speaker of the ECOWAS Parliament, Rt. Hon. Sidie Mohammed Tunis, and the Speaker of the East Africa Legislative Assembly, Rt. Hon. Joseph Ntakirutimana.

These engagements laid a strong foundation for collaborative legislative initiatives across Africa, strengthening NILDS' role as a hub for legislative research, capacity building, and democratic innovation.

NILDS' influence also extended to national policymaking. In 2023, the Institute was integrated into the **Presidential Committee for Fiscal and Tax Reforms**, inaugurated by President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR. This appointment underscored the Institute's growing importance in shaping economic and legislative policies and highlighted its broader contributions to deepening democracy and fortifying democratic institutions in Nigeria.

Professor Abubakar's leadership has also garnered international acclaim. In 2023, the **Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD)**, a UK public body, honoured NILDS with the **Impact and Innovation Award** in recognition of its

substantial contributions to advancing democracy in Nigeria. On the national front, Professor Abubakar received the **Fellowship of the Institute of Labour** during the 40th-anniversary celebrations of the Michael Imoudu National Institute for Labour Studies (MINILS) in June 2023, acknowledging his dedication to staff welfare and institutional development.

His exemplary public service was further recognised when he was named **Public Servant of the Year 2024** by the Presidency. Additionally, he was awarded a fellowship from the **Institute of Chartered Secretaries of Nigeria (ICSAN)**, among numerous other accolades that attest to his sustained impact and visionary leadership.

Advocacy for Gender Equality and Climate Legislation

Building on NILDS' commitment to inclusive and participatory governance, Professor Abubakar spearheaded initiatives aimed at advancing gender equality and environmental sustainability. In August 2023, the Institute hosted the **International Conference on Women in Governance**, which brought together distinguished leaders, including the President of the Senate, Senator Godswill Obot Akpabio, GCON, and other prominent figures from Nigerian and international political circles. The conference highlighted NILDS's role in advocating for greater female representation and leadership in politics, reinforcing the importance of gender inclusivity in legislative processes and governance.

Beyond gender advocacy, Professor Abubakar also positioned NILDS at the forefront of climate policy engagement. At the **Africa Climate Summit** held in Nairobi in September 2023, he called on West African nations to enact and implement climate-focused legislation to promote sustainable regional development. Through these initiatives, Professor Abubakar demonstrated a forward-looking approach that integrated social equity and environmental sustainability into legislative priorities, ensuring that NILDS' impact extended beyond traditional legislative support into shaping a more inclusive and responsible governance framework.

Global Legislative Engagements

In May 2023, Professor Abubakar led a knowledge-sharing mission that further elevated NILDS' international profile. Heading a delegation to the **Austrian Parliament in Vienna**, he engaged in parliamentary discussions that highlighted the Institute's contributions to legislative development worldwide. His efforts were formally recognized by the **President of the Austrian National Assembly, Norbert Hofer**, who commended Professor Abubakar's outstanding work, solidifying NILDS' international reputation as a center of excellence for legislative studies.

Professor Abubakar's engagements extended to **Berlin and Brussels**, where he, alongside several Speakers of Nigeria's State Houses of Assembly, participated in experience-sharing programmes facilitated by the **Konrad Adenauer Stiftung**. These interactions with European Union leaders focused on improving legislative processes in Nigeria's subnational

parliaments, fostering practical knowledge exchange on governance and parliamentary best practices.

Additionally, Professor Abubakar addressed an extraordinary session of the **ECOWAS Parliament in Winneba, Ghana**, where he tackled critical issues surrounding unconstitutional regime changes and presidential term limits in West Africa, emphasizing the role of legislatures in safeguarding democratic norms. Later in November 2023, he led a high-powered delegation to the **Geneva Center for Security Sector Governance**, accompanied by the former Senate President, distinguished Senator Ahmad Lawan, and chairpersons of key security committees from both the Senate and House of Representatives. This mission aimed to enhance their understanding of **security sector governance**, underscoring Professor Abubakar's commitment to bridging the knowledge gap between the legislature and security institutions while reinforcing Nigeria's democratic framework.

Establishment of the Legislative Drafting Internship Programme

At the start of his second term as Director-General, Professor Abubakar inaugurated the **Legislative Drafting Internship Programme**, a pioneering initiative aimed at enhancing professionalism in legislative drafting across Nigeria. The programme was conceived to address the longstanding shortage of skilled legislative drafters at both the national and subnational levels, while aligning with NILDS' broader mandate of strengthening legislative capacity, promoting

democratic governance, and improving the technical competence of individuals involved in legislative processes.

The programme equips participants with specialized skills to draft clear, precise, and effective legislation, while also deepening their understanding of legislative procedures, constitutional frameworks, and the overall lawmaking process. In doing so, it fosters a new generation of legislative experts capable of contributing meaningfully to Nigeria's governance and policy development.

Since its inception, the initiative has recorded remarkable successes. Over 200 young professionals have been trained, many of whom now serve in key roles within legislative and government institutions across the country. In addition, the Institute rewards outstanding interns with automatic employment, further incentivizing excellence. By June 2025, the programme had successfully launched its **fifth batch**, demonstrating the sustained impact and institutionalization of this critical capacity building initiative.

Establishment of the NILDS Advanced Executive Programme (DAEEP)

In May 2025, Professor Abubakar inaugurated the **Department of Advanced Executive Education Programme (DAEEP)** at NILDS, marking a strategic expansion of the Institute's capacity for executive education and leadership development. The department was tasked with designing, developing, and delivering advanced executive education programmes tailored for top-tier administrators,

chief executives, and permanent secretaries of government Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), as well as leaders of public and private institutions, boards, corporations, political parties, civil society organizations, and leading non-governmental organizations in Nigeria and beyond.

DAEEP was also mandated to recruit expert resource persons, develop specialized modules including bespoke and tailor-made programmes, and collaborate with prestigious national and international institutions to ensure world-class delivery. In addition, the department was charged with facilitating action-oriented research, publications, and documentation of its programmes and studies to promote effective, results-driven leadership across all sectors of the national and global economy.

During the inauguration, Professor Abubakar emphasized the availability of local resources capable of supporting international-standard programmes in leadership development, underscoring the importance of building and strengthening institutions within Nigeria to curb capital flight. The highly respected Professor Attahiru M. Jega, a distinguished scholar and former INEC Chairman, was appointed as the pioneer Director of DAEEP, bringing gravitas and intellectual rigor to the new department.

Notable Challenges

The tenure of Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman as Director-General of NILDS has been marked by remarkable

institutional innovations and a strategic expansion of the Institute's mandate.

Through comprehensive reforms, strengthened legislative support, enhanced staff development, and robust partnerships, NILDS has solidified its position as a premier institution for legislative and democratic studies, both within Nigeria and internationally. The foundation laid during his leadership is poised to continue shaping the Institute's trajectory in strengthening democratic governance across Africa. Yet, even amid these laudable achievements, several challenges emerged.

The politics surrounding his appointment and assumption of office, internal resistance to change, inter-agency rivalries, staff turnover (sometimes referred to as the “*Japa syndrome*”), and financial constraints all tested the resilience of his administration. These challenges, though significant, were met with strategic foresight, tenacity, and inclusiveness. By prioritizing systems over sentiments, merit over mediocrity, and institutional vision over personal ambition, Professor Abubakar navigated the complexities of leadership with remarkable skill.

Through these creative and decisive responses, NILDS has been transformed into a world-class institute of legislative governance. Under his guidance, the Institute has become a model of public sector leadership, demonstrating how visionary administration, strategic planning, and principled leadership can elevate an institution to international

prominence while reinforcing Nigeria's evolving democratic and governance landscape.

Professor Abubakar's tenure at NILDS stands as a testament to visionary leadership, institutional reform, and unwavering commitment to democratic governance. From strengthening legislative support services and staff capacity to expanding international collaborations, overseeing infrastructure development, and introducing innovative programmes such as Democracy Radio, the Legislative Drafting Internship, and the Advanced Executive Education Programme, his leadership has fundamentally transformed the Institute into a world-class center for legislative studies.

While the journey has not been without challenges including internal resistance, inter-agency rivalry, and financial constraints, Professor Abubakar's approach has consistently prioritized institutional vision, merit, and sustainability, over personal ambition. These efforts have ensured that NILDS is not only a hub for legislative research and capacity building in Nigeria but also a respected partner for democratic institutions across Africa and the world. As he continues to lead the Institute to this day, the ongoing reforms, innovations, and programs, reflect his enduring commitment to strengthening democratic institutions, fostering professional excellence, and promoting effective governance.

Under his stewardship, NILDS remains a dynamic and evolving institution, poised to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing political and legislative landscape, while continuing

to serve as a model of public sector leadership and institutional excellence

Chapter 8:

Leadership Philosophy and Mentorship

In this chapter, we undertake a retrospective prospective analysis of Professor Abubakar's contributions to humanity drawing from the stories of his life and legacy documents in this book. This must, of course, start with a thorough assessment of the founding flags of a very illustrious career as a university lecturer, Minister of National Planning, and Director-General, National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies NILDS, and how he has been able to use these formations and opportunities to advance the cause and course of humanity, broadly defined.

Primarily, we **project** into the prospects of the celebrant, drawing on his records of performance in previous positions as highlighted in the various chapters of this book. The inevitable conclusion is that Professor Abubakar has made positive use of previous and current opportunities to positively impact humanity in many respects. Across these various opportunities, he has seen it all, the good, the bad, and the ugly. Such all round experiences would appear to have cooked and equipped him for future responsibilities, no matter how highly placed, with the requisite political, administrative, and policy skills, innovation, resilience, and other key attributes of leadership.

Early Anchors: Education, Faith, and Moral Foundations

The first and most striking feature of Professor Abubakar's life is the solid foundation upon which it was built a foundation shaped by family, religion, and education. From the outset, his upbringing positioned him for excellence. The family, as the primary agent of socialization, plays an unparalleled role in shaping a child's character and worldview. Abubakar was fortunate to be born into a household deeply grounded in Islamic teachings and practices.

His parents were not only devout Muslims but also living examples of faith, modeling the principles of discipline, integrity, and compassion. The family environment included prominent Islamic clerics and scholars, whose influence extended beyond the home, imbuing young Abubakar with spiritual and intellectual guidance that would shape his entire life.

By the age of nine, Abubakar had completed foundational Qur'anic studies with distinction, and in the same year undertook his first pilgrimage to Mecca with his father, a formative experience that blended spiritual reward with personal discipline. Beyond religious instruction, his upbringing fostered qualities of leadership and service from an early age. Even as a child and adolescent, he gravitated towards leadership roles in Islamic groups, laying the groundwork for a lifetime of service and organizational stewardship. These early engagements exposed him to senior clerics, religious thought leaders, and wider societal networks,

providing lessons in diplomacy, ethics, and spiritual fortitude, that would later inform his professional and public life.

Education, both religious and secular, reinforced these values. Abubakar's formative schooling cultivated intellectual curiosity, analytical thinking, and a sense of responsibility. His consistent excellence in learning, paired with the mentorship of family and religious authorities, instilled the importance of hard work, integrity, humility, and empathy. Through this combination of parental guidance, religious immersion, and educational rigour, Abubakar internalized the principles of ethical leadership and service to humanity. This narrative underscores a critical truth: solid foundations in early life rooted in family, faith, and education, create a framework for lifelong development. They shape values, beliefs, and behaviors, that influence both personal growth and societal impact. For Professor Abubakar, these foundations were not mere advantages; they were the bedrock upon which a life of influence, service, and transformative leadership, was built.

The Exceptional Career of Professor Abubakar

With the solid foundations of family, education, and spirituality firmly in place, it is hardly surprising that Professor Abubakar embarked on a fulfilling and impactful career. Yet, while these foundations were critical in setting him on the path of success, they were complemented by something beyond human design, the unlimited grace, unfailing love, and abundant blessings of God. Abubakar himself has consistently acknowledged this divine favor,

recognizing that when solid foundations intersect with grace, the beneficiary becomes almost unstoppable.

The lesson here is clear; strong foundations alone do not guarantee achievement. Many individuals possess similar, if not superior, beginnings, yet do not attain comparable heights.

Success, as Abubakar's life illustrates, is a product of preparation, vision, values, hard work, and divine providence. The synergy of these factors in Abubakar's life has produced remarkable outcomes across multiple spheres. In academia, he rose to the pinnacle of his profession, becoming a full professor of Political Science and International Relations at the University of Abuja, where he held various leadership roles. In politics, he served with distinction as a Minister of the Federal Republic, contributing to policy formulation, economic planning, and democratic reforms. He also directed presidential, gubernatorial, and senatorial campaign organizations in Kwara State, acted as the unofficial spokesperson for the People's Democratic Party (PDP), after the exit of Goodluck Jonathan administration.

As Minister, Abubakar chaired the Policy and Monitoring Committee of the National Council on Privatization, overseeing the SME Sub-Committee and the ₦220 billion SME loan facility.

He also represented Nigeria at the IMF/World Bank Annual Review Meeting in Washington, DC. Later, as Director-General of NILDS, his unprecedented record of achievements

set a benchmark for the institution and left a substantial legacy for his successor. Across these roles, he influenced landmark legislation, economic development plans, democratic reforms, and human capital development, all of which are documented in the preceding chapters.

However, Abubakar's career was not without challenges. He faced instances of victimization, delayed promotions, denial of privileges, blackmail, and character assassination. Yet, in every scenario, he demonstrated resilience, patience, and unwavering conviction, standing firm and persevering through adversity. His journey is a testament to the enduring value of integrity, resilience, and faith in the pursuit of professional excellence.

Transformative Effects and Heritage

Everywhere Professor Abubakar has served, particularly in leadership positions, he has exemplified the qualities of a transformational leader, leaving indelible impacts and legacies. In academia, he influenced countless students and colleagues through methodical teaching, intellectual rigour, extensive research, and publications. Many of his books continue to serve as reference materials for both students and scholars, and he has consistently received recognition from those whose lives he has touched. Among his peers at the University of Abuja, he is respected as a scholar-activist committed to collective advancement, and a jolly good fellow who played a leading role in the organization and activities of ASUU at the university.

His contributions resonated especially with students from his hometown of Ilorin. He made it possible for many to gain university admission despite socio-economic constraints, sometimes even drawing on family resources to accommodate students in need. Beyond classrooms, he opened his home to students without prior personal acquaintance, embodying generosity, empathy, and commitment to the welfare of others.

As an academic, Abubakar is known for his discipline, integrity, and incorruptibility. He meticulously marked examination scripts personally, provided transparent avenues for student inquiries, and ensured meritocratic evaluation devoid of personal or ethnic bias. His dedication was evident in his unwavering punctuality, commuting from Maitama to the Gwagwalada campus without fail. Students and colleagues alike admired his principled approach, understanding that academic benefit was earned through merit alone.

Beyond the classroom, Professor Abubakar is fearless in speaking truth to power. In a world where silence is often the path of least resistance, he stood as a vigorous advocate for justice and fairness, even when it placed him at odds with powerful authorities. This steadfastness earned him enduring respect among students, many of whom now occupy high offices and continue to hold him in deep regard. Remarkably, after serving at the highest levels of government, he returned to the university classroom, an uncommon feat among Nigerian academics. This decision reflected humility, deep

faith in the transformational power of knowledge, and commitment to intellectual development. Despite ridicule and “broke-shaming” from some quarters, he remained undeterred, holding firmly to the ideals of modesty and moral integrity.

As a public servant, Abubakar demonstrated exceptional leadership and innovation. As Minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, he helped formulate landmark policies that remain relevant today, transcending government changes since 2015; a rare achievement in a political environment where policy reversals are common. As Director General of NILDS, he engineered profound reforms that elevated the institute to prominence in legislative and democratic governance. His oversight of the permanent site’s completion and commissioning stands as a testament to strategic planning and execution under challenging circumstances.

The scope of Professor Abubakar’s impact and legacies is extensive. It includes transformational leadership guided by core values, educational and human capital development, impactful teaching, research, and publications, mentoring of students and colleagues, institution-building, sustainable legislative and democratic governance, policy reforms and innovations, improved staff welfare, and strengthened foreign policy and diplomacy through legislative governance. His contributions also extend to community service, youth and women’s empowerment, and inclusive development initiatives, reflecting a life dedicated to service at the highest level.

Awards, Recognition, and Continuous Learning

Over the years, Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman has received numerous awards, honours, and recognitions that reflect his unwavering commitment to humanity, democracy, and public service. These accolades, conferred by both governmental and non-governmental institutions in Nigeria and abroad, stand as a testament to his tireless work in nation-building and democratic development. From the Presidency of the Federal Republic of Nigeria came the Excellent Merit Award as Outstanding Public Servant of the Year 2023, a clear acknowledgment of his transformative leadership in public service. The Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) equally recognised his remarkable partnership, presenting him with the Award of Excellence as Best Partner of the Year 2023. Similarly, New Telegraph honoured him alongside the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) as the Legislative Support Institute of the Year, further affirming his institutional reforms.

Within the Nigerian legislature, his impact has been consistently acknowledged. The House of Representatives Press Corps named him the Champion of Legislative Development and Democratic Growth (2022), while the National Association of Political Science Students at the University of Abuja presented him with a Distinguished Leadership Award in August 2023 for advancing democratic studies and legislative excellence. His influence has also transcended national borders, as reflected in the ECOWAS Youth Council's Kwame Nkrumah Exemplary Leadership

Award, which hailed him as an Icon of Legislative and Democratic Transformation in Nigeria and West Africa.

In recognition of his character, patriotism, and professionalism, Afrikanwatch Network Communications inducted him into the African Legendary Hall of Fame (2023), while the Michael Imoudu National Institute for Labour Studies conferred on him a Fellowship Award. Professional bodies, too, have sought to associate with his legacy, including the Chartered Institute of Leadership & Governance (USA), which admitted him as a Fellow in December 2020, and the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management of Nigeria (CIPM), which honoured him as Guest of Honour at its Emerald Jubilee International Conference in 2023. Security institutions have not been left behind in celebrating his contributions. The Nigeria Police Force presented him with an Award of Excellence in 2022, while the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, the Army War College Nigeria, and the Police Community Relations Committee (PCRC) also extended formal commendations. His work with regional and international partners earned him recognitions from the Parliament of Ghana and various academic institutions, including the University of Abuja, whose Faculty of Social Sciences and student associations have repeatedly decorated him with leadership and merit awards.

Yet, for Abubakar, these recognitions are not an end in themselves but a call to higher service. Despite his many achievements, his quest for knowledge remains undiminished. He has continually pursued professional development,

undergoing extensive training and study visits across the globe. In 2023 alone, he was part of high-level delegations to the Austrian Parliament in Vienna, the Belgian Parliament and the European Parliament in Brussels, and the German Bundestag and Bundesrat in Berlin. Each of these engagements deepened his understanding of legislative processes and democratic practices, enriching his vision for Nigeria's governance and reform agenda.

In truth, the honours, fellowships, and commendations that decorate his career are not mere symbols of prestige, but markers of a life lived in service to democracy, knowledge, and humanity. They highlight a man whose leadership continues to inspire, whose scholarship continues to enlighten, and whose legacy continues to expand across Nigeria, Africa, and the wider world.

What Lies Ahead: Dedication Begets Greater Responsibility

It is often said that one good turn deserves another. For Professor Abubakar, it is no longer a matter of one good turn, but many, each deserving its own continuation. He has excelled as a scholar, Minister, and Director-General of NILDS, leaving enduring legacies that have positively impacted humanity. These experiences: the successes, challenges, and lessons learned, have prepared him for even greater responsibilities in the future.

Yet, as with all humans, the outcome of tomorrow rests not in our hands but in the wisdom and will of God, the all-knowing and all- powerful.

Nonetheless, the human spirit aspires to advancement and self-actualization, and it is within Professor Abubakar's rights, given his qualifications, credentials, and track record, to aim for higher responsibilities. His journey is far from its final chapter. Across academia, executive governance, and institutional leadership, his record speaks not only to competence and character but also to a steadfast belief that public service is a continuum rather than a culmination. His ongoing work at NILDS foreshadows a broader national responsibility, embodying the axiom: "The reward for good work is more work." This is no mere cliché but a fitting reflection of a life dedicated to aligning service with sacrifice and responsibility with results.

As new frontiers of national development, democratic consolidation, and institutional reform emerge, Professor Abubakar stands ready not merely as a participant, but as a torchbearer of visionary leadership. His intellectual depth, moral fortitude, and administrative acumen, position him as a strategic asset for future engagements in academia, public policy, or governance. The enduring lesson of his career is clear: excellence is not a destination, but a platform for deeper, more meaningful contributions.

The future beckons with new challenges, and for a man whose work has consistently inspired, transformed, and elevated

institutions, there is every assurance that more work in the most dignified and impactful sense shall continue to be his reward. May the Almighty God bless and accept these aspirations beyond our imagination. Amen.

As the story of Professor Abubakar continues to unfold, it is clear that his life is a tapestry woven with service, vision, and unyielding integrity. From the quiet halls of learning to the bustling corridors of governance, from the classrooms of knowledge to the chambers of national decision-making, his footsteps have left enduring imprints. Each challenge met, each institution transformed, and every life touched, stands as a testament to a man who serves not for acclaim, but for impact. The horizon calls with new challenges, yet for one whose hands build, whose heart leads, and whose mind illuminates, the reward for good work is always more work a continuum of service, legacy, and purpose.

May the Almighty continue to guide, bless, and elevate his journey beyond all imagining, and may the story of his life inspire generations yet unborn.

Chapter 9

The Interview

Professor Abubakar Olarenwaju Sulaiman is a scholar, statesman, and tireless servant of the people. His work across academia, government, and democratic institutions reflects a rare blend of intellect, integrity, and vision, qualities that have continually shaped policy, inspired leaders, and touched the lives of citizens across Nigeria and beyond.

Some People Are Born Great, Some Achieve Greatness, And Some Have Greatness Thrust Upon Them. The Life Story of Professor Abubakar Olanrewaju Sulaiman, Director General of The National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS), Shows How He Was Destined to Pursue Extraordinary Paths From the Very Beginning. In This Revealing Interview With Yusuf Alli, Managing Editor, Northern Operation, And Sanni Onogu, Chief Correspondent of The Nation Newspapers, The DG Opens Up About the Lesser-Known Aspects of His Life.

Excerpts:

Q - What is your family background and what specific branch of the family tree do you belong to?

My name is Abubakar Olanrewaju Sulaiman. I was born into the Sulaiman Ajimati family, a deeply religious and Islamic household.

Although I was born in Lagos, I grew up in Ilorin, in a large polygamous family of nine children. I am the sixth in line, and my mother, the third wife of my father, had three of us, my late elder brother (who sadly passed away just two months ago), myself, and my younger sister.

In terms of Western education, I would say I am the most privileged and fortunate among my siblings. Much of my early childhood was shaped not directly by my parents, but by my maternal grandparents, especially my grandmother, Hajiya Mariam Yahaya Tajudeen. From the age of two until nearly ten, she raised me in Ilorin, in a home steeped in Islamic values and discipline. Under her guidance, my foundation in Islamic studies was firmly laid before I began to pursue formal schooling.

At the age of nine, I had the rare privilege of going on pilgrimage to Mecca with my maternal grandfather. What makes this even more remarkable is that my grandfather, Sheikh Sulaiman Aminullahi Okeleru, was not just a devout scholar but also a Jihadist, a man of deep conviction and discipline. Looking back, I consider myself truly fortunate to

have been raised by my grandparents, who showered me with a kind of love, care, and attention, that stood out not only among their many children but also among their other grandchildren. They had a special passion for me as a child, something I could feel in their actions every day.

Perhaps the clearest example of this is my journey to Saudi Arabia at such a young age. How many nine-year-olds would be taken on pilgrimage when even their parents had not enjoyed that privilege? My grandfather never did the same for his own children, yet he chose me. While I may not go into the details of how or why it happened, what matters is the lesson: my upbringing, my values, and the foundation of who I am today are deeply rooted in the love, care, and extraordinary interest of my maternal grandparents.

I was born in a rather special way. In Yorubaland, such children are called **“Oke.”** Okes are babies born wrapped in a cyst formed by the umbilical cord. There are other types as well, like *Ige*, but mine is Oke. Ordinarily, when a child is born, you see the baby immediately. But in the case of an Oke, what first appears is the cyst, not the child. In traditional times, palm oil was used to carefully bring the baby out, while in modern hospitals doctors cut the cyst open with surgical instruments to deliver the child. That is why people often say Okes are children who come into the world still enclosed in their own “womb.” Perhaps because of this unusual birth, my parents and grandparents always regarded me with a certain sense of specialness. As I mentioned earlier, I was the second child of my mother and the sixth child of my father, but in

many ways, I was treated with attention and affection that stood out.

Q - How was growing up like?

Despite the special care and interest shown to me, I was never a spoiled child. If anything, my story proves the opposite. Think about it, a woman who waited nearly 20 years before having a child would naturally want to keep that child close, to hold on tightly. Yet, after having me, my mother handed me over to her own mother when I was just two years old. At that time, my mother was living in Lagos, but she chose to leave me in Ilorin with my grandmother, who was already about 70 years old. If my mother's intention was to spoil me, she would have kept me by her side. Instead, she trusted her mother to raise me with discipline, values, and the guidance of a traditional Islamic upbringing.

And my grandmother didn't just raise me, she raised many of us, instilling in each child a strong foundation built on care, faith, and discipline. We were raised by disciplinarians, both my parents and my grandparents, and our upbringing was anything but soft. My grandmother, in particular, played a defining role in shaping my spiritual and moral foundation. She was the one who first taught me the Arabic alphabet and how to recite the Qur'an. Whenever I was asked to recite verses, it was her teachings that guided me.

I grew up watching her devotion firsthand. From the earliest days I can remember, she would rise at 3 a.m. every morning for prayers and continue until 6 a.m. As a child, I would

quietly sit beside her, simply observing. That consistency, that unwavering discipline, became my first lesson in faith and commitment. Islamiyah school was not optional it was mandatory. From the age of two or three, I was enrolled, moving from one *Makaranta-Alo* (as it's called in Hausa) to another. This traditional method taught us the Qur'an beginning with *Alif, Ba, Ta, Sa*. By the age of nine, when I traveled to Saudi Arabia, I had already completed the recitation of the Qur'an and could commit almost half of it to memory. At the same time, I was pursuing a Western education alongside Islamic learning.

Looking back, none of this was easy. No child naturally wants to go through such a rigorous routine. It was discipline, commitment, and my grandmother's insistence supported by my mother, who often came from Lagos to ensure I wasn't getting "spoilt" (sometimes with the cane, too!) that kept me on track. It was tough, yes, but it was also filled with love, guidance, and a deep sense of purpose. Everything I became in those formative years, I owe to my grandparents, especially my grandmother. At that tender age, my life revolved around two worlds; *Islamiyah* and the Local School Management Board (LSMB) School in Ilorin West, which was then under Ilorin Local Government. By the time I traveled to Saudi Arabia with my maternal grandfather, I had already become versatile, confident, and eloquent in reciting the Qur'an.

That journey itself was an unforgettable experience. We traveled by bus from Ilorin to Kano, then boarded a flight from Kano to Jeddah, and finally continued to Medina. At that

time, going to Saudi Arabia was almost like embarking on a journey to heaven.

People would cry as they saw pilgrims off, unsure if they would ever return, since the stay often lasted two to three months. In Medina, something extraordinary happened. The Arabs who heard me recite the Qur'an were deeply impressed. They approached my grandfather, insisting that I should not return to Nigeria, they wanted to adopt me and nurture my talent. The same thing happened again when we moved to Mecca; the pressure on my grandfather grew stronger.

Fortunately, my grandfather was fluent in Arabic, which allowed him to handle the situation wisely. He explained that he was not my biological father but only my grandfather. He assured them that once we returned to Nigeria, he would consult my parents, and whatever decision they reached, he would communicate back. That was the arrangement that eventually brought me home.

When we returned to Nigeria, my grandfather reached an understanding with a man who frequently traveled to Saudi Arabia. He told him, *"When you are going back, you will take this boy with you, in line with the agreement I made with the Arabs."*

But when that man eventually returned to Saudi Arabia, he never informed me, and just like that, the opportunity slipped away. Looking back, I sometimes say that my journey into Western education was more accidental than deliberate. From

childhood, everything about my upbringing was geared towards preparing me to become an Islamic cleric, that was my grandparents' dream for me. But fate had other plans, and the path I eventually followed was shaped as much by missed opportunities as by the discipline and foundation they instilled in me.

After completing primary school at the LSMB School, I moved on to Community Secondary School, Ballah, located in a suburb of Ilorin, now within the Asa Local Government Area. Perhaps I should also add more about my maternal grandfather, the one who first took me to Saudi Arabia. He was not just a scholar but a Jihadist, known for traveling far and wide to spread Islam across Nigeria, from Yorubaland to Lagos, from Delta State to Agbor, and even into the South-South. It was during one of these journeys that he met my grandmother in Okene and married her. Naturally, his dream was that I would succeed him. Since none of his children had stepped fully into his path, he believed his grandson could continue the mission.

That was why, when the time came for me to proceed to secondary school, he was firmly against it. In his eyes, I was not destined for Western education but to carry on his clerical and religious legacy. One must also remember the context of that time. Passing the Common Entrance Examination into secondary school was a great challenge; admission opportunities were scarce because there were very few schools in Kwara State. So, while I had the ambition to

continue, my grandfather held an entirely different vision for my future.

When the time came for the Common Entrance Examinations, my grandfather insisted that I would not participate. While my peers sat for the exams and many gained admissions into secondary schools, I remained at home. His plan for me was clear: I was to be enrolled under either Sheikh Adam Al-Ilory or Sheikh Kamaldeen Al-Adaby, two of the most respected Islamic scholars of the time. In his view, I was destined to be trained as a cleric, and I was content with that decision. I waited patiently at home, expecting to be sent to one of those renowned Islamiyah schools in Agege, Lagos, or in Ilorin. But then came a twist. One day, my uncle, my mother's younger brother, Dr. A. B. Suleiman visited. He was then the Director of National Health Planning at the Federal Ministry of Health. When he saw me at home, he was surprised. He asked, "*Why are you not in school?*" I replied, "*Alhaji said I will not go to school, that I will go to Arabic school and become a Mallam.*" He was not satisfied with that answer.

Immediately, he went to confront my grandfather, questioning why I was being denied the chance of formal education. It is worth saying a word about Dr. A. B. Suleiman. He was one of the most outstanding civil servants Nigeria ever produced at one point serving as Acting Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Health. Earlier in life, he was also in the military, where he rose to the rank of Major, rubbing shoulders with the likes of Obasanjo, Murtala Mohammed, and their peers. So, when he spoke, people listened.

I should also mention that he was not just any figure, he was widely respected in Nigeria and beyond. His name appeared in *Who's Who in Nigeria* and even *Who's Who in Africa*. At one time, the late General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua himself visited our house, which gives you an idea of the caliber of people my uncle associated with. He was indeed a man of stature, and of blessed memory.

So, when he discovered I had been left out of school, he was insistent: *"This boy must go to school."* To persuade my grandfather, he cleverly said, *"If you want him to go to Arabic school, that's fine. He will go. But let him first learn to speak English, so that after preaching in Arabic, he can also preach in English."* With that reasoning, he cajoled my grandfather into agreeing. The challenge, however, was that the Common Entrance Examinations had already been concluded, and those who passed had been enrolled in secondary schools. The question then was: how would I get in?

Fortunately, around that time, a new school had just been established in the Ilorin Emirate, Community Secondary School, Ballah (CSS Ballah) by the Ilorin Descendants Progressive Union (IDPU). My uncle reached out to the late Mr. Saka Saadu, a highly respected man who had served as a commissioner in Kwara State, a federal Permanent Secretary, and later as Nigeria's Minister of Education. At that time, he was also a national leader of IDPU. Through his intervention, I was granted late admission into CSS Ballah in 1979.

Even in secondary school, my religious foundation never left me. I served as the Imam of the school, continuing the path my grandparents had set me on, even as I pursued a Western education. In secondary school, I was very active. I served as the President of the Muslim Students' Society (MSS) and took on several other responsibilities, which shaped my leadership journey early on. You can see the trajectory already forming.

After completing secondary school in 1984, I proceeded to Kwara College of Technology, now known as Kwara State Polytechnic. I initially enrolled in Cooperative Studies under the School of Management & Business (SM&B). Later, I shifted to pursue the Higher School Certificate (HSC), which was called the School of Basic Studies (SBS) at the time. From there, I gained admission into Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, where I studied Political Science. Interestingly, my current Special Adviser on Media was also my classmate then, he studied Political Science Education, while I studied Political Science proper. And that, in many ways, is the story of my growing up from an early foundation in Islamic scholarship, through the unexpected path into Western education, and finally into the field of Political Science, which has defined much of my career

Q - You mentioned that your mother had you after 20 years...?

Yes, my mother only started having children after almost 20 years of marriage. That was why her decision to hand me over

to her own mother at just two years old was such a remarkable act of sacrifice.

Q - You have spoken about it in the past, what led to that?

It was only natural that my mother was considered special. She had difficulty bearing children and did not have us until nearly 20 years into her marriage. Beyond that, she was also the firstborn of her parents and truly a child of remarkable heritage.

Her father, my maternal grandfather, was a deeply spiritual man.

Her mother too was the daughter of another spiritual figure. Infact, my great-grandfather was the first Chief Imam of the entire Ebiraland, which we now call Okene. He was the one who first went to Okene to spread Islam, and he became the central Imam for all the Ebira people in Nigeria.

So, when you trace the lineage, you can see where I come from. My great-grandfather, the first Chief Imam of Ebiraland, gave birth to my grandmother. She, in turn, gave birth to my mother, and my mother gave birth to me. In many ways, I am the product of these two powerful spiritual lineages.

I cannot say for certain whether this heritage has directly shaped my journey, but what I do know is that my story cannot be told without my grandparents. They practically did everything for me before they passed away. It was my

maternal grandfather who took me to Mecca at the age of nine, a man of immense influence and power, spiritually and in his community.

My maternal grandfather was an extraordinarily powerful man. His spiritual authority was such that if he told someone, *“The sickness you have today may lead to death tomorrow,”* it often came to pass. He and his contemporaries were people who could foresee things before they happened. Because I was very close to him and that closeness is why he chose to take me to Mecca, he often shared profound things with me. One of the things he told me was, *“You children are lucky. You should not have been your mother’s children; you should have been her grandchildren, if only she had given birth earlier in life.”*

He also once recounted how powerful my mother had been as a child. He said that when she was growing up, if she wanted to enter a room, she wouldn’t open the door, she would simply walk through. But my grandparents became concerned, fearing that people might brand her a witch. So, they prayed earnestly to remove that extraordinary gift. Perhaps it was those prayers that delayed her ability to bear children until almost 20 years into her marriage. Eventually, she did have three children, and I was among them. I believe this spiritual heritage shaped much of my identity. I was born into a family that never stayed in one place, my grandfather was constantly traveling from community to community, Islamizing people, let me use that word, preaching, and even confronting masquerades. On my paternal side too, there was a strong

reputation. If you mention the name Imam Sulaiman Ajimati in Lagos, anyone above the age of 45 within the Islamic community will likely know him, because he was well known and deeply respected.

As a matter of fact, during the years when Lagos was still the Federal Capital, there was hardly any Head of State who visited the Central Mosque without my father playing a role. He was always the one chosen to recite the Qur'an, largely because of his melodious voice and deep mastery of recitation. Through this, he interacted with many of the great figures of the time, from the late Alhaji Lateef Jakande, to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, and even his mother, along with many other notable personalities in Lagos.

I am proud to say this, and if they were to hear it, they might be surprised. Sometimes, when people say they are close to the President, I smile and say, *"I am closer to the President than you, even though he does not know that I am the son of Mallam Ajimati."* Despite his status, my father remained a quiet, easygoing, and deeply religious man. Let me tell you that, for over 40 years, he served faithfully as the Imam of Ejigbo Mosque on Lagos Island.

Later, he rose to become the Imam of a larger mosque, the Alaso Oke Mosque at Offin, also on Lagos Island. Eventually, he attained the position of third in command to the Chief Imam of Lagos State, a role of immense honour before he passed away.

Let me digress a bit...

My father lived in Lagos, and we only saw him occasionally, mostly when he came home for Sallah or other important occasions. Our half-brothers and sisters stayed with him in Lagos, but on our side, we were raised differently. My mother believed strongly that raising children on Lagos Island would not allow them to live a meaningful life. To prevent that, she made sure we stayed with our grandparents in Ilorin, where the environment was more disciplined and spiritually grounded.

One particular incident has stayed with me since childhood, and I even shared it during my valedictory session at the Federal Executive Council on May 27, 2015, in the Villa.

My father had come home to Ilorin for Sallah. He was a very generous man, always giving out money, especially new notes, to children and anyone who came around. People would say, "*Alhaji has come!*" and rush to greet him, knowing he would give freely. He was truly a giver. On that day, as he sat surrounded by people, a Mallam happened to pass by. He stopped to greet my father, and as usual, my father gave him some money. The man began to pray for him.

Incidentally, I was sitting right beside my father just by chance, as a young boy in primary school. As the prayers went on, the Mallam suddenly said something remarkable. He told my father:

“Imam, I want to tell you that one of your children will rise to a level in life that can be compared to that of Jakande.”

Remember, this was during the Second Republic, when Lateef Jakande was a towering figure. He said one of my father’s sons would one day become known and popular, just like Jakande. That was the only part of the Mallam’s prayer I truly heard and absorbed. At the time, I didn’t take it too seriously. Yet, as tender as I was, those words never left my mind, not for years, not even decades.

When I began to dabble in politics and unionism, I often found myself remembering that prophecy. In 1993, I contested to become chairman of a local government in Ilorin, but it didn’t work out. I tried again in 1999, and still, it failed. Each time I lost, I would wonder: *will this prophecy ever come to pass?*

But there was something else I couldn’t ignore. Out of my father’s nine children, I was the only son who pursued Western education.

My sister, much later, also went through Western education, but among my father’s sons, I stood alone in that regard. And of the three children my mother had, only two of us went to school, and I was the only male who ventured into politics. So, whenever I reflected on the Mallam’s words, I would ask myself: *if one of my father’s sons will rise to the level of Jakande, and I am the only one on this path, could it be me?*

Yet after failing twice to become a local government chairman, I started to doubt again.

Then, when I had my only son and they asked me for his name, I didn't hesitate, I said he should be called **Sulaiman**. That name carries a lot of weight in my life. My father's name was Sulaiman.

My maternal grandfather, the man who took me to Mecca and raised me, was also Sulaiman. And the uncle who brought me to Abuja, a towering figure in my life, was equally named Sulaiman.

All three of them now of blessed memory shaped the man I became. So, naming my son Sulaiman felt like stitching together the legacies that defined me. When that uncle, who later became Director of Finance at the FCDA, passed away in 1996, it felt like the closing of a chapter.

But the weight of their names, their guidance, and that prophecy continued to live with me. So, I named my child **Sulaiman**, but that day something else happened. Sitting beside me was Lanre Onilu, who is today the Director General of NOA. Right there, it just occurred to me that perhaps this prophecy might not be about me after all. I had tried several times, and it wasn't working. So, I decided to add another name: **Kashimawo**, which means, *"Let us wait and see."*

It was my way of saying, *maybe this prophecy will not come to pass through me, maybe it is this child who will fulfill it. I don't know yet, but let's wait and see.* That was how my son came to bear the names **Sulaiman Kashimawo**, a name born out of both faith and uncertainty.

The second thing I must recall is about my maternal grandfather.

He had a peculiar way of treating me, something rare, something that felt like a privilege. Looking back now, it was also a sign that something special was ahead of me.

In Ilorin, within the Islamic circle, my father was known as a kind of Jihadist. People constantly came to consult him. They would say, *“I want to start a business, should I go ahead?”* and he would give them guidance, *“Go,”* or *“Don’t go.”* He was almost like a fortune teller. But despite this gift, whatever he wanted to do, he always humbled himself before God. He would still invite Mallams to come and pray and recite the Qur’an over the matter.

Sometimes, three to five times a week, our house would be filled with Mallams, sometimes more than fifty, all gathered to pray. He would feed them, give them money, and ask them to intercede.

That was the kind of spiritual atmosphere I grew up in. Now, here is where it became personal for me. Before he took me to Mecca, and even after we returned from Saudi Arabia, whenever the prayers reached a certain point, my maternal grandfather would suddenly stop them and say: *“Alfa, please, before you conclude this prayer, pray for this boy.”*

He would pull me to sit in their midst, in front of all the Mallams, and they would pray specially for me. Meanwhile,

his own children would be seated there, but he never asked them to be prayed for them in that same way, always me. He did this on several occasions.

Looking back, I now see it was not ordinary. It was a sign, though I didn't understand it at that tender age. Although I was privileged by my grandfather's special interest in me, I later fell victim to it as well. In a polygamous home, such open affection had consequences. The other wives of my father could not understand why a grandchild should receive such exclusive love and attention, and they often directed their resentment toward me. But that was the man my grandfather was, deliberate and fearless in the way he showed love. And beside him stood my grandmother, a woman of no lesser status. She, as I mentioned, was the daughter of that great Jihadist from Okene. I say it clearly, and it will go into the record: there is no Ebira person in Nigeria, especially when Okene was still part of Kwara, who could set foot in Ilorin without first paying homage to my grandmother.

She was the living encyclopedia of Ebira history and deeply religious, and known for nothing else but prayer, prayer, and more prayer. People considered her almost like a demi-god, a custodian of both faith and heritage. Because of her standing, anyone coming from Ebiraland to Ilorin for any mission or purpose would first go to her house. And invariably, they would meet me there, sitting by her side. Through all this, people began to notice how much my grandmother loved me. Whatever was given to her, she would find a way to pass it to me. At a point, one of the family members had to caution her

directly: *“Mama, when they give you something, please don’t give it to Olanrewaju. But we know you will still give it to him.”* That was how strong her attachment was to me. I can say without hesitation that the love, prayers, and special interest she invested in me, she gave to no one else. I recall it vividly because it marked me deeply. Even my uncle, Alhaji Saka Ibrahim who later became Director of Lands in the FCDA once confirmed it. He is still alive today, though advanced in age. When I was appointed a minister and I went to pay him homage, thanking him for his support over the years, he simply told me: *“I am not surprised. From the way Inyan treated you in those days, we already knew you would be great in life.”* That statement struck me, because it affirmed what I had felt all along that my grandmother’s prayers and attention were not ordinary. They were seeds planted deliberately, and much later, I began to see how they had quietly shaped my destiny. Sorry that I went deep, deep into the story. (Laughs!)

Q - It is very evident you had a lot of spiritual investment and it played out in your life, but regardless you were still a young boy. Did you engage in truancy that is associated with teenagers and growing young men?

I don’t think so. Do you know why I said that? Because even from my days in primary school, you could already see the direction of my life. In secondary school, I became an Imam, leading the whole students in prayers. Not only that, I was also President of the Muslim Students Society (MSS). But here’s the part that might surprise you: with all this “Islamism” in

me, I was still the leader of the Fuji music group! I led the *Ajiwere*. And if you know the history, Fuji actually evolved from *Were* music. So, there I was in secondary school, carrying both responsibilities of the Imam on one side, and the Fuji band leader on the other. Some might call that truancy, but I never saw it that way. To me, it was simply another expression of leadership whether in the mosque or through music, people naturally followed me.

Q - That is to say you can sing very well?

No doubt about that, nobody could match me (general laughter). Truly, it's not disputable. Even in that area, I was able to excel. I remember clearly, around 1980 or 1981, when they were about commissioning our secondary school. It was a community school owned by the Ilorin Descendants Progressive Union. The late Senate Leader, Senator Olusola Saraki, was invited to grace the occasion, make donations, and perform the commissioning. Now, when Saraki was coming, the school had to organize a cultural display to welcome him. Guess who was chosen to lead the Fuji group? Me. I was the one that sang for Olusola Saraki himself.

By the time I finished performing, before the Emir, the community leaders, and all the important personalities in Ilorin, I stood out.

People talked about it for a long time. And mind you, I am talking about Olusola Saraki, the father, not the son, Bukola. And you know what that meant in those days.

They said: *What? This child has such a unique voice, and he can even compose songs!* That was how they decided to schedule me for the finals of the annual singing competition that used to be held in Ilorin after Ramadan, where Fuji musicians from across the Emirate would compete. The photo from that event should still be in the secondary school archives till today. If you go to Ballah, you will see it, I mean me, right there, in front of everyone.

So even in that aspect, I was unique. I didn't just participate, I excelled. And it remains a point of pride for me to say: yes, the great Olusola Saraki of yesterday, the Senate Leader himself, was welcomed to our school with songs led by me and my Fuji group. In fact, when I was growing up, because of that natural gift for music, my dream was to work with none other than Sikiru Ayinde Barrister. At the time, Fuji was our own "hip-hop", it was the sound that inspired us.

You mean Ayinde Barrister...?

Yes! If I had known anyone close to Sikiru Ayinde Barrister back then, I would have gone straight to him to show how good I was. That was how strong the gift was in me. I could sing, I could compose, and I know, even up till today, that it is a special gift God gave me. But because of my religious background, my family could never allow me to follow that path.

Still, it came out in different ways. As leader of the Islamic group, we even performed dramas one of which was staged

on NTA Ilorin. I remember the late Duro, who was a producer there, helped with the programme. It was during Sallah, and we performed *Ijesin*. I wrote the play, organized it, did everything myself. That was another outlet where my creativity found expression. But beyond all these talents, I remained disciplined. I didn't drink, I didn't smoke. And growing up, I used to surprise people when I told them that I never courted women throughout my university days. From primary school, to secondary school, to Kwara Tech, to ABU Zaria, I had no girlfriend. None! (general laughter). I know it is hard for people today to believe, maybe even hard for you too (general laughter), but that was the truth.

Q - Can you dance...?

Of course. You have not seen me dance? My staff know that I dance.

Q - They say a person who grows up with their grandparents, has a particular kind of wisdom. Would you attribute the influence of your grandparents to the wisdom that you display today?

Today, whatever wisdom or native intelligence I display, no doubt it came from my upbringing under my grandparents. That foundation shaped me completely. Even in Ilorin today, people will tell you I am a different kind of politician. Out of all my peers in politics, in Ilorin or in Kwara, people believe that I am the only one who, when I hold the microphone,

speaks in a way that carries unique messages, stories, and history that others cannot tell.

In fact, among other aspirants in my generation, there is no comparison. They can't match me. One of my uncles who still lives in our paternal home would often ask, "Ah, where does he get all these stories and history from?" And the reply would always be: "Don't mind him, he was brought up by his grandparents." Even many who are well-learned, who studied in the famous Arabic schools of Sheikh Adam Al-Ilory or Sheikh Kamaldeen Al-Adaby, people you would expect to know these

things, do not know them the way I do. That is the kind of distinction my upbringing gave me. But I was able to combine the two worlds. People often say, "Don't mind him, he is a professor... don't mind him, he is a DG... don't mind him, he is a minister. Yet when he comes home, he still knows the old ways better than anyone else." And truly, I thank God for that.

It is one thing to inherit values and knowledge, but it is another blessing entirely to retain them. Many people forget, but for me, I don't forget not even the smallest details. Despite my education, exposure, travels, and all the positions I've held, I never allowed any of those experiences to wash away my native culture, my memory, or my attitude. That balance has remained with me to this day.

Q - While growing up you had friends, do you still keep in touch with those friends? Who were those friends of yours?

Absolutely. And that is one “bad attitude” people say I have. They often wonder how, while relating with ministers, ambassadors, and other high-ranking personalities, I still keep going back to my *local, local, local* friends. But to me, I always say: in life, you grow up, you climb up but one day you will surely come down. And when that happens, it is those very old friends you ignored that will still be there for you.

Today, we see many retired Chief Judges, retired Permanent Secretaries, and other top officials who, after office, return to their villages and who do they sit with? Their old friends. That is why I have never abandoned mine. The friends I grew up with, I still keep in touch with them. I adore them even more than the new friends I have made through government. Even my staff know this about me. When I close late at the office, I don’t go hanging around; I go home, and I go back to the circle of my old friends. Not that I don’t value the new ones I’ve made in government, I do, but my old friends remain my foundation. For example, even my SA Media, Abdulkadir, who is here with me, never once asked for this job. He is simply part of the way I ensure I carry my friends along. These are people who have been with me from the beginning. In fact, I would even say I am more with them than they are with me.

Q - You have mentioned Ilorin in Kwara State, Lagos and Kaduna, that is ABU, where did you stay or domiciled that shaped your perspective in life? Secondly, your family tree is like a family of scholars, even if it is in Islamic way, but they were scholars. Why did you choose Political Science as a course of study in the university?

You have asked two questions. What has shaped my perception the most is my community, the Ilorin community. Even though I am almost 60 years old, I have spent less than 20 years actually living there. But what has kept me deeply rooted is the habit of going home often. That culture, that value system of Ilorin, is still very much in me. I don't throw it away wherever I go.

For instance, I moved to Abuja in 1995, and I have been here since then. That is almost 30 years. Before that, I was in Jos for my NYSC and master's degree, close to six years, and at ABU for about three years. When you add six and three, that's nearly 10 years, plus 30 in Abuja, that's almost 40 years of my life lived in the northern part of Nigeria. But despite that, I remain deeply connected to Ilorin culture. Wherever I am, I still relate closely with Ilorin people. And when I return home, they immediately know that *Abubakar is around*. So, without doubt, my perception, my value system, my orientation, up to this moment, have all been shaped by the Ilorin value system.

Secondly, you asked why Political Science? Honestly, it was accidental. When I first sat for JAMB in 1985, I applied to Usman Dan Fodio University to study Islamic Studies. I

passed JAMB very well, I scored over 200, but surprisingly, I wasn't offered admission. I was angry. I said to myself, *Islamic Studies, with that score, and they still didn't give me admission?* Out of frustration, I decided I would never apply for it again. Of course, I had an interest in Law. But at that time, within our circle, there was a strong belief that studying Law was not good. My parents, my grandmother, even my Alfa all said, *no, no, people who study Law will enter hellfire*. That was the thinking then, and out of respect for them, I did not apply for Law. So, I asked myself, what is the closest thing to Law? And that was how I ended up in Political Science. That is the true story of how I chose the course.

Q - What is it that you want us to remember about those qualities that make you to be what you are today and what is your style of leadership?

I have already told you how my parents mentored me in a very strict way. Normally, you don't just have a child and leave him with his grandparents, it almost feels like abandoning the child. But in my case, my grandmother practically raised me. That in itself was unique.

Now, despite the special care and attention they gave me, my grandparents did not pamper me. They foresaw what I could become, so they handled me with very tough gloves. I was given plenty of responsibilities, *you must do this, you must do that*, there was no room for idleness. Sometimes, I would move from my grandmother's place to my grandfather's house. And you know how our elders were in those days, even

at old age, they still had young wives who were raising children. Some of my uncles and aunties, my mother's younger brothers and sisters, were actually younger than me. So, I grew up in that unusual mix: living among my own uncles and aunties who were far younger than I was, in a polygamous home, after already leaving my parents' care. It was not an easy way to grow up. But it shaped me.

So, I believe the way I was brought up and the mentorship I received really shaped me. One day, I was narrating to a staff member how I became a minister, how I rose to become a DG, and some of the travails I passed through in life. He looked at me in surprise and said, "*Oga, so it was not that rosy?*" Those experiences, the struggles, the strict discipline, the responsibilities

I carried, they emboldened me. They prepared me to face challenges head-on. That is why, when I tell you I was an Imam in secondary school, or the president of MSS, it was not accidental.

At Kwara Poly, I became the secretary of MSS, and at the same time, I was president of another Islamic society, Nasir Dawatu, in Ilorin. I was also leading the Islamic choir group, as well as the cultural group. All of these were leadership journeys that kept building on one another.

So, you can see that my leadership path did not just happen suddenly. It was not accidental. It was a deliberate process of tutelage, of mentorship, of responsibility, of service. When

you look at the trajectory of my life, it's clear leadership was something that grew in me, stage by stage.

Q - From where did you inherit your humility? Do you get upset at all and what are you upset about?

I believe my humility is deeply rooted in my religious upbringing.

Islam has taught me, and I firmly believe, that life is about humility. There is nothing that is sacrosanct, nothing that lasts forever. Whatever position you hold, whatever wealth you gather, however high you rise, one day it will all pass. The only lasting value is how humble you remain. I also drew from the examples within my family. My father was a very humble and quiet man. My uncle who brought me up in Abuja, the late Sulaiman Abdulrahim, former Director of Finance at FCDA, was also a model of humility.

I imbibed these virtues from them and from the values of Islam, and I have tried to sustain them all my life.

That is why, whenever my staff follow me to Ilorin, they notice the way I relate with the people in my community, without airs, without distance. Even when I was serving as a minister, I recall an incident at a function where another minister, younger than I was, passed by acting in a rather arrogant manner. Some of the senior ministers turned and said, "*Don't mind him. See how he behaves, as if he were older than everyone. Look at Abubakar, see how humble he*

is.” That moment reminded me that humility always speaks louder than position. For me, I honestly don’t see a big deal in being humble. That is why I can freely mix with my staff, with my students, and with people generally. If you ask my students in Abuja, they will tell you the same.

I recall one incident that still stands out. At the time, I was a part-time lecturer and had already earned the rank of Associate Professor. There was another colleague who had just completed his PhD, but he carried himself with an air of arrogance. One day, Professor Ekator, who is still alive to confirm this, remarked, “*Who would even know that Abubakar is an Associate Professor?*” because of the way I carried myself so simply, without airs.

Q - Who are your role models?

I’ve mentioned my role models earlier, and they were largely my uncles. I was fortunate to have three uncles who rose to the position of directors at the federal level in this country. Dr. A. B. Suleiman, my mother’s younger brother, was a former Director of National Health Planning and Research. He played a very key role in my life because he encouraged me to pursue education, even against the initial reservations of our parents. Then there were my two other uncles: Saka Abdulrahim, who is still alive and was a former Director of Lands in the FCT, and the late Sulaiman Abdulrahim, who served as Director of Finance in the FCT. They all inspired me in different ways.

Of course, I cannot forget the prophecy made to my father that one of his sons would rise to be like Jakande. That was another powerful motivation for me. Since I was the first in the family to go into unionism and politics unlike my uncles who were bureaucrats.

I have always carried a sense of responsibility to conduct myself in a way that would not tarnish the image of my family. Another person who had a big influence on me was the late Ismaila Sadiq, the one-time Speaker of the Kwara State House of Assembly during the Second Republic under Governor Cornelius Adebayo.

He also took part in my upbringing, and what stood out most about him was his humility. But despite being a politician, he would always be at home reciting his Qur'an. That alone was a lesson for me that no matter how high you rise, you must remain grounded in faith and humility.

From that inspiration came my own drive: to work hard, to aspire to greatness, and to make my family proud. I had Western education, yes, but the bigger question for me was: *How do I make a real mark in life? How do I become the pride of my family? How do I accomplish something greater?* These questions pushed me constantly.

At the family level, those uncles I mentioned were my role models. But at another level, I also looked up to people like Professor Ibrahim Gambari. In fact, just last year I told him personally: *Prof, I have been looking up to you all my life as*

a role model. I reminded him that today, I am a Professor like him, we share that calling. I told him I have also served as a Minister like him, and I have been a DG like him too. The only position I have not yet attained, I told him, is to become a United Nations Ambassador, and that remains my next dream.

He just laughed when I said that. Then he told me, *you are already doing things I could never do.* That moment stayed with me. He told me, *“You had the courage to go into partisan politics, but I cannot do it.”* And I replied, *“But Prof., you are now a Chief of Staff to the President, so in a way, you are in politics too.”* He was indeed one of my great role models.

I cannot conclude without mentioning the late Professor NuhuYakub. In the area of scholarship, he stood tall, a profoundly humble person, a great academic, and a man of unquestionable integrity. Even the simplicity I bring into leadership and administration today, I can say I drew much of that from him. In the area of academic pursuit and stardom, Nuhu Yakub was my model and inspiration.

Q - What is your personal philosophy?

My philosophy in life is simple: whatever I do, I never disconnect from God. As long as you carry God in your perception of issues, you will not go astray. In my workplace, in my political journey, in my personal life everything is tied to God. For me, it's always *God first*. Even when I make mistakes, I don't take pride in them. I turn back and ask God

for forgiveness. I believe that if all of us could truly imbibe that sense of religiosity and godliness in pursuing our ambitions, society would be a far better place.

Unfortunately, some people try to downplay the role of God in human affairs. I remember an incident about three years ago with a member of the House of Representatives during a disagreement we had with the then Speaker, Femi Gbajabiamila.

While I was making a point, I mentioned God, and he snapped, “*Don’t talk of God here.*” I was shocked. I told him, “*Honourable, if this small position makes you feel too big to acknowledge God, then you’re wasting your time. One day, God will show Himself to you.*” That Honourable is Gaza from Nasarawa State.

That’s just me. What will be will be, as long as God is at the center of it.

Q - You were persecuted in the University of Abuja now Yakubu Gowon University, how did you miraculously survive and later become a full professor in the system?

The University of Abuja case is a whole story on its own, and the persecution I faced there came in different phases. But I know the particular one you are referring to. I often tell people who care to listen that I began my academic journey in Abuja as a part-time lecturer. I served in the Department of Political Science and International Relations for seven years, strictly

part-time. During that period, I worked so hard that I even rose to the position of Examination Officer for the department.

As a part-time lecturer, I had the privilege of teaching ministers, permanent secretaries, senators, and other top figures in this country. Yet, throughout those seven years, I wasn't paid a single dime. Despite the workload and responsibilities, I kept pushing.

When attempts were made to regularize my appointment as a full staff, they failed. The Vice Chancellor and the acting registrars at the time, mostly from the northern part of the country, simply did not see me as one of them. Instead of regularizing me or others in the department who were qualified, they brought in about six new lecturers, all of northern descent. Ironically, I am also a northerner.

But because I do not speak Hausa, they did not regard me as one of their own. For seven years, I worked under those conditions.

Looking back, it was not just neglect; it was outright persecution.

At that time, I was already a PhD student, and eventually I bagged my doctorate while still doing part-time work at the University of Abuja. Yet, despite my qualifications and commitment, I remained on the margins.

While I was there, I saw others being brought in and regularized: Dr. Sally Dauda, Dr. Mato, Dr. Usman, Dr. Gali,

Dr. Sadiq, all northerners. But myself, along with Dr. Ola, Dr. Jacob, and three others who happened to be Christians were left out. Somehow, they grouped me with them, even though I am a northerner. This is part of my life's journey, and I don't shy away from telling it.

It wasn't until the late Professor Nuhu Yakub came in as Vice Chancellor that things began to change. I reported my case to him. He didn't rush into action, he watched and waited for about a year. Eventually, he announced that he was going to carry out a mass recruitment exercise and instructed that all of us serving as part-time staff should apply as well. We applied, went through the interviews, and when it came to the Department of Political Science, the panel declared that everyone was suitable, except Abubakar. They claimed I was "not suitable" and that I had committed an offence three years earlier. When this was reported to Professor Nuhu Yakub, of blessed memory, he asked the Acting Registrar, Modibbo, a simple but profound question: *"You said he committed an offence three years ago. Then what did you do about it all this while? For three years you've been using his energy and his service, and now you say he's not suitable?"*

Please, go and do the right thing." That was the first major phase of persecution I faced at the University of Abuja, and by the grace of God, I survived it.

The second phase of my persecution came under Professor Sunday Adelabu, who succeeded Professor Nuhu Yakub as Vice Chancellor. Unlike Yakub, who brought remarkable

innovations to the University of Abuja including the introduction of the Faculty of Medicine, the Faculty of Engineering, and even a university radio station, Adelabu came with an agenda to reverse all those gains.

He attempted to scrap the new programmes, shut down the radio station, and practically dismantle the progress Yakub had achieved. Throughout his tenure, the university stagnated. For five whole years under Adelabu, there was not a single convocation. Imagine a university without convocation for five years, that was the extent of the rot.

Naturally, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) could not fold its arms. The union rose in resistance, challenging his destructive policies. And even though I was a Director under his administration, I was not spared. When I successfully completed my first term, instead of renewing my appointment, Adelabu flatly refused simply as part of his vendetta against those who did not align with his retrogressive style. That marked the second phase of my persecution at the University of Abuja.

So, we rose against him, and I naturally became the vocal voice leading the ASUU struggle. I took full advantage of my connections with the media. Since I was living in town, I was always on radio stations, granting interviews, speaking out, and releasing documents that exposed the rot in the system. That was how I got to know people like Inyan, Yusuf Alli, and many of their colleagues in the press who stood by me throughout that period.

As the struggle gained momentum, it became clear to the administration that I was the one championing the resistance. Soon, I became a marked man. His aides started trailing me, and one day, things took a violent turn. His Special Assistant attempted to run me down with his vehicle. It was a direct attack on my life, simply because I refused to keep quiet in the face of injustice. I had no choice but to report the attempt on my life to the Inspector General of Police. The IG then invited the Vice Chancellor and his Special Assistant for questioning. To everyone's shock, both of them were detained. Imagine a sitting Vice Chancellor being held in detention. When he was eventually released around 1 a.m., he did not take it lightly. From that moment, he openly declared to anyone who cared to listen that he was going to "deal with Abubakar both physically and spiritually." I am quoting him directly, and he is still alive today. It was so bad that even Hajiya Yakub, the wife of the late Prof. Nuhu Yakub who was then a Deputy Registrar, pleaded with him, saying, "Oga, please spare his life." His response was chilling: *"Don't worry, I know what to do."*

The very next week, he set up a committee chaired by Professor Uwat. The mandate was not to investigate fairly but to witch-hunt.

He claimed that I had committed an offence 13 years earlier and gave the committee a marching order: *"Suspend him first. Let him leave the university first. Let him be fighting from outside."* Before all this, I had tried to go on sabbatical. I first applied to Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai,

Niger State, he turned it down. Then I applied to the Institute of Security and Strategic Studies here in Abuja, again, he turned it down. Clearly, he wanted me trapped and at his mercy. Then he set up a committee to try me. But on the very day the committee was to sit, I was at the Federal High Court. I had secured an injunction, and once a case is before the court, the university had no choice but to stop. That was how I stalled their plot. The case became *ABUBAKAR versus UNIABUJA VC and seven others*. I was going to court, fighting that battle alone, standing my ground.

And in the middle of that struggle while the case was still ongoing I was pronounced a Minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. (laughs) Maybe that's the perfect summary: while they were plotting my downfall, God was preparing my elevation.

Q - No, you have not talked about how you emerged as full professor...

Under Adelabu, I was already an Associate Professor. But before my professorial promotion could come up, I was appointed Minister. While I was away serving the country, my colleagues were promoted ahead of me. When I eventually returned after my ministerial tenure, I applied for my own promotion and I got it.

So, in the end, I became a full Professor *after* I had already been a Minister of the Federal Republic. That is how God

works. Man may try to delay you, but when it is destined, it will surely come to pass.

Q - Despite all these challenges that confronted you as a lecturer in the university, was there any major impact?

Oh, my students are everywhere across the world. I usually like to answer that question the way late President Muhammadu Buhari answered questions about himself: “*Go and ask those who know me.*” My students can testify to who I am. When I was active in ASUU, I often told journalists: Go and ask my students whether any of them can say Abubakar ever demanded money or harassed them for marks. None.

As a lecturer, if class was scheduled for 7 a.m., I was there at 7 a.m. If the lecture was for two hours, I completed my two hours.

Today, I have students among journalists, in the Senate, and across different parts of the world and they can all attest to my hard work and integrity.

I also have a unique style of teaching. I never teach with a paper in hand. And if a student fails my course, they are free to confront me and ask why. I keep the scripts in my office, and I sit with the student to go through them. I don’t dismiss them with “you failed, go away.” No. But one thing I do not tolerate is cheating. That, for me, is non-negotiable.

At the University of Abuja, I became known as one lecturer who does not tolerate examination malpractice. If you hide

something under your bra, I will discover it. People used to joke and say, “*That man na jazz he dey use!*” because with me, there was simply no hiding place.

For me, seriousness in work has always been a principle. Teaching, research, I take them seriously and I don’t play with my responsibilities. Even as a part-time lecturer, I worked as if I were a full staff, and that surprised many people.

Some of my students went on to become very senior figures. For example, Aboki Sawa, who later became Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Petroleum, once told me, “*This young man was just a part-time lecturer?*” He offered me a level 10 appointment, but I turned it down. Similarly, Ishaya Akau, former chairman of the National Assembly Service Commission from Kaduna State also my student, offered me level 12 in the National Assembly. Again, I refused. I told him I must see the struggle at the university through to the end.

Even when my colleague, the late Dr. Ola, left to join the newly established Kogi State University, I told him, “*I’m not going anywhere. I’ll stay here and see this through.*” For me, it was never about comfort. It was about standing firm, no matter the odds.

Today in the Senate, I can count at least five of my former students. Senator Fatai Buhari was my student, Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan was my student, Senator Ahmad Maidori, chairman of the Senate Committee on Police Affairs, was my student. Senator Abdul Ningi was also my student.

Beyond them, I also taught Senator Biodun Olujimi and several others.

It goes beyond the Senate. Whenever I travel to any High Commission across the globe, I meet my former students. They are in the military, the police, Immigration, and other services. A former Inspector General of Police, Suleiman Abba, was my student. The immediate past DIG Operations, Danmalam, was my student. Titi Abubakar was my student. Former Governor of Kogi State, Ibrahim Idris, was also my student.

I have produced a lot of people who have risen to great heights, and what is remarkable is that many of them were my students during the years I served only as a part-time lecturer, the same system that claimed I was not qualified to be a lecturer, yet continued to use me. This is why I am detribalized. Having gone through such experiences myself, I know what it means to be unfairly treated, and I cannot subject anyone else to that.

Q - Sometimes people say that children that grow up with their grandparents are usually pampered. There is a story you once shared with us of how you used to go out and sell used newspapers for your grandmother after school hours, can you recount it again?

I have forgotten (laughs). But at least when I told you that I was not pampered and that I was brought up in a very hard way, is that not the story? This is my grandmother that I was

talking to you about. I told you she loved me so much. You know already used newspapers, she would wrap it and I will go and sell it to people that are selling Kose (akara). That is what I was selling.

When I come back from school, I will go and sell it: On Saturdays, and Sundays that I don't go to school, I will go and sell it and I would bring the money and give it to my grandmother.

Q - It might sound a bit weird, but you are clearly a unique person, background, personal principles and all that. Have you thought about a way to extend or to pass on these principles that you have, especially in the education sector? For a lecturer to stand up and say there is no student who can say that he has collected money or sexually harassed them, that is not what we've seen across board. Is there a plan in the future or any time soon when you will put these ideals and principles together and passed them on so that the Nigerian education system, especially at the university level, can have some level of sanity restored?

It's work in progress. What we are doing is part of it. These things we are saying are being documented and every time I meet people, I tell them, this is the story of my life. This is my philosophy to teaching. This is what I used to do. That is why, again, I feel anybody that has passed through this kind of sojourn in life, having been a government appointee should go back to the academia and share this experience with students. So, one of the things I intend doing after all this is to

get some time off, after all these wahala, so that I can get this literature down to people to read. Ask Inyan, in one of her radio programmes in Nigeria Info, I said it loud and clear, when we were battling with Adelabu that time, that let any student come out to disprove what I have said.

Let them say it that today, Abubakar engaged in 'sorting.' Or Abubakar said, until I sleep with him, he will not pass me.

I challenge any of my former students to claim otherwise. In fact, when a recent incident happened in Nigeria, I said that people who engage in such behavior are very foolish. If I ask a student out and express my feelings, and she says no, I must still pass her in my class. Even if she fails, I ensure she passes—because I've already accounted for it. There's no trickery, no hidden agenda. If I ask and she declines, she still passes. That is my principle. But if a student fails and someone tries to date her, how would you explain that to God, especially if you have children?

That is not who I am. These are the principles I believe should be documented, and I feel it is important to share them with my colleagues.

If you are interested in a woman who is a prostitute, pursue that outside the campus. Why should it involve a student under your supervision? Why? That is why I have repeatedly told my management staff during meetings: when it comes to staff appraisals, do not settle personal scores. Do not joke with someone's career. It is wrong and ungodly. We may have

disagreements, but when it concerns someone's career, never victimize them. This is why, in this Institute, you will find people who are perceived as my enemies still working with me. Some of you know who they are. People often ask, "What kind of man is this?"

These people don't like him, yet he keeps them close." When it comes to work, personal feelings do not interfere. It is up to you to act rightly, God sees everything. I have done my part.

The same principle applies to marking and assessing students: do not use it to settle personal scores or jeopardize their future. That is simply not the way to go.

Q - What were your achievements as Minister of National Planning and what have you been able to achieve in the last six years as DG of NILDS?

I spent roughly one year as the Minister of National Planning. I took over from Shamsudeen Usman, stepping in due to the exit of Bolaji Abdullahi from Kwara State, to complete his tenure.

Although my time was short, I was able to achieve significant milestones. Within that period, I successfully advanced two major policy frameworks for the country: The National Integrated Infrastructure Master Plan and the policy concerning foreign donor partners.

Additionally, one of my major achievements during that period, despite it coinciding with an electioneering season,

was securing the full buy-in of all donor partners operating in Nigeria.

The Ministry of National Planning serves as the custodian of donations, investments, and grants for Nigeria. Under my tenure, the donor partners operating in the country experienced more effective engagement than under any previous minister. This strong relationship enabled us to make significant progress, including in the fight against Ebola, through the coordinated efforts of donor agencies, as well as in managing numerous other donations, aids, and grants to Nigeria.

I was one of the few ministers at that time whose accessibility and straightforward approach encouraged donor agencies to respond positively whenever I reached out to them.

Thirdly, I was able to galvanize the support of donor partners in strengthening key policy frameworks in the country, particularly at the subnational level. What I mean is this: many states were independently courting organizations like UNDP, UNESCO, and JICA for various projects, often resulting in overlapping efforts.

This lack of coordination was problematic, and it fell under the mandate of the Ministry of National Planning. We therefore developed an official policy framework to streamline and regulate the activities of donor partners, providing clear guidance on how they should engage and operate within states.

You can't just come into our country and operate in Jigawa, or any other state, without understanding what is already in place there, whether it's in fighting malaria, addressing polio, or other interventions. That was why we developed this policy framework: to ensure that donor activities were coordinated, complementary, and aligned with the existing programs on the ground.

Under my watch, we implemented a coordinated policy aimed at regulating the activities of donor partners in Nigeria. I was also the minister responsible for all the privatized agencies in the country, working closely with the Bureau of Public Enterprises at the time.

Today, we see GenCos and DisCos misbehaving, with nobody holding them accountable. Nigerians are struggling with electricity tariffs that are imposed arbitrarily, and there is no one to caution them. Back then, it was one of the key responsibilities of the Ministry of National Planning, in close collaboration with the Vice President's office, to ensure that these privatized agencies operated within the agreed terms. Despite my short tenure, I traveled extensively to Ibadan, Lagos, Port Harcourt, and across the country to ensure that all privatized agencies adhered to the terms set by the federal government.

But today, I think that is no longer the case. These are some of the key achievements I was able to record as National Planning Minister, despite the period coinciding with electioneering. This is aside from the daily routines of the

ministry in areas such as microeconomic policies, evaluation, and monitoring of infrastructure. At the time, we were setting up infrastructure units in each state to ensure coordinated implementation nationwide, a system that was later abandoned by the Buhari administration after our tenure.

Talking about my achievements as DG of NILDS, that is perhaps even more substantial, as it is an ongoing effort and I still have some months to spend. We are having this interview at the permanent site, and I must acknowledge my predecessor for laying the foundation and starting construction. At a stage, the project had been abandoned for five to six years. I got the contractors back to the site, resumed work, commissioned the permanent site, and brought us into this facility. By the time we took over, there was no electricity, no infrastructure, no furniture, no internet, nothing. Today, this place is fully functional, and that stands as one of my major achievements.

Secondly, I inherited four departments. Today, we have expanded to twelve, including a radio station, a Centre for Security Analysis, and several other units. Our output has grown tremendously, particularly in terms of technical support to the National Assembly. Our capacity-building initiatives have also extended to the sub-national level, and to date, we have reached about 32 states through various training programs.

Fourthly, we introduced the Parliamentary Lecture Series. Although we faced challenges last year and could not hold it,

we hope to organize another session before the end of this year.

Fifthly, we now provide the National Assembly with regular reports, what we call security tracking, or security dimensions and dynamics, on a monthly basis. These reports serve as a guide to both the legislature and the executive on the country's threat landscape, helping them address issues proactively. When I took over, there were numerous issues related to staff claims, grievances, and restiveness, particularly around promotions and confirmations. All of these were resolved, and my staff can testify to that. I won't dwell much on this, as the results speak for themselves. We also continued the quiz competition initiated by my predecessor, which had previously been limited to the FCT, and expanded it to a national level. This year, we are set to hold the fourth edition of the National Quiz Competition. At the time I assumed office, postgraduate enrollment was only 50 to 60 students.

Today, we have over 200 postgraduate enrollments per year. When I started, we offered only Master's programmes; now, we run PhD programmes in numerous fields. We have established partnerships with a wide range of institutions and launched programmes modeled on those at Harvard and Oxford, which we call Advanced Executive Programmes. These are coordinated by distinguished figures, including the former National Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Professor Attahiru Jega, among others. Beyond this, the Institute continues its core

functions—bill drafting, bill scrutiny, and data analysis, which we provide to the National Assembly for their perusal and actionable insights. The achievements have been substantial, but as I said, it is still work in progress. The NILDS of today is a far cry from the Institute I met; we have truly gone global.

We are now extending our services to the ECOWAS Parliament and countries within the sub-region. Recently, a delegation from Malawi concluded a programme here. Just two weeks ago, I wrapped up a three-week programme with the ECOWAS Parliament. Additionally, three weeks ago, we conducted a memorandum validation exercise with the President of the Benin Republic Parliament, which is projected to span the next three years.

We have achieved a lot, and with adequate funding, I believe we can accomplish even more. In terms of accomplishments and fulfilling our mandate, it is for Nigeria and our clients to judge.

What I can confidently say is that, with the support of our staff and the guidance of our principals, we have successfully lived up to the institute's mandate.

Q - What have been your challenges as the director general of the institute? Challenge

One of the major challenges we are facing over the last two years has to do with political interference on the side of our

principals. No doubt about that , dealing with 360 members of House of Reps and 109 senators is not easy. These are politicians anyway, everybody with different interests, contestation of interest. So, it has not been easy managing the interest. Secondly, and most worrisome, is the poaching of my staff, especially by the Speaker's office. In the recent time, the Honorable Speaker with due respect has poached into my staff, It would have been better if the poaching was done to strengthen the institute, but I think from all indications, it is being done to undermine the institute. We have instances, where some of the mandate of the institute programs, have been hijacked in the last two years by the Speaker's office. We talk about the open week which is being done as NASS Open Week by the institute, You talk about the various capacity building, you talk about the retreat for parliamentarians which we conducted for Senate, when it came to that of the House of Rep, it was solely done by the Speaker's office and quite a lot of other responsibilities and program of the institute. So, in recent time the Speaker's office has been turned into a parallel institute which is not too good enough. It has been a serious challenge on the side of the management of the institute in the recent time. I just hope that going forward the leadership and the parliamentarians will be wary of this. And another dimension which is affecting the capacity or so to speak the operation of the institute is the fact that some parliamentarians, especially from House of Rep, have now turned themselves to a training institution, largely training the same people, the same audience, the same set of workers, that's we are to train, using NILDS platform, and our venue .

we have about three or four, with due respect, chairmen of House of Rep in collaboration with their clerks, floating training institution, thereby doing exactly what the institute was established to do. This is not too good for our system and also an aspect of undermining the institute. It doesn't portray us as a serious country. And this is one of the challenges besides the issue of funding and some other challenges that we have been facing in the last two years.

Q - What type of NILDS do you intend to bequeath?

I aspire to bequeath a NILDS that serves as the intellectual hub for African stakeholders. This vision is why we initially considered transforming the institute into a specialized university, one that would cater to parliaments, democratic institutions, and key actors across the continent.

Q - As an educationist, what reforms will you want in the Nigeria University system? And how will Nigeria universities get better ranking globally? Thirdly, what role did billionaire ebusinesswoman, Hajiya Muinat Shagaya play in your being appointed as minister? Was that why you named your daughter after her? Your ministerial job brought you some tribulations but you were later discharged and acquitted by a court. What was your experience like? Did you regret taking up a job as minister?

Firstly, I owe Shagaya a lot. At that time, I was a lecturer fighting many battles. Amidst these challenges, there was an attempt by five governors to leave the PDP, and my governor

and leader in Kwara State, Saraki, was among them. When they left, the minister representing Kwara, Bolaji Abdullahi, then Minister of Sports and one of Saraki's disciples, was also being courted by the group, and as a result, he was eventually removed from office.

This created a vacuum, leaving Kwara without a minister. Shagaya, being a friend of the Jonathan family, was tasked with finding a suitable candidate. During this search, she found me useful and recommended me. It wasn't easy, though. Kwara politicians resisted, arguing, *"How can you nominate a lecturer for a ministerial position?"* That was another battle I had to face.

Time will not permit me to go into that struggle, it is a chapter of its own. My name was dropped twice during the shortlisting at the Villa. Each time they would say, "No, no, no," and my name would be removed. But, as God would have it, I was eventually nominated and sworn in. Even at the time of my Senate screening, it was Osita Chidoka and myself. Osita went before the Senate first. While he was being screened, the Special Assistant to the President on National Assembly Matters then, Senator Suleiman Makanjuola Ajadi, called me and said: "Ministerial nominee, there's a problem before you appear. There's a petition from the university, Adelabu, again, But don't worry, we are working on it. Opposition parties may raise it, so just be composed." And that was just minutes before my appearance before the Senate. I said, "No problem".

That would have been the third time my name was dropped. Eventually, I appeared before the Senate, and it went very well, so well that a Senator even wanted to move a motion for a vote of confidence on me right there. I scaled through successfully.

It was Alhaja Muniat Shagaya who played a pivotal role and facilitated my nomination to become a minister. That is why, when I had a child after leaving office, I named the child Muinat Shagaya.

The second point is about the tribulations I faced after leaving office as minister. When Buhari came in, within a few weeks of our exit, his government began targeting all of us who served under Jonathan. We started facing persecution. Before the persecution began, there were already fundamental issues and allegations being raised against the Jonathan government. As Minister of National Planning at the time, I felt it was my duty to defend the administration. I stood out among all the ministers to champion that defence. I stuck my neck out.

Whenever any official from Buhari's government made claims, I was the only one in the country challenging them, answering, debunking, and countering most of these allegations. At some point, people began asking, "Why are you doing this? Why must you stick your neck out for Jonathan?" I received countless calls from people in my region, some invoking religion, ethnicity, and all, urging me to stop, warning that I was putting myself in danger.

I told them, yes, I was ready. I granted numerous interviews with journalists, all documented. I risked my life. At one point, they even called Professor Nuhu Yakub and said, “Warn him. If he thinks that because he didn’t do much at the Ministry of National Planning, we won’t use it against him.” I said, let them use it.

So, I wasn’t surprised when, in my last interview, I think with *Vanguard*, I said, yes, I’m sure after this interview they would go after me. And not quite a week later, I was summoned and subsequently detained in Lagos for almost two weeks. My account was blocked, and that marked the beginning of my ordeal, which lasted for three and a half years. I was in court for all that time. Thanks to the Supreme Court, which, on the basis of lack of jurisdiction, absolved us.

Interestingly, during that period, I received my appointments. For my first ministerial appointment, I was in court. For my second appointment as DG, I was also in court. I certainly don’t pray to be in court to get the third one! (laughs)

Q - Do you regret taking appointment as a minister based on what you went through after you left office?

No regrets at all. There can’t be a child without labour, am I right? If you want to have a child, you must go through labour. You must go through that pain. I see it as part of life. Even the Prophets of God went through persecutions and tribulations. For me, the struggle is part of my life. So, when challenges come and people are being ruffled, I just keep calm because I

know it's one of those stages you go through. What will be, will be. You go through it, you endure it, and you pass through it.

Q - As a community leader, in Ilorin and as one of the leaders in the state, what impact are you making or have you made in the lives of your people?

This is another chapter. As I've told you, I was a lecturer at the university, and I can say with full responsibility and pride that I have impacted the lives of many young people in my community.

For instance, a significant number of graduates from Ilorin Emirate at the University of Abuja gained admission through my facilitation running into hundreds. Some of them even went on to become lecturers at UniAbuja, again with my assistance in their employment.

As a minister, I facilitated employment for nearly 80 people from the Ilorin community. I also organized capacity-building opportunities, sending almost 70 individuals to China, Korea, and Japan, and engaged many others in local training programs.

These efforts, across teaching and public service, were aimed at empowering my community and creating opportunities for growth and advancement.

As minister, I did a great deal in empowering our people, and as DG, this work continues, it's very much a work in progress.

Sometimes ago, my followers established the AMANA Foundation, which is actively supporting empowerment initiatives for the downtrodden and students. The foundation has renovated schools, constructed wells, built roads, and carried out numerous other projects across various communities.

In the last two years alone, I have paid for almost 700 candidates from Kwara State who applied for JAMB, not just in Ilorin, but across the state. Among them was one of the top-performing candidates in this year's JAMB, and the records can verify this. I don't like saying it, but I think I have to. I've carried out extensive interventions in mosques and religious homes. I've supported madrasas too, because I am a product of Madrasah myself, buying chairs, bags, uniforms for primary school pupils. The scorecard is there for everyone to see. I'm not doing this for political gain. If it were about politics, I could keep the money and use it during elections to buy votes, as is often done today. But this is about giving back to my community and serving God, so that I may receive His reward. In terms of community service, I won't claim to have no peers, but I am among the few within the emirate and the state who have had a profound and tangible impact on people's lives.

Q - People can look at you today and say you are a successful man. But what would be success to you?

What will be, will be, but my ultimate goal is to see my dream actualized, and I am yet to achieve it. I feel deeply saddened

when I observe how leaders at every level perceive their followers; when I see hospitals poorly maintained, schools where children are learning under the shade of trees, roads that are badly constructed, environmental degradation, and extreme poverty, and I ask myself, why?

Recently, I visited the National Hospital, and I thought to myself: if today I were offered a ministerial appointment, which portfolio would I choose? Without hesitation, I would say Minister of Health. My dream is to dedicate my maximum effort to making society better, and until that dream is realized, I cannot claim to be truly successful.

Q - There is a kind of migration by politicians transforming from one political party to another, we want your views on that. We equally want your views on the new tax regime by the present administration and its impact on the economy? Is your dream the reason you are interested in politics and your aspiration to be Governor of Kwara state?

Who told you I want to be governor of Kwara State? (General laughter) On the issue of defections, let me be clear: defection is allowed. But the current trend tells us something important, it highlights that political parties in Nigeria are not ideologically grounded. Because there is no strong ideology, you can align with APC today and wake up in PDP tomorrow. In a party guided by ideology, such shifts would not happen. We urgently need to redefine our political party system. In Nigeria, defections are largely driven by sycophancy and the instinct for political survival.

In fact, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu should not be under any illusion that all these defectors genuinely love him. Many are acting out of sycophancy or self-preservation. Some are in their second term and want to avoid trouble; others are in their first term and want to secure reelection. But you cannot entirely blame the party or the beneficiary of the defections, after all, the ultimate goal of any political party is to win elections. If winning requires that people join you to secure a majority vote, why not? In that sense, APC deserves commendation for securing victory.

However, for the political system as a whole, it is problematic when there is no strong and constructive opposition to challenge the ruling party.

I have long advocated for a review of our tax regime because I firmly believe that Nigeria can thrive without over-reliance on oil.

Oil has been a spoiler for us, and much of the contestation over power is driven by the revenues it generates. We must reduce this over-dependence on a single resource. I often point out that some countries have no mineral or natural resources at all, yet through effective taxation, they achieve remarkable progress.

With our large population and immense potential, a well-restructured tax administration could enable Nigeria to thrive sustainably as a nation. I think what the government has done, credit goes to the APC administration, is a welcome

development that we should all support to ensure its success. It is one thing to have a policy; it is another for the policy to thrive. We must therefore focus on sustaining this policy and allowing it to work effectively. What we currently have is the policy itself; the next critical step is implementation, which depends on the actors in the sector. Even before now, many sectors have been taxed, and individuals have been taxed, but where does the money go? Too often, a significant portion ends up in private pockets. The Federal Government has played its part, and the National Assembly has done its own. Now, it is up to the administrators and individuals in the sector to ensure proper execution.

So, it goes beyond merely having the policy in place or establishing a regulatory framework. The key now lies with the people responsible for implementing the new tax regime. How do we ensure that taxpayers get true value for their contributions?

That is a critical question. Nonetheless, I believe the policy itself is sound, and it is something we all need to embrace and work to make effective going forward.

Q - What are your thoughts on constitution review?

Of course, that has always been an issue. But perhaps I align with those who believe that these seasonal constitutional reviews, with billions of Naira spent, are misguided. I think it's time to put an end to this cycle. Instead, we should overhaul the system entirely and draft a brand-new

Constitution. Looking back at the past 20 years of constitutional reviews, one can see the enormous expenditure and time invested. One thing I would suggest is that, whether you like him or not, the Jonathan government had some good initiatives and policies that this government should consider. The Confab report needs to be revisited, a constitutional committee should be set up to examine it, gather additional memoranda from stakeholders, and then we should adopt a brand-new Constitution. Constantly reviewing the Constitution over and over again doesn't make sense. I align with the Patriots on this issue; I believe we should have a Constitution that truly reflects "We, the people of Nigeria..."

Q - Why did you adopt the slogan AMANA for your political campaigns?

I wasn't the one who named myself AMANA. AMANA means "trust." When someone is called Amana, it signifies that the person is trustworthy, dependable, and reliable. It was actually the people who coined it.

In fact, the Emir once said I am a reliable, dependable, and trustworthy person. When I say something, I keep my word. So, it wasn't me. Over time, as people began to chant "Amana, Amana, Amana," it became a slogan, and it has stuck. It is a political slogan given to me by the community.

It was from this recognition that my people established the AMANA Foundation. I didn't set up the foundation myself, my followers and disciples did, and they appointed me as the

Chairman of the Trustees. Through this foundation, we are reaching out to the indigent, the downtrodden, the peasantry, and the have-nots in society, providing support and assistance in one way or another.

I always ask myself whether I truly live up to this “Amana” people say I have. I hope I do, and I am doing my best to maintain it. I can’t say “yes” today and “no” tomorrow. I don’t operate that way.

If I cannot do something, I will tell you honestly that I cannot. If I say something about you in your absence, when I meet you, I will say it in your presence. Perhaps that is what informed the appellation. At least, I have tried to live up to it up to this moment, and I pray I continue to do so until the end of my life. But of course, there are moments when I feel I haven’t done enough, and I think, “People will say, ‘And you call yourself Amana?’” I don’t want that to happen.

I try, as much as possible, to live by that name. When the AMANA Foundation was set up, I made every effort not to disappoint its initiators by giving out to those in need. Sometimes, I even deny my family to reach out to people in one way or another. As we speak now, if I open my phone, I will have received numerous requests from all over, and whatever I can give, I will.

We came into this world with nothing, and we shall leave with nothing. That is my belief.

Q - Tell us about your social life?

My social life is quite limited, and my staff who travel with me can attest to that. They often say, “We’re going to Dubai, we’re going to London,” and while they enjoy the beaches, I stay in my hotel.

When I go out, it’s usually for shopping, I can shop for 10 hours straight, but I don’t go clubbing or to recreational centers. The one thing I do consistently is exercise daily. Beyond that, in terms of extra-curricular and social activities, I keep a very low profile.

That is why people are still pleading with me and putting pressure on me to try this or that. They say, “When you travel, you don’t go out; you’re wasting resources”, and that is what a lot of people do (general laughter). I think this is one area where I have a shortcoming, and it’s something I should work on, especially as I approach retirement.

How do you relax?

How do I unwind? (General laughter).

Q - QYes, if you don’t go to all these places, what do you do?

Beside the daily exercise that I do, my way to unwind is simply to sit with people and gist. I recall about four or five years ago, when we were at Danube Street in Maitama, my Personal Private Secretary at the time, Joy, brought a memo stating that staff could no longer see the DG. It suddenly became difficult for staff to reach me. I said, “Come on, do

you want to kill me? I don't drink, I don't unwind, I don't do anything—and now you're saying no staff should see me again? You want to kill me?" I insisted that at least two staff must see me: Hassana and Mariam. That way, I could always chat or gist with them.

Let me also say this: initially, I wasn't that withdrawn socially. I told you I was a Fuji musician, but experience in life, especially my time as a minister, led me to keep to myself. After my work, I preferred to retreat and maintain some privacy.

As a minister, your office is always bustling. People are constantly coming in, disturbing you. But once you leave the ministry, you barely see people again. When you are under travail, you don't see them at all. For instance, during my persecution at the EFCC, I hardly saw some of my SAs. My SA Political, I had conflicts with him, and throughout my three-and-a-half-year ordeal in court, he did not follow up for a single day. It was an experience.

There are some things I don't want to elaborate on because, Experiences like that make you reflect and ask yourself: who can I truly unwind with again? (general laughter) No, no, no. It shapes your perception of life. I've just shared one or two examples.

Perhaps these are the kinds of unpleasant experiences that made me prefer staying indoors with my family. People might say, "He doesn't want to keep friends," but honestly, it's not

worth keeping too many associates. I decided to focus on my politics and then return to my family. Everything I do is ultimately for God.

It was these unfortunate incidents that shaped my social interactions. Even before I became DG, I would go to my office in Zone 4, sit down with one or two friends, and then go home. Most of my political engagement is in Kwara, but in terms of social activities, it simply isn't worth it.

Q - What are your future aspirations?

I intend to lead Kwara State if given the opportunity. If that doesn't materialize, I aspire to serve as an ambassador, should the opportunity arise.

Q - Any regrets?

Over what?

Q - ...Your life. What have you done that you would have done differently? Or what have people done to you that put you on the edge and you feel that they have not done the expected things? So where do you have your regrets?

My main regret is that I tend to over-trust people. I place a lot of faith in them, and as a result, I have experienced considerable backstabbing. Had I known, I might have been more cautious with my trust.

Q - On a lighter note, are you a troublesome lover, as a husband or father? Secondly, how did you defy poverty to marry the daughter of an Emir?

My wife, yes, is the daughter of an emir, but the daughter of a former emir, not a serving one. Poverty wasn't a factor (laughs).

Her father was the ninth Emir of Ilorin, the father of the current emir. In other words, my wife is the youngest and sister to the present emir. In fact, I was richer than her family when I married her (laughs). So, that question doesn't really hold.

Another thing I should mention is that when I consider a lady for marriage, I don't look at status. That's why most of my wives come from modest backgrounds. A friend once said to me, "You are supposed to marry a big, well-to-do lady." But I said, "No, no, no, we have to distribute wealth too." Look for the average status (laughs).

Q - So, what are your suggestions as to reforms in the university system?

Let's open up the university environment. This policy of government funding universities should stop. We should deregulate it. When you deregulate, you attract the best administrators, the best personnel, and the best infrastructure.

If the government still wants to maintain a role in universities, then we need to revisit the policy framework that established TETFund.

Its mandate should be expanded beyond just capital projects to include overhead and operational costs. By doing this, we can put an end to restiveness, instability, and unrest in the university system, giving institutions enough resources to focus on teaching and research.

Q - Looking at politics today, how can you analyse leadership and followership in this country?

Any criticism or condemnation of leadership often stems from the attitude of the followership. When people say leaders are corrupt, it is frequently because the followers themselves are corrupt.

When they claim leaders are underperforming, often it's because the followers are worse.

Consider this example: You are appointed as a councilor and paid a salary of N500,000, yet the people expect more than N5 million from you. If you don't meet those demands, they call you useless, and in extreme cases, some may even resort to threats or witchcraft. Such pressures make a leader vulnerable, creating temptation to gather extra resources to satisfy these demands.

I experienced this personally. As a minister in 2014, my salary was just over N900,000. A friend of mine had a baby that year, and I sent him N100,000. He later told me I was useless.

N100,000 in 2014! I could recount thousands of similar experiences. It is this kind of pressure that pushes leaders to seek additional resources to meet people's expectations. Corruption often lies more with the followers than with the leaders. Many times, leaders want to do the right thing, but the followers push them toward the wrong path. Let me give you an example:

Four or five years ago, as DG, I said, "To be a governor, you need billions. Where will I get such funds?" One of my staff said, "Oga, we can make that billions for you." Imagine that, a follower suggesting something illegal! I was scared and concerned.

This shows that leaders are often a reflection of their followers. If our leaders today are bad, it's because the followers are worse, they shape the leaders. The National Assembly, the executive, they are not from the moon; they reflect our society. So, if we want better leaders, we must start by cultivating better followers.

Q - You mentioned some time ago that after your tenure as minister people were making jest of you. Can you throw more light on that episode?

When I left office as Minister, I relinquished all my official vehicles. Nigerians didn't even take notice of that. All ministers did the same. They auctioned one jeep that belonged to me, but I didn't want to rely on it, so I parked it and bought a small Toyota Avensis for myself. Suddenly, people made a big fuss: "Look at him, his life has finished! If you see your friend now, na Avensis e dey drive!" (laughs) It became a matter of jest all over Abuja. Just because I chose to live a simple life!

Q - What are you most afraid of?

The hereafter.

Q - What is your advice for the next generation?

They should be godly, hardworking and show love for this country,

Nigeria.

END

Core Areas of Intervention of the Amana Foundation

A. Education Support

- Sponsored over 2,000 less-privileged students for free JAMB registration, empowering them to pursue higher education.

- One beneficiary scored an impressive 322 in JAMB 2024, securing a brighter future.
- B. Religious Infrastructure
- Renovation and rehabilitation of 200 community centers in the Ilorin Emirate, ensuring these remain vibrant centres of worship and community life.
- C. Moral and cultural Education
- Significant interventions in schools to enhance Islamic learning in the Ilorin Emirate.
 - Ensures children from all backgrounds access quality education and a deeper sense of values and belonging.
- D. Hunger Relief (Ramadan Initiative)
- “Amana Ramadan Iftar Package” provided food for 30,000 Kwarans in 2024 and 2025.
 - Strengthened community spirit and alleviated hunger during the holy month.
- E. Agricultural Empowerment
- Launched the Farm2Feed programme to support farmers with finance and technical training.
 - Boosted agricultural yields, livelihoods, and local economic growth.

F. Child Welfare

- Sponsored 500 children for fun-filled outings at Diamond Park, Ilorin, on New Year's Day (2024 & 2025).
- Gave children unforgettable moments of joy and laughter.

G. School Infrastructure & Learning Support

- Constructed and renovated classrooms, ICT centres, laboratories, and admin blocks in schools like: [L]
[SEP]
- Baboko Community Secondary School
- Abata-baba Oyo School, Ajikobi
- Created a conducive learning environment for academic excellence.

H. Entrepreneurship & Business Support

- Provided financial aid and resources to entrepreneurs, empowering them to expand businesses and create jobs.

I. Student Mentorship & Summer Lessons

- Organised free Summer Lessons for SS1–SS3 students across 50 Community Development Associations in Kwara State.
- Helped bridge educational gaps and encouraged continuous learning.

- J. Religious Pilgrimage Sponsorship
 - Sponsored 10 individuals to perform the 2024 Hajj in Saudi Arabia.
- K. Widow Support
 - Distributed over 1,000 bags of 5kg semovita to widows, easing the burden of food insecurity.
- L. Community Engagement & Networking
 - Hosted a dinner for young entrepreneurs in Kwara State, fostering dialogue, collaboration, and innovation.

Chapter 10
Prof. Abubakar O. Sulaiman @
60. Picture Story



























Chapter 11

Prof. Abubakar O. Sulaiman

@ 60. Tributes and 60 Hearty Cheers!!!!



**VICE PRESIDENT,
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA**

Tribute to Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman at 60

My Dear Prof,

In the Republic, Plato reminds us that the ideal state is realised only when philosophers are entrusted with leadership, for in their hands, wisdom and justice find expression. Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman embodies this truth. His life has been one of devotion to the production and promotion of knowledge, and for this, our nation owes him a debt of gratitude.

2. For decades, Professor Sulaiman has stood at the intersection of scholarship and policy making, demonstrating with rare clarity that theories alone cannot redeem a nation. He has shown us that ideas must walk into the corridors of power, that the gown must shake hands with the town, and that our theorists must not remain confined to the lecture halls but must be positioned where their wisdom serves the cause of nation-building.

3. On a personal note, I have always been deeply impressed by the role he plays in inspiring not only intellectual interrogations of issues but also in guiding generations of Nigerians along the path of reason, the path of logic, and the path of objectivity. His leadership of the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies is a testament to this mission. It is a perfect station from which to shape democratic culture and institutionalise the ideas that animate our collective quest for the ideal state.

4. While strong institutions are the pillars of every enduring nation, it is individuals like Professor Sulaiman who build these institutions – one person at a time, one idea at a time. For this, and on behalf of the good people of Nigeria, I extend my warmest felicitations and wish you a joyous 60th birthday. May your days ahead be as impactful as the decades you have already gifted to our nation.

A stylized red ink signature of Senator Kashim Shettima, consisting of a large 'S' followed by 'Shettima' and a long horizontal flourish.

Senator Kashim Shettima, GCON
Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

OGEJ/AB/HE/072/0508-25

5th August, 2025

Prof. Abubakar Olanrewaju Sulaiman
Director General,
National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies
No. 2, Abubakar O. Sulaiman Avenue, Piwoyi District
FCT, Abuja

Dear Prof,

GOODWILL MESSAGE ON YOUR 60TH BIRTHDAY

I am pleased to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Professor Abubakar Olanrewaju Sulaiman on the momentous occasion of his 60th birthday and the presentation of the commemorative book titled "Visionary Leadership: Lessons from Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman at 60."

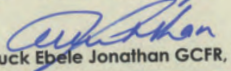
This publication is a well-deserved tribute to a man whose life has been defined by dedication to public service, intellectual depth, and a consistent passion for nation-building. As a scholar, former Minister of National Planning, and now Director-General of the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS), Professor Sulaiman has continued to demonstrate the kind of leadership that inspires confidence and drives positive change.

During his service as a Minister in my administration, I found in him a man of integrity, clear vision, and deep commitment to the ideals of good governance. He brought thoughtful analysis and intellectual rigor to the policy process, always prioritizing the best interests of the Nigerian people.

It is gratifying to see his contributions to public policy and democratic development being documented and celebrated in this book. The lessons drawn from his leadership journey will no doubt serve as a valuable resource for current and future generations.

As you mark this milestone, Professor Sulaiman, I join your family, colleagues, and well-wishers in celebrating your achievements. May the years ahead be filled with continued wisdom, strength, and impactful service to our great nation.

Congratulations once again, and happy 60th birthday.

Yours Sincerely,


Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan GCFR, GCON



PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE
Federal Republic of Nigeria

**TRIBUTE TO A VISIONARY ADMINISTRATOR
AND SCHOLAR AT 60!**

**TODAY WE MARK NOT MERELY THE PASSAGE OF YEARS,
BUT THE TRIUMPH OF A LIFE DEVOTED TO DUTY, SERVICE,
AND THE ADVANCEMENT OF MANKIND. IN CELEBRATING
PROFESSOR ABUBAKAR OLANREWaju SULAIMAN AT
SIXTY, WE SALUTE A MAN WHOSE LABORS HAVE LEFT
INDELIBLE MARKS UPON THE FABRIC OF OUR NATION.**

From the lecture halls where young minds were sharpened, to the corridors of policy where the destiny of the Republic has been deliberated, you have stood firm — steadfast in vision, courageous in spirit, unyielding in your devotion to the public good. Yours has been a voice of clarity and conviction, reminding us that democracy must not only be defended but deepened, not only preserved but perfected.

I have long admired your work ethic, which first endeared you to me when we served together in the National Executive Council. I am glad that in my current role as President of the Senate, I have once again found this attribute to be a great asset in your service as Director-General of the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS). Indeed, your discipline, diligence, and integrity have reinforced NILDS as a true think tank of democracy, a center of excellence for legislative capacity, and a fountain of knowledge for present and future generations.

You have taught, by precept and example, that leadership is not the mere trappings of office, nor the pomp of position, but the power of influence

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National Assembly Complex

Three Arms Zone, P.M.B 141 Garki, Abuja, Nigeria
Tel: 0811 111 0858, 0704 667 0458 | e-mail: godswill.akpabio@nass.gov.ng Website: www.nass.gov.ng



exercised with integrity; not privilege seized, but responsibility embraced. This is the true test of statesmanship, and it is one you have borne with distinction.

Now, as you enter this diamond jubilee, may Providence grant you renewed strength and unbroken vigor. May the years ahead open fresh vistas for service, fresh triumphs for truth, and fresh harvests of honor in the service of humanity.

On behalf of the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and in my own person, I extend to you the warmest felicitations. Let it be said, in the fullness of time, that at sixty you stood not at the twilight of influence but at the dawn of greater deeds yet to come.

Happy 60th Birthday, Professor.

With great esteem,


Dist. Sen. Godswill Obot Akpabio, GCON
President of the Senate, Federal Republic of Nigeria



**SPEAKER
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Federal Republic of Nigeria**

NASS/SPK/ADM/VOL.II/0450

Wednesday 2nd July 2025

Prof. Abubakar Suleiman

Director-General

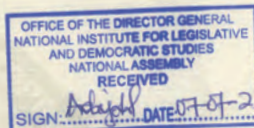
National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies

No. 2, Abubakar O. Sulaiman Avenue

Cadastral Zone C00

Off Umar Musa Yar'Adua Express Way, Airport Road

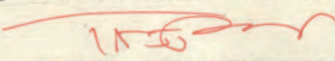
ABUJA



CONGRATULATORY LETTER

It is my pleasure to join your family and friends to wish you a wonderful celebration of your 60th birthday.

2. Celebrating your 60th birthday is a great milestone in human life. Yours has been a life of service to God Almighty, our nation and humanity in general.
3. I am delighted to be part of this celebration of God's faithfulness in the life of an accomplished technocrat, Patriot and a democrat. Your life has been characterised by grace, tenacity, and divine guidance.
4. On behalf of the House of Representatives, I extend best wishes and prayers for God's abiding grace, mercy and continued protection to you and your family. May this special day be filled with joy, love, and cherished memories.
5. Once again, I wish you a happy 60th birthday.


RT. HON. ABBAS TAJUDEEN, Ph.D, GCON
Speaker

1 ATTRIBUTE TO EXCELLENCY, LEADERSHIP,
AND SERVICE

Dear Distinguished Professor Abubakar
O. Sulaiman,

On this momentous occasion of your
60th birthday, I join your family, friends,
colleagues and the entire legislative
community in celebrating your life
of profound impact and intellectual
brilliance to democratic governance.

Your tenure in the last six years,
following a renewal after the first
successful four years as Director-
General of the National Institute
for Legislative and Democratic
Studies (NILDS) has been nothing
short of transformative. Under your
watch, NILDS has become a
crucible for legislative excellence,
and a vital pillar in strengthening
Nigeria's democratic institutions.
Your scholarly rigour, administrative
acumen, and passion for capacity
development have left an
indelible mark on our nation's
system of governance.

Beyond your professional accomplishments,
you have exemplified humility, integrity,
and a rare commitment to mentorship.
You have nurtured policymakers,
driving a culture of informed and
evidence-based legislation.

As you celebrate this diamond jubilee,
may you be rewarded with continued
good health, and the satisfaction
of knowing that your contributions
have shaped Nigeria's democratic
journey for the better.

Happy 60th Birthday, Professor Sulaiman!
May the coming years bring you
even greater opportunities to lead
and serve.

Kind regards

Senator Ahmed Ibrahim Lawan, Ph.D, GCON
President of the 9th Senate
Federal Republic of Nigeria.



RESTRICTED

STATE HOUSE,
ABUJA,
NIGERIA.

Reference:

SH/COS/182/A/6188

14th May 2025

Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman
Director General,
National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS)
No. 2 Abubakar O. Sulaiman Avenue,
Cadastral Zone C00, Piwoyi District,
Abuja.

TRIBUTE TO PROFESSOR ABUBAKAR O. SULAIMAN, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR LEGISLATIVE AND DEMOCRATIC STUDIES (NILDS) ON THE OCCASION OF HIS 60TH BIRTHDAY AND THE PUBLIC PRESENTATION OF THE BOOK, "VISIONARY LEADERSHIP: LESSONS FROM PROFESSOR ABUBAKAR O SULAIMAN AT 60".

I am delighted to join friends, family, colleagues and associates to celebrate you on your 60th birthday. No institution or agency in government or outside of it has done more to facilitate and support the National Assembly and state legislatures across the country in developing their capacity to be effective in an emerging democracy than the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS), and no individual has had more consequential impact on the operations of NILDS than you have.

As Speaker of the House of Representatives, I worked with you and the Institute to develop the Legislative Agenda of the 9th House as a comprehensive policy document with performance tracking, monitoring, and reporting to ensure we kept our promises to the Nigerian people.

When I established the Legislative Mentoring Initiative (LMI) as a youth leadership development programme to identify, equip and empower a new generation of young people to lead in government and public service, particularly in the legislature, you supported my efforts to ensure that the initiative took off. You have since continued to support the LMI to be a rigorous and impactful mentorship programme.

I thank you for your friendship, service to our country, and dedication to the cause of a progressive and prosperous nation. I pray that God will grant you good health, grace, and wisdom so that you can continue to serve God and your country with intelligence and dedication.

Please accept the assurances of my esteemed regards.

Femi Gbajabiamila
Chief of Staff to the President



Office of the Chief of Staff to the President C-S-C

RESTRICTED



**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
KWARA STATE**

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, AHMADU BELLO AVENUE, ILORIN, KWARA STATE, NIGERIA. PMB 1370
TELEGRAM: GOV.ILORIN WEBSITE: WWW.KWARASTATE.GOV.NG

18th August, 2025

Professor Abubakar Suleiman

HAPPY 60TH BIRTHDAY: BEST WISHES ON YOUR SPECIAL DAY

Greetings from the Government and people of Kwara.

2. I join your family, friends, and well-wishers to congratulate you on your 60th birthday. Attaining this milestone is a special favour from Almighty Allah. As a distinguished statesman who has served our nation in various capacities, your contributions remain indelible.

3. I pray for God's abiding grace, good health, and continued fulfilment in the years ahead.

Accept the assurances of my highest regards.

A. AbdulRazaq
AbdulRahman AbdulRazaq, CON

Governor, Kwara State
Chairman, Nigeria Governors' Forum



BAUCHI STATE OF NIGERIA OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Government House P.M.B 0059, Bauchi, Bauchi State, Nigeria
E-mail: governorhouseabb@gmail.com
+234 906427 7869, +234 901 780 7301

GH/OFF/09/VOL.VI

16th September, 2023

Prof. Abubakar O. Sulaiman,
Director General,
National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies,
National Assembly,
No. 2, Abubakar O. Sulaiman Avenue,
Cadastral Zone C00, Piwoyi District,
Off Umaru Musa Yar'adua Express Way,
Airport Road, Abuja.

My Brother,

TRIBUTE TO PROFESSOR ABUBAKAR O. SULAIMAN AT 60

It is with profound joy and deep affection that I celebrate my brother, friend, and former colleague, Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman, at this remarkable milestone of sixty years. Our time together in the Federal Executive Council, where he served with distinction as Minister of National Planning, cemented a bond of friendship and respect that has endured ever since.

2. Professor Sulaiman has remained a shining light in public life, an intellectual of courage, a teacher of generations, a mentor to many, a devoted family man, and above all, a patriotic Nigerian whose selflessness continues to inspire. Through his wisdom and generosity of spirit, he has nurtured leaders, enriched scholarship, and contributed immensely to national development.

3. As Governor of Bauchi State and a former Senator of the Federal Republic, I hold in special regard the office he now occupies as Director General of the

National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies. In that role, he has strengthened our democracy, elevated the legislature's capacity, and enhanced the culture of governance and accountability in our country. His work at NILDs has proven beyond doubt that when academics bring their scholarship into public service, both the academy and the nation are better served.

4. At sixty, your life exemplifies the true essence of service, a service that binds knowledge with practice, vision with action, and leadership with humility. You remind us that public service is not simply a duty, but a noble calling.

5. On this joyous occasion, I salute you for your sacrifices, your mentorship, and your steadfast commitment to Nigeria's progress. May your years ahead be filled with health, wisdom, and renewed opportunities to continue shaping minds and institutions for the good of humanity.

6. With warm regards and heartfelt congratulations,

[Signature]

SEN. BALA ABDULKADIR MOHAMMED, CON, Fnlpr
EXECUTIVE GOVERNOR



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, PMB 43, MINNA - NIGER STATE, NIGERIA
www.nigerstate.gov.ng; www.nigerstateonline.com

GHNS/PPS/052


6th August, 2025

BIRTHDAY MESSAGE TO PROFESSOR ABUBAKAR O. SULEIMAN @ 60

In a world where leadership is often scrutinised, the balance between a leader's vision and the desires of the public is crucial. When there is no conflict between these elements a leader is better positioned to drive meaningful changes, foster trust and maintain social stability.

Apparently it is right to state that, you are a leader with transformational energy, aligning your style with the collective needs of the public. This embodies vision and style which reflects people's values, ambitions and understanding of the broader social economic and political landscape that represents aspirations and expectations of many.

My brother on behalf of the government and people of Niger State, I sincerely congratulate you as you clock **60 years** and on the launch of your commemorative book titled "**Visionary Leadership**". This event is a confirmation of your enviable contributions to the development of humanity. You are indeed our role model and we are proud of you. We would find time to be part of this memorable occasion. It is our Farrant prayer that, the good Lord continue to bring joy, good health and opportunities to further inspire you to impact the lives of the downtrodden. Once more congratulations.!!


Farmer Mohammed Umaru Bago
Governor, Niger State

00004111



... shared vision, unlimited opportunities



AnyScanner

NOTE

Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman @ 60


HAPPY 60TH BIRTHDAY

My dear prof.

Your remarkable contributions to academia, public service and community development speak volumes of your unwavering dedication and exceptional legacy.

On this special occasion of your 60th birthday, I join many others around the world in honouring your visionary leadership dedication and profound impact. May this new chapter of your life be filled with continued purpose, excellent health and lasting joy.

Wishing you a truly memorable 60th birthday and many more years of greatness ahead. Happy birthday prof. Sulaiman!


C. M. MUTTWANG

NOTE

Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman @ 60

22nd August, 2025

Dear Prof. Abubakar Suleiman

On behalf of the entire team, I heartily Congratulate you on the joyous occasion of your 60th birthday. This milestone is not only a celebration of life but also of your remarkable contributions as a leader, scholar, and mentor.

May this new decade bring you greater fulfillment, good health, and happiness.

We celebrate you today, not just for the years you have attained, but for the impact you have made and continue to make in every sphere of your life.

Happy 60th Birthday, Professor.

With warm regards and best wishes

Arc Mohammed Namadi Sambo



NOTE

TRIBUTE

Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman @ 60

THE PROFESSOR ABUBAKAR O. SULEIMAN I KNOW!

It is not often that one is honoured to pay tribute to a fellow compatriot. When the need arises, nonetheless, it is counted as a mark of fellowship which should not be discounted.

Therefore, I must express my gratitude to have been reckoned with as a good enough contributor to a collection of heartfelt testimonies on the man - Abubakar Olarenwaju Suleiman. Without a doubt, he is an excellent scholar who has etched his name in the country's academia. Prior to his current tour of duty as the Director-General of the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies, he had had a number of equally distinguished public service engagements.

Ministerial appointments which he had had in the past are the barge of men and women of character, learning, loyalty to group interests, and undisputed allegiance to friendships. These attributes have often placed him in good stead in his lucky but merited streaks in public service.

As a son of a religious cleric in metropolitan Lagos city, when the observance of morality was at its apogee in the early decades of the country's nationhood, it is hardly a surprise that the visage and carriage of Professor Abubakar O. Suleiman have the imperiousness of cosmopolitanism - very urbane personality! To me, these characteristics have been the defining catalysts in charting his professional career till date.

On this auspicious occasion of his 60th birthday anniversary, it gives me considerable delight to identify with other compatriots to strike cymbals and beat the drums to celebrate our contemporary doyen of public service engineering in Nigeria.

Happy Birthday, Prof!

Congratulations!!

From - Senator (Dr.) Barau I. Jibril CFR, CON
Deputy President of the Nigeria Senate

NOTE

Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman @ 60


My dear Prof,

I heartily rejoice with you on this occasion of your 60th birthday.

You have distinguished yourself as an intellectual and worthy statesman. Your profound dedication and enduring commitment to repositioning the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies are proof of your unwavering passion for the best.

May this new phase of your life be filled with joy, peace, and happiness.

Warmest birthday wishes,



Rt. Hon. Benjamin Okezie Kalu, CON
Deputy Speaker, House of Representatives



Office of :
The Leader of The Senate
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

**ABUBAKAR OLANREWAJU SULAIMAN: CELEBRATING A DISTINGUISHED
SCHOLAR AND SEASONED ADMINISTRATOR @ 60**

It is my great pleasure to explore this medium in joining your family, your teeming friends, colleagues in the academia, political associates and well wishers to congratulate you and to celebrate you on this auspicious and memorable occasion of your 60th Birthday Anniversary.

On this special occasion, I, Sen. (Dr.) Michael Opeyemi Bamidele, CON, together with my darling wife and our children, profoundly rejoice with you, as we celebrate your glowing achievements as an accomplished scholar of international repute, a seasoned administrator, a quintessential political scientist, a former Honourary Minister of National Planning, Federal Republic of Nigeria and currently, the much celebrated Director-General of the National Institute of Legislative and Democratic Studies.

Today, your remarkable contribution to the growth and development of the National Institute of Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) and its transformation to what it is today, a world-class citadel of learning and top-notch democratic institute as well as your contribution generally to nation building as a cerebral technocrat and committed patriot cannot be over-emphasized. Over the years, you have proved your mettle as a likeable personality, a reliable friend, a dependable ally, an astute academic and one of the great pillars of knowledge that the National Assembly had benefitted immensely from his depth of intellect and organizational acumen.

On behalf of the President of the Senate, Sen. (Dr.) Godswill Obot Akpabio, GCON and the entire leadership of the National Assembly, I felicitate with you on this special occasion.

As you graciously attain the diamond age of 60 today, I sincerely wish you more prosperous, fruitful, fulfilled and rewarding years ahead. May the good Lord continue to imbue you with the manifold wisdom, grace, strength and enablement to continue to serve humanity.

Once again, please accept my congratulations and highest regards to you and your family sir.

M. Bamidele
Sen. (Dr.) Michael Opeyemi Bamidele, CON
Leader of the Senate



His Excellency, Sen. Adolphus N. Wabara, Ph.D.

PRESIDENT OF SENATE
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA
(2003-2005)

Monday, August 18, 2025

Prof. Abubakar O. Sulaiman

Director General

National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies


CELEBRATING A REMARKABLE LEADER @ 60

On this special day, we gather to honor not only your birthday, but also your outstanding legacy as Director General of the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies. Your visionary leadership has inspired countless individuals and advanced the mission of the Institute with both wisdom and integrity.

Your dedication has built enduring bridges between the Institute and the highest levels of public service, including your impactful collaborations with past and serving members of the National Assembly. Such alliances have enriched our national discourse and fostered progress that will resonate for generations.

It is fitting that today, as we celebrate your life and achievements, we also mark the launch of your new book as a testament to your commitment to knowledge, dialogue, and innovation. May this publication further illuminate your extraordinary journey and inspire all who read it.

I extend my warmest wishes for happiness, continued success, and fulfillment in the years to come. Happy Birthday!


H.E. Sen. Adolphus Wabara, Ph.D

205 Road, House 5, Festac Town, P.O.Box 1777, Apapa, Lagos, Nigeria.

Tel: +234 (0) 8035481000, +234 (0) 805 533 1000 Email: wabadolf@yahoo.com



Anyim Pius Anyim LLB, LL.M

2nd June, 2025

Prof. Abubakar O. Sulaiman
Director General

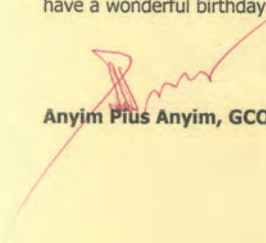
National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies
No. 2, Abubakar O. Sulaiman Avenue, Cadastral Zone
Piwoyi District, Off Umaru Musa Yar'adua Way
Airport Road, Abuja

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR 60TH BIRTHDAY

It is with heartfelt joy that I received your letter on the occasion of your 60th birthday celebration. This significant milestone is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate not only your life but also the incredible contributions you have made to the field of leadership and education.

I am particularly thrilled about the celebration of your book project, "**Visionary Leadership: Lessons from Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman at 60.**" It is a testament to your commitment to guiding others through your experiences and insights. This book will undoubtedly inspire many to embrace visionary leadership in their own lives and endeavors.

As you celebrate this special day, kindly accept my warmest congratulations and have a wonderful birthday celebration.


Anyim Pius Anyim, GCON



10 JUSTICE FATAI WILLIAMS STREET, ASOKORO, ABUJA
E-mail: anyimp@gmail.com



Senator Ken Nnamani, GCON

August 20, 2025

Prof. Abubakar O. Sulaiman

Director General

NILDS

#02 Abubakar O. Sulaiman Avenue, Piwoyi District

Off Umar Musa Yar'Adua Express-Way, Airport Road Abuja

Dear Prof. Sulaiman

I congratulate you on your 60th birthday, a remarkable milestone in a life dedicated to scholarship, service and leadership. Your journey from the cradle to professorship, a former Federal Minister and the Director-General of NILDS is truly noteworthy. Your dedication, intellectual depth and commitment to institutional excellence stand out distinctly.

Over the decades, your impactful teaching at the University of Abuja and beyond has shaped countless minds, while your visionary leadership at the NILDS continues to contribute meaningfully to democratic growth and legislative development in our country.

As you launch your book on the occasion of your birthday, chronicling this extraordinary journey of growth, may God continue to bless you with wisdom and grace in all your endeavours.

Warmest personal regards,



Sen Ken Nnamani, GCON

President,

Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2005 – 2007)

Abuja: 5, Oban Close Off Mambilla Str., Aso Drive, Abuja
Lagos: 6, Tola Adewumi Close, Maryland, Lagos
P. O. Box 3782, Ikeja - Lagos
Tel: +234 803 322 1000, 805 500 0007
Email: ken@nnamani.org
Website: www.kncld.ng



Senator Ashiru Oyelola Visa

DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER
KWARA SOUTH SENATORIAL DISTRICT.
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

A TRIBUTE TO PROFESSOR ABUBAKAR SULAIMAN @60

It is with great joy and deep respect that I join family, friends, colleagues, and the entire legislative community to celebrate a rare gem — Professor Abubakar Olanrewaju Sulaiman, the Director-General of the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) on the occasion of your 60th birthday.

Professor Sulaiman stands tall as a scholar, administrator, patriot, and bridge-builder. Your unwavering commitment to nation-building, democratic consolidation, and institutional capacity development has elevated NILDS into a globally respected policy and research think-tank, aligned with the ideals of legislative excellence.

As one who has worked closely with you in the National Assembly, I can attest to your exceptional intellect, leadership finesse, and passion for service. Through your guidance, NILDS has become a hub for legislative innovation — equipping lawmakers, legislative aides, and public servants with the tools required for good governance and effective representation.

Your journey from academia to public service reflects a life of discipline, integrity, and vision. At 60, your legacy is already being written in the minds of those you have mentored, the institutions you have strengthened, and the democratic values you continue to champion.

As the leader of the North Central Zone in the 10th Senate and particularly as Deputy Senate Leader, I celebrate you and pray for continued strength, wisdom, and grace as you enter this new chapter of your impactful life.

Happy 60th birthday, Professor Abubakar Sulaiman.

NOTE

Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman @ 60

It is a true Privilege to celebrate this milestone with you. Your dedication to Scholarship and mentorship to participants in the Institute has been an Inspiration to all. If justice has been done to the Institute in appointing a deserving individual to steer its affairs, it will be you. Your wealth of experience and excellent human relation which you brought to bear on the challenges of the Institute speaks volumes of the justification of your appointment in the first instance and renewal. Your Imprints and accomplishment in stabilizing and expanding the Concept and Programs of the Institute is in the open for all to see. It is an honour to have the chance to relate and interact with you over the years.

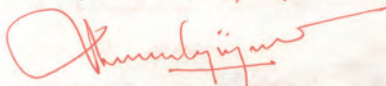
This is a celebration not only of your birthday but also a remarkable achievement that have defined your journey.

You have distinguished yourself through Scholarship and leadership. As you set in to the Phase beyond your sixth decade, here is wishing you joy, good health and many more years of wisdom and fulfilment.

~~I am humbled~~ May this milestone birthday bring you peace, happiness and continued success in all your endeavours.

I am humbled and honored to be among the chosen 60 to write for your 60th.

Happy Birthday Prof.



Sen. Mohammed Ali Ndume



GOVERNMENT OF AKWA IBOM STATE OF NIGERIA

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY GOVERNOR

P.M.B. 1111, Uyo

THE PROF. ABUBAKAR O. SULAIMAN I KNOW

Serving as colleagues in the Federal Executive Council (FEC) between 2014 and 2015 provided me the privilege to personally meet and closely interact with this great Nigerian, Prof. Abubakar Sulaiman.

The most easily noticeable virtues of Prof. Sulaiman are his intelligence, discipline, courage, forthrightness and boldness.

He is someone who likes to speak his mind, saying it the way it is, notwithstanding whose OK is good. These attributes endeared him to his colleagues and contributed to making him a voice in the Federal Executive Council.

As a Minister of National Planning, he worked very hard, thus giving a good account of himself as a very competent, productive and result-oriented Minister. I'm sure that it's the same story in his present assignment.

Today, I join his family and Nigerians from all walks of life to celebrate a dedicated public servant, a patriotic Nigerian, audacious personality and a celebrated Professor of International Relations, Abubakar Sulaiman.

Happy 60th birthday, Prof.

~~Sulaiman~~
Senator (Dr.) Akon Eyakenyi
Deputy Governor, Akwa Ibom State.

Good Will MESSAGE IN HONOUR OF PROFESSOR
ABUBAKAR O SULAIMAN ON HIS 60th BIRTHDAY
CELEBRATIONS

I am delighted to Celebrate an astute administrator and
Erudite Professor on his 60th Birthday. Professor Abubakar
Sulaiman is a Loving and Caring husband, a socialite
Who has impacted So many Lives positively and has
Sacrificed Immensely to human existence.

Today, We Celebrate not only your Birthday but also
your remarkable and incredible achievements in life
as demonstrated in both public Service and
Service areas.

I'm proud to salute your efforts and dedication to Community
Development and Can do spirit when the needs arises.
No doubt, the Quality of people and Important personalities
Celebrating you today, is a clear testament to your
Kindness, Love, Compassion and willingness to serve God
humanity and your Community and the Country at Large.

Once again, On behalf of my family and good People of
Kwara State, I wish you Sound Mind and Long
Life in good health and prosperity.

Congratulations and Cheers to your new age, My
Professor

Mr. Kayode Alabi
Deputy Governor, Kwara State.

Prof. Abubakar O. Sulaiman at 60: A Portrait of Vision and Service

At sixty, a life is more than the sum of years; it is a canvas painted with courage, wisdom, and enduring influence. In Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman, we witness not merely the passage of time but the shaping of minds, the building of institutions, and the quiet, powerful imprint of service.

From the lecture halls where he inspired generations, to the corridors of governance where his intellect strengthened democracy, Prof. Sulaiman exemplifies the rare harmony of scholarship and leadership. His vision of democracy has always been more than theory; it is lived in courage, in empathy, and in transformative service to the people.

As he celebrates his diamond jubilee, we honor not age alone, but relevance, substance, and the enduring mark of a life well-lived. He reminds us that true leadership is measured not by titles, but by the depth of impact, the values upheld, and the lives uplifted.

I celebrate my brother and friend at 60, praying that the years ahead bring him deeper wisdom, richer fulfilment, and abiding peace. May his convictions continue to light the path for a nation in search of genuine service and visionary guidance.

Congratulations, Prof. Abubakar O. Sulaiman - sixty years of excellence, inspiration, and enduring legacy.

With warm regards,



Rt. Hon. Emeka Ihedioha.CON.KSC.

Dep speaker H/Reps 2011-2015;

Fellow NILDS



SENATOR DR. ORJI UZOR KALU (MON)

CHAIRMAN, SENATE COMMITTEE ON SOUTH EAST DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (SEDC)

ABIA NORTH SENATORIAL DISTRICT

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY,
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

My dear brother . Prof. Sulaiman

Congratulatory Message

I am highly pleased to be part of the epochal event marking your 60th birthday.

I am so glad to have crossed paths with you in the service of our great country. You have proven to be a good friend, the leading light, an avatar of moral revivalism, a dedicated patriot, a national treasure, and a legendary humanitarian.

Without mincing words, your life has been marked with incomparable excellence and astuteness, which sits snugly in the words of Aristotle that "excellence is never an accident. It is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, and intelligent execution."

Not surprisingly, the Nigerian Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies has achieved remarkable success because of your ardor for excellence and visionary leadership.

As you mark your 60th birthday and attain another milestone in your life, I wish you God's continuous good health, novel accomplishments, and endless fruitful opportunities in life.

yours truly

Sen. Dr. Orji Uzor Kalu

National Assembly Complex, Room 3.20, Three Arms Zone, P.M.B. 141 Garki, Abuja.
e-mail: okalu@orjikalu.com

Senator Dr. Victor C. Umeh, OFR

Chairman, Senate Committee on National Identity and National Population
Member, Governing Council of NILDs

NOTE

My dear Prof. Sulaiman,

I am very happy to receive and a Notification that your 60th Birthday comes up in October 2025. I have also noted that a book on your Visionary Leadership with your life in the last 60 years is also being written to record your life and accomplishments in the last 60 years detailing your beginning and your climb to the pinnacle of your Academic Accomplishments and your Visionary Leadership.

I am very proud to have known you and also worked with you as a Member of the Governing Council of the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies of the National Assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

I have found you to be a thorough bred lifespan with an uncommon commitment in the discharge of your Duties.

Your Interpersonal Relationship with people from all spheres of life brings you out as a bridge Builder, national Nation Builder and Promoter of National Unity.

You have brought your ingenuity into turning NILDs into a World Class Citadel of Learning.

I look forward to getting a Copy of the book which will encapsulate your Visionary Leadership, Career, Worldview, Achievements and Contributions.

to Humanity.

It promises to be Captivating and loaded with Visionary demonstrations and knowledge sharing.

On your Life at 60, I join your family, colleagues and friends to celebrate God's Blessings upon your Life.

Your Life of numerous Achievements will inspire very many people to imitate the virtue of hard Work and Simplicity.

I wish you God's continued Blessings of good health and strength of both body and soul.

I wish you many more Happy Returns.

Congratulations!!

Yours Truly,
"V. C. Umeh"

Senator Dr. Victor C. Umeh, OFR
Chairman, Senate Committee on National Identity and National Population
Member, Governing Council of NILDs

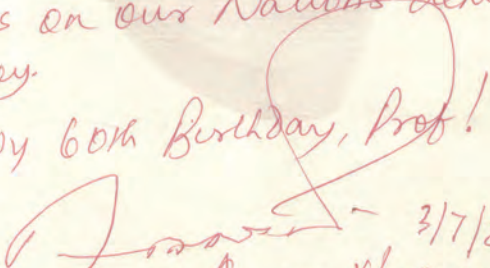
NOTE

Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman @ 60

I am delighted to join the family, friends & Associates of Prof. Abubakar Olanrewaju Ibrahim Sulaiman in Celebrating a remarkable milestone - his 60th birthday.

Prof. Sulaiman is an embodiment of excellence, integrity and patriotic service. His contributions in Strategic leadership particularly as the S/G of the NPLDS and as former Minister of National planning have left indelible marks on our Nations democratic journey.

Happy 60th Birthday, Prof!

 - 3/7/25
SENATOR ABDUL AHMED NINGI OON, CON
BAUCHI CENTRAL SENATORIAL DISTRICT

Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman @ 60



H.E. TOYIN OJORA SARAKI
H. H. THE PRINCESS ROYAL OF LORRAINE & HANNOVER
KNEIGHT BARONESS OF BELL LANEY
SIR SARAH OF KANAKA KINGDOM
GLOBAL AMBASSADOR, WHO FOUNDATION
FOUNDER & PRESIDENT, THE WELLBEING FOUNDATION AFRICA



THE WELLBEING
FOUNDATION AFRICA
Health and Wellbeing



H.E. Mrs Toyin Ojora Saraki - Tribute for Visionary Leadership: Lessons from Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman @ 60

It is a distinct honour to celebrate Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman as he marks the distinguished occasion of his 60th birthday. Throughout his remarkable career, Professor Sulaiman has exemplified the highest ideals of public service, principled leadership, intellectual rigour, and a commitment to democratic governance and national progress.

In our shared efforts to strengthen Nigeria's policy frameworks, particularly in maternal, newborn, and child health, I have had the privilege of witnessing firsthand his openness to collaboration and his capacity to engage with civil society, such as my Wellbeing Foundation Africa, with sincerity and purpose.

As Director-General of the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies, Professor Sulaiman has guided the institution with clarity of vision and purpose. Under his stewardship, NILDS has become a beacon of legislative excellence, empowering lawmakers and stakeholders alike to drive meaningful and sustained progress.

A hallmark of his leadership has been his consistent advocacy for gender equity. He has championed inclusive legislative practices and invested in strengthening the capacity of women to participate fully in political leadership. Through NILDS, he has prioritised programmes that amplify women's voices and enhance their active role in governance and policy reform.

Professor Sulaiman's ability to cultivate partnerships across sectors and ideologies reflects not only political acumen, but a profound dedication to democratic values, grounded in humility, grace, and a strong belief in Nigeria's equitable future. He leads with quiet strength and a steadfast moral compass, and his legacy is evident not only in the halls of policymaking, but in the minds and hearts of the many he has mentored, encouraged, and inspired.

As you celebrate your 60th birthday, may this new chapter bring you renewed peace, and fulfilment. May your vision continue to guide and inspire, and may your contributions continue to shape a more just, inclusive, and prosperous Nigeria.

Thank you for your friendship, your thoughtful partnership, and your service to our nation.

Sincerely,

H.E. Toyin Ojora Saraki

TOYIN SARAKI

*Her Excellency Toyin Saraki
Global Policy & Philanthropy*

NOTE

Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman @ 60

Happy Birthday to a Great Nigerian.

My dear Brother,
This is to wish you a most blessed
and Super Happy birthday. I join your
family and friends in thanking God for
your life. You have paid your dues
and served the country well. As an
academic, researcher, administrator,
political leader, philanthropist and
global scholar, you have left
clear landmarks of credibility,
integrity, purposeful leadership
and patriotism. On this 60th birthday
I wish you good health, peace of mind,
and more positive achievements well
into the future.
Happy birthday my dear Brother
and compatriot.

Julius O. Ihonubere
Prof Julius O. Ihonubere, OON, DSSRS
Leader, House of Representatives
May 20th, 2025.

NOTE

Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman @ 60

I am delighted to join friends, colleagues, and well-wishers in celebrating my brother, friend and neighbour, Professor Abubakar Olanrewaju Sulaiman on the occasion of his 60th birthday.

Living side by side has given me the privilege of knowing him beyond his remarkable public achievements. I have seen up close his humility, warmth and generosity – qualities that make him not only a respected leader, but also genuinely good neighbour and friend.

His career speaks volumes: from his academic journey at Ahmadu Bello University, the University of Ife and the University of Ife, to earning a Certificate in Public Leadership from Harvard. From his decades of service as a Professor nurturing the next generation, to his impactful leadership as Minister of National Planning, and now as the Director General of the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies – Professor Sulaiman has made his mark with integrity and dedication.

2

NOTE

Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman @ 60

At 60, he stands as a shining example of how to live a life of purpose, service, and friendship. I pray Almighty Allah (swt) grant him many more years of good health, fulfillment and success.

Happy Birthday my brother. Here's to more shared moments as friends and partners in nationbuilding.



SEN. ABUBAKAR KYARI CON
HON. MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND
FOOD SECURITY.
FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA.

NOTE

Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman @ 

How do you begin to write about this Patriot, an academic Colossus, a National Enigma? This difficult task is made easier for me by my training as an Administrative Officer (Former?) and a manager of men.

2. Professor Abubakar's and my path crossed in my days in the Civil Service and our relationship has blossomed over the years.
3. Happy Birthday to a Patriot who is very Passionate about National Unity, Happy Birthday to a very humble and epitome of simplicity, Happy Birthday to an Academic Per Excellence
4. Allah (SwT) will continue to bless you, and empower you for service to him Allah and humanity, Amen.

Senator Babangida Hussaini
Chairman Senate Committee on North West Devt



His Excellency, The Senator,

Otunba Engr. Gbenga Daniel, FNSE, FAEng, FNIMechE

Chairman, Senate Committee on Navy

Deputy Chairman, Senate Committee on National Identity and National Population

Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman: Celebrating a Luminous Beacon of Democratic Excellence.

I join to celebrate a towering figure whose unwavering dedication has illuminated the corridors of democratic governance and legislative excellence as he reaches the remarkable milestone of his 60th birthday; a testament to six decades of purposeful living and transformative leadership.

Like a master sculptor chiseling democracy from the marble of potential, Professor Sulaiman has wielded his pragmatic brilliance to shape the foundations of Nigeria's legislative landscape. His stewardship at NILDS has been nothing short of revolutionary, transforming theoretical frameworks into tangible democratic realities through his visionary approach and meticulous attention to detail.

No doubt, Professor Sulaiman's legacy transcends mere administrative excellence; he has crafted a symphony of democratic values that resonates through every policy framework and educational initiative. His approach marries scholarly depth with practical wisdom, creating solutions that are both intellectually rigorous and remarkably applicable.

As we honor this distinguished gentleman on his diamond anniversary of life, we celebrate not just his years, but the immeasurable impact of his contributions to Nigeria's democratic journey. Happy 60th birthday, Professor Sulaiman, may your light continue to guide our nation toward democratic prosperity. Amen.

His Excellency, The Senator

Otunba Engr. 'Gbenga Daniel, FNSE, FNAEng, FNIMechE




Committee Membership

Aviation * Works * Educational Basic and Secondary * Environment * Federal Character and Inter governmental Affairs
Banking, Insurance and Other Financial Institution * Oil and Gas Host Communities * Local and Foreign Debt
Tertiary Institutions and TETFUND * Police Affairs * Public Procurement * Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA | OGUN EAST SENATORIAL DISTRICT

Room 2.27 Senate Wing, National Assembly Complex, Three Arms Zone, P.M.B. 141 Abuja, Nigeria
Tel: 08037470001 08057470001 email: oed@otunbashedaniel.org oednassoffice@gmail.com

NOTE

Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman @ 

Dear Sulaiman,

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO MY COMPANION

When your member of staff approached me that they were planning a program for you for the purpose of your birthday and they wanted me to write briefly about you, I found the request awkward because it is quite impractical for me to write an all encompassing birthday tribute for you in a brief.

Sulaiman, you and I know that these period and moments we shared together are not expressible in writing. How do I express your beautiful spirit of brotherhood and friendship, both socially and deep, in words? How do I describe a brother who always want to see me realize my dream, achieve my aim and accomplish my goals? It is impossible for me because you are man no pen can summarise.

In view of circumstance, I shall only be taking the exceptional opportunity of your birthday to thank you for being a reliable friend. While I also thank Almighty Allah for sparing you till this moment, I pray and urge him to grant you good health and wealth to accomplish your dream goals in life, Ameen.

Happy Birthday My Prof.
Senator Buhari Abulfatai, PhD.

GOODWILL MESSAGE BY THE CLERK
TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
KAMORU OGUNLANA, ESQ

It is with great joy and profound respect that I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Professor Abubakar A Suleiman on the occasion of his 60th birthday.

Professor Suleiman is a distinguished academician, a visionary leader, and an outstanding public servant whose life and career have been defined by a deep commitment to national development and democratic excellence.

As Director-General of the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies, Abuja, his stewardship has brought innovation and renewed relevance to legislative research and capacity building in the Nigerian Legislative landscape.

I have the privilege of witnessing his tireless efforts to strengthen the interface between the Nigerian legislatures and the people, his intellect, humility, and statesmanship are reflected not only in his work but in the lives he continues to inspire - colleagues, mentees and the broader public alike.

Turning 60 is not just a celebration of years, but a celebration of impact. His legacy will endure, not just in policy papers and programmes, but in the hearts of all who have benefitted from his wisdom and leadership.

On behalf of the National Assembly staff and Management, I wish Professor Suleiman, many more years in good health, renewed strength, and greater accomplishments. Congratulations, Sir!



Sen. (Barr.) Natasha H. Akpoti-Uduaghan

VICE CHAIRMAN: COMMITTEE ON STEEL

KOGI CENTRAL SENATORIAL DISTRICT, SENATOR OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

August 23, 2025



The Director – General,
National Institute for Legislative & Democratic Studies,
No. 2, Suleiman O. Abubakar Avenue,
Piwoyi District,
Airport Road,
Abuja.

TRIBUTE TO PROF. ABUBAKAR O. SULEIMAN AT 60

It is an honour to celebrate your remarkable journey on the occasion of your 60th birthday. Over the years, I have been privileged to witness your commitment to moulding characters for patriotic citizenship and the advancement of good governance and democratic culture in Nigeria. Your passion for service and learning has inspired countless individuals, myself included, to pursue excellence and integrity in all endeavours.

Your humility, openness, and dedication to mentoring of young Nigerians have left a significant mark on everyone fortunate enough to walk through you. I recall, particularly, that you mentored through dialogue and welcomed diverse perspectives, making every interaction with you an opportunity to grow. Your vision and leadership at the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies have not only strengthened institutional capacity but also fostered greater understanding of the democratic process by parliamentarians and students.

In addition, through wisdom and tireless efforts, you have shaped policies and programs that continue to positively impact our society. Beyond your academic and professional achievements, your kindness and ability to connect with people on a personal level, remain truly inspiring. Thank you for your unwavering support, guidance, and friendship over the years.

I wish you many more years of good health, happiness, and continued success.

Yours sincerely,

Sen. (Barr.) Natasha H. Akpoti – Uduaghan

Suite 2.05, Second Floor, New Senate Building, National Assembly Complex, Three Arms Zone P.M.B 141, Garki, Abuja-FCT
Tel: +234 8136813935, e-mail: senator@natashaakpoti.com

MEMBER COMMITTEES ON: AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, APPROPRIATIONS, DEFENCE, EDUCATION (BASIC AND SECONDARY), FOREIGN AFFAIRS, GAS, MARINE TRANSPORT, NIGER DELTA DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (NDDC), PETROLEUM RESOURCES (UPSTREAM),



Capt. Idris I. Wada

(Former Governor, Kogi State)

📍 No. 24, Vaal Street,
Maitama - Abuja
☎ 08034080302
✉ idiwad@yahoo.com

30 August 2025

A TRIBUTE TO ~~Prof. Abubakar Sulaiman~~
ON HIS 60TH BIRTHDAY ANNIVERSARY:

I have known ~~Prof~~ Abubakar Sulaiman for over twelve years. He is a pleasant person, very straight forward and accomodating. He dedicates himself fully to duties and responsibilities assigned to him with passion and Commitment.

Prof Sulaiman is a highly intelligent intellectual who readily assists and is willing to guide others in difficulty for mutual success.

I heartily congratulate you on your 60th Birthday and wish you robust good health, happiness and lasting Prosperity. May the almighty Allah continue to shower you ~~and~~ your family with abundant blessings always. Congratulations and Happy Birthday.

Yours Sincerely,

Idris I. Wada

Capt Idris I. Wada.



DR. ABDULFATAH AHMED

Former Executive Governor of Kwara State
No. 8, Owens, Close Maitama, Abuja

Goodwill Message
on the 60th Birthday
of Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman.

It is with great joy and deep regret that I extend my heartfelt Congratulations to Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman on the occasion of his 60th birthday. This milestone is not only a celebration of age but a testament to a life rich in Purpose, Service and outstanding Contributions to our nation and humanity.

I have had the Privilege of knowing him close enough and I can testify to his unwavering Commitment to truth, justice and excellence, his humility, clarity of purpose and bold ideas remain a beacon



DR. ABDULFATAH AHMED

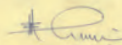
Former Executive Governor of Kwara State
No. 8, Owens, Close Maitama, Abuja

for many in public service and academia. As we celebrate this landmark birthday, I join family, friends, colleagues, and well-wishers in Saluting a man whose legacy is deeply etched in Scholarship and Service.

May the Years ahead bring him continued health, renewed strength and greater accomplishments. InshaAllah Birkudratullah.

Happy 60th Birthday, Professor
Abubakar O. Sulaiman.




Abdulfatah Ahmed

SEN. BIODUN OLUJIMI

3, Atakpame Street, Wuse 2, Abuja. Tel: 08033141536

TRIBUTE TO A REMARKABLE GENTLEMAN PROF ABUBAKAR O SULEIMAN DG NILDS @60

Dear Professor,

"Happy Birthday to an Erudite teacher! A towering figure of intellect, integrity, and inspiration, you embody the essence of excellence in scholarship and mentorship, your unwavering dedication to teaching, your piercing cerebral approach to knowledge, and your unassuming humility have earned you the admiration and affection of countless students and colleagues.

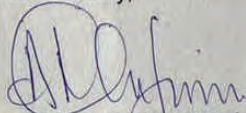
Like a beacon of wisdom, you have guided generations with your painstaking rigor, hard work, and visionary leadership. Your warm smile and perpetual happiness have lit up countless lives, making you not just a great mentor, but a beloved father figure to many.

As you celebrate this milestone, we celebrate not just six decades of life, but a profound legacy of impact, scholarship, and kindness. May this special day bring you joy, gratitude, and fulfilment. May your continued contributions shape minds, inspire hearts, and leave an indelible mark on the world.

Wishing you a happy, healthy, and blessed 60th birthday, Prof Suleiman!"
How does that resonate? Would you like me to tweak anything or expand on certain aspects?

Happy birthday sir!!

Yours Sincerely,



Sen. Biodun Olujimi (Mrs)

11/09/25

NOTE

Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman @60

OONI CELEBRATES A LUMINARY OF VISION AND SERVICE, PROFESSOR ABUBAKAR O. SULAIMAN @60

I write with immense joy and honour to celebrate an illustrious son of the Nigerian nation, Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman on the auspicious occasion of his 60th birthday.

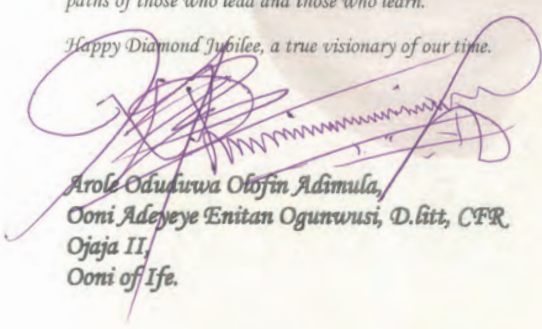
Over the years, Professor Sulaiman has stood as a beacon of intellectual excellence, administrative brilliance, and patriotic resolve. From the halls of academia to the policy chambers of governance, his journey has been a testimony to what true leadership, anchored in clarity of vision and unwavering integrity, looks like. In him, we see a man whose life reflects the principles of diligence, humility, and dedication to the common good.

His impactful tenure as Director General of the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS) has not only enriched the democratic landscape of our dear country but has also become a vital bridge between legislative knowledge and national development. Through research, mentorship, and advocacy, he has consistently elevated the quality of leadership within and beyond Nigeria's borders.

As the natural head of Yoruba race and custodian of our ancestral heritage, I recognize and commend his unique ability to foster unity across our multicultural fabric, building enduring legacies through scholarship and service.

Dear Prof. Sulaiman, as you celebrate this remarkable milestone of 60 hearty years, may your days ahead be even more impactful. May your vision continue to illuminate the paths of those who lead and those who learn.

Happy Diamond Jubilee, a true visionary of our time.



*Arole Oduduwa Olofin Adimula,
Ooni Adeyeye Enitan Ogunwusi, D.Litt, CFR,
Ojaja II,
Ooni of Ife.*

NOTE

Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman @ 60

My dear brother,

It's with joy and a grateful heart that I welcome you to the diamond jubilee club. I've known you since your days as the Minister of national planning and you have been a good man of integrity and honesty over the years. You have consistently been a source of inspiration to your younger brothers, and I am sure you will continue to radiate your folksy signature my brother, as you celebrate this remarkable — milestone. I can only wish for you the best thing that could happen to a good man like you. You are a competent administrator, a loyal brother, and the pride of the — Ilimin Emirate. I mean, beyond our bond as brother — and sister, you are a man whose humility I admire, and I am more than happy to share this moment with you. I wish you a happy birthday. you will have more birthdays in good health and wealth.

I pray that all your aspirations will come true. I am with you, you know it my dear Professor, the sky is the starting point. You are a true son of the Ilimin Emirate, and I believe that one day, you will make us even prouder than you have. Happy birthday, my dear Professor and brother!

Yours sincerely,
HAJIA BOLA SHAGAYA, MON



21:07:2025

GOODWILL MESSAGE TO PROF. ABUBAKAR O. SULEIMAN AT 60

As Professor Abubakar O. Suleiman, Director General of the National Institute of Democracy and Legislative Studies (NILDS), marks his 60th birthday, I am pleased to honour a versatile Academician, former Minister of the Federal Republic and a worthy Ambassador of Ilorin Emirate whose vision has profoundly shaped democratic discourse in Nigeria.

With a career defined by intellectual rigour and a commitment to public service, Professor Suleiman has been a driving force behind efforts to strengthen democratic institutions and legislative capacity in the country.

Under his leadership, NILDS has emerged as a pivotal institution, providing critical training and research support to lawmakers and policymakers and his strategic vision has positioned the institute at the forefront of promoting good governance, accountability, and legislative excellence beyond Nigeria.

His dedication to bridging the gap between theory and practice has empowered legislators to craft policies that reflect both national aspirations and global best practices.

One of Professor Suleiman's greatest strengths is his ability to inspire collaboration and foster partnerships.

that advance democratic ideals even across African Continent. His work has not only enhanced the capacity of legislative bodies but has also contributed to a more informed and engaged citizenry. Through his mentorship and guidance, he has nurtured a new generation of leaders equipped to navigate the complexities of governance.

As we celebrate this milestone, we acknowledge Professor Suleiman's unwavering commitment to the ideals of democracy, justice, and development.

We extend our warmest congratulations to him on this remarkable occasion, wishing him continued success, good health, and fulfilment in the years ahead.

His Royal Highness,
Alhaji (Dr) Ibrahim Sulu-Gambari CFR

Emir of Ilorin, Chairman Kwara State Traditional Rulers Council & Chancellor, Bayero University Kano.



NOTE

Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman @ 60

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO OUR AMIABLE DG!

I wish to join others in wishing our brother and DG, Prof. Abubakar O. Sulaiman a happy 60th Birthday, with best wishes and many happy returns. Birthday celebration offers a great opportunity to reflect on the past, acknowledge growth and progress, celebrate life, and, importantly, express gratitude to God Almighty, Allah (SWT), for His blessings and mercy. Today, we celebrate not just the passing of another year in your life, but also your leadership qualities, friendship, unwavering commitment to making NIKDS an excellent national research and training centre, and your humane disposition in your relationship with your staff and colleagues.

You have undoubtedly contributed immensely to the growth and development of NIKDS, in the process, building and entrenching a formidable, unenviable, legacy. For example, you have remarkably enhanced the quality of NIKDS academic programmes; increased its research quality and output; partnered with reputable universities to develop and expand capacity for post-graduate programmes; upscaled its competence to provide excellent legislative support to the National Assembly and state legislatures; and now, you have introduced Advanced Executive Education Programmes (AEEP), which can serve not just Nigeria but indeed Africa as a whole, with great potential for global competitiveness. These are noteworthy achievements. In Shaa Allah, more are to be accomplished in due course, during your tenure as DG of the Institute.

Once again, Happy Birthday! With best wishes for many more years of peace of mind, good health, sound mind, commitment, and many more opportunities to contribute positively to nation building and socioeconomic development in our Motherland, Nigeria.

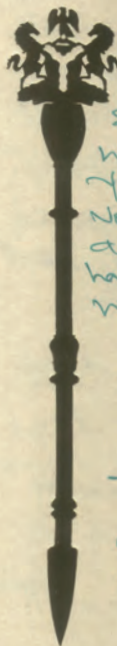
Prof. Attahiru M. Jega, OFR.



Hon. Kafilat A. Ogbara

HONOURABLE MEMBER
Kosofe Federal Constituency, Lagos State
Chairman, House Committee on
Women Affairs and Social Development

TRIBUTE TO A TRUE CHAMPION OF EQUALITY
@ 60



On this special day, I write to commend your steadfast advocacy for policies that empower women, youths and people living with disabilities. You strive to ensure their inclusion and that their voices are heard. Your unwavering dedication to advancing women's rights and democratic principles have endeared you to many. The impact of your work will be felt by generations to come.

I sincerely wish you good health, Soundmind, Peace of mind, endless Joy, longer life and Continuous Prosperity today and always.

Thank you for being a 'PARI' creating a 'PATH' to build a more Equitable world for all.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!!

Kafilat
Hon. Kafilat Ogbara

TEL: +234 802 315 3750
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY COMPLEX
New Building, National Assembly Complex,
Three Arms Zone, P.M.B. 141, Abuja - Nigeria.

BIRTHDAY WISHES TO PROFESSOR ABUBAKAR SULEMAN DCI, NILDS

It is with great admiration and deep respect that I extend my warmest birthday wishes to you, Professor Abubakar

O. Suliman on this special occasion of your birth.

May the new year of your life bring you renewed strength, unshakable peace and continued fulfillment in all your endeavours, both personal and professional.

Your contributions to the academic, legislative and democratic landscape of Nigeria have been both transformative and inspiring. As the Director General of the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS), your leadership has been a beacon of excellence, dedication and innovation. Under your leadership the institute has not only strengthened its capacity to support the National Assembly, but has also elevated the standards of legislative research, democratic training and policy development across the country.

Your unwavering commitment to nation-building, good governance and the rule of law stands as a model for all public servants and intellectuals. Your academic insights, policy initiatives and inclusive leadership style have left a lasting impact, inspiring a new generation of thinkers, lawmakers and legislative actors. It is truly commendable how you have combined scholarly rigour with pragmatic governance to uplift democratic institutions and foster a culture of accountability and development.

On this auspicious day I celebrate not only your birth, but your values - integrity, service, humility and excellence. May your days ahead be filled with continued success, robust health and the satisfaction that comes with knowing your efforts have helped shape a better Nigeria.

Happy birthday once again, Professor. May your legacy continue to thrive and may the years ahead offer you even greater opportunities to serve, lead and inspire. With highest regards and warm wishes,

Dr Wakil Mohammed, Ph.D, OON, FNIM, MCI Arb (UK)

25-08-25

NOTE

Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman @ 60

Dear Prof. Abubakar Sulaiman.

Happy, Happy 60th Birthday. 60 is a good age to be because it is the age when you have acquired wisdom but also young enough to use that wisdom. I hope you enjoy that age.

I would like to personally commend you for your passion and thank you for the tireless work and effort that you have been doing in the area of Women inclusion in governance and policy making. When the day comes when women finally achieve equity and inclusion in all walks of life, you would be counted as one of the champions and advocates on whose shoulders we stood to get there!

I wish you a very happy Celebration! Now and in the future, I wish you good health, long life, contentment, fulfillment and many, many more good years ahead.

Happy Birthday!!!

Senator H. Ireti Kingibe



**OFFICE OF THE HONOURABLE MINISTER
FEDERAL MINISTRY OF SPECIAL DUTIES AND INTER-GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

Federal Secretariat Complex Phase 1, Shehu Shagari Way, Abuja - Nigeria

29th May, 2025.

Prof. Abubakar O. Sulaiman,
Director General,
National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies,
National Assembly,
No 2, Abubakar O. Sulaiman Avenue, Cadastral Zone C00,
Piwoyi District, Off Umaru Musa Yaradua Expressway,
Airport Road, Abuja.

WARM BIRTHDAY WISHES TO AN ADMINISTRATIVE GEM

On behalf of my family, I join your numerous well wishers to express gratitude to Almighty God for your life and also to congratulate, rejoice, and send my warm wishes to you as you mark your changing jubilee.

As a seasoned administrator, I reflect on your outstanding accomplishments and celebrate your unwavering dedication and impactful leadership and hope that the years ahead will be as amazing with good health and true happiness.

Accept my best regards and happy cheers.


RT. HON. ZAPHANIAH BITRUS JISALO, MFR
HONOURABLE MINISTER 

NOTE

Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman @ 60

TRIBUTE TO PATRIOTISM AND DILIGENCE

Some years ago, I got to know Dr. Abubakar O. Sulaiman as a budding scholar. Before my very eyes, with hardwork, persistence and professional commitment, he attained full professorship in a discipline that prepared him for contribution to knowledge and society in spectacular ways.

I was not in any way surprised that Professor Abubakar Sulaiman's knowledge and training inspired his foray into active involvement in participatory democracy through which he has been able to make a reassuring mark that a great future lies ahead of Nigeria.

His meteoric rise in Nigeria's political space and the laudable outcome of his various appointments is attestation that whenever leadership recruitment is based on merit, efficiency, effectiveness and success would be the outcome.

Sixty hearty cheers to a diligent and conscientious compatriot. As Nigeria yearns for unity and development, through leaders that are fair, just and intentionally caring with liberating visions, may the calibre of "the birthday boy", Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman, multiply in our political space!

TUNDE ADENIRAN, Ph.D (Columbia) KJW, OFR, FCPA
Prof. Emeritus of International Relations & Strategic Studies/
Former Minister of Education and Former Ambassador to Germany.

NOTE

Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman @ 60

PROFESSOR ABUBAKAR O. SULAIMAN AT 60

It's with great joy and happiness that I send this my special birthday greetings and felicitations to Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman, former Honorable Minister of National Planning of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and present DG of NIKAS, my friend, brother and very close confidant, on the occasion of his 60th birthday celebration.

They say life begins at 50. At 60 years there fore, you are only 10 years old my dear brother and friend. In these ten years you've been able to create and carve a niche for yourself. You have grown to become a highly successful academic, a consummate administrator, a social critic, an astute motivational speaker par excellence, a grassroots politician, a compassionate philanthropist and a beacon of hope and inspiration to many Nigerians. Without else can I say than to wish you a happy birthday and many happy returns in good health and prosperity.

KABIRU TANIMU TURAKI, SAN

NOTE

Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman @60

Personal Tribute to Professor Abubakar Sulaiman @60

I am hugely delighted to join in the celebration of Professor Abubakar Olanrewaju Sulaiman on the happy occasion of his 60th birthday. This is not only a personal landmark but also a unique opportunity to reflect on a life commitment to scholarship, public service and national development.

There are a number of ways in which our paths have crossed meaningfully. We both began our early careers as Political Science lecturers; united in the belief that knowledge is a powerful tool for citizenship, leadership and good governance and thus must be transmitted through generations of students. Secondly, we both served as Ministers of the Federal Republic of Nigeria—he as Minister of National Planning and myself as Minister of External Affairs much earlier. Third, we both engaged in translating academic insights into policy actions. In his case, as Director-General of the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS), he continued to demonstrate sustained dedication to excellence in democratic consolidation and institution building. Third, and at personal levels, Professor Sulaiman is not only my in-law but as a younger colleague, we share a common commitment to principled public service. In this regard, his career is a testament to what is achievable when scholarship is guided by values and leadership is anchored on service.

May Allah grant him continued good health, wisdom and many more years of service to our nation.

Professor Ibrahim Agboola Gambari, CFR, OCORT
Former Minister of External Affairs & Chief of Staff to the President

NOTE

Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman @ 60

Professor A. O. Sulaiman: A Tribute

This is one tribute I am particularly glad to pen. Professor Sulaiman is among Nigerians I have most respect for. He is genuinely an accomplished academic and a consummate administrator.

I remember like it was yesterday when I sat with him just before he started his current assignment as D-G, NIDS. His humility and articulation of his vision struck me as particularly outstanding. My assessment of him has been right.

I pray that Allah (SWT) will bless his life and strengthen him to serve our country with health and commitment.

Dr. Hakeem Baba-Ahmed, OON

NOTE

Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman @ 60

60 Hearty Cheers to Prof. Abubakar O. Sulaiman

I have known Prof. Abubakar O. Sulaiman for an unbroken period of over three decades, which means that I have known him for more than fifty percent of his life so far. In these years, he has come across to me as a serious, focused, intellectually stimulating, an excellent academic, fantastic family man, a relevant community leader, and an astute administrator.

The above testimony is borne out by the successes that have attended all his endeavors, including his present position as the Director-General of the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies. It takes an excellent academic, intelligent and wise person to be able to navigate the sometime treacherous waters of politics and politicians.

Prof. Abubakar by his docility has been able to steer the ship of NILDs for more than six years. This speaks to lots of positive qualities about his person.

In a country where life expectancy is less than 50 years, to attain the diamond age like he has done, is nothing but special favour from Allah. I pray that as he grows older, he will be like the proverbial wine that becomes better by age.

Prof. Abubakar is a good example of what determination, hard work, focus, and deep faith in Allah could bring out of a person. I wish to join other well-wishers to pray for longer life, laced with the favours of Allah, on my younger friend and brother, as he marks this landmark age of three scores.

May you continue to attract the favours of Allah and man, the way honey attracts the swarm of ants.

Happy Birthday.

— — — — — Ali

Prof. Yusuf Ali, SAN FCI Arb

1st Kuliya Ngari of Ilorin Emirate.

NOTE

Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman @ 60

Congratulations and Happy 60th birthday to my dear brother and friend, Prof Abubakar O. Sulaiman. A visionary and pragmatic leader. An unapologetic gender advocate.

As you mark this diamond jubilee, I join your family, friends and well wishers in celebrating God's faithfulness to you! I wish you a more fruitful, impactful life ahead! Nigeria needs leaders like you.

I wish to also congratulate you for your hard work and the production of the book "Visionary Leadership: Lessons from Prof Abubakar O. Sulaiman at 60". This book will inspire all who aspire to be a leader in decision making in all spheres of life. Congratulations once more

Prof Patricia Mankolar
Acting Vice Chancellor, Yakubu Gowon University (Uni-Abuja)

NOTE

Professor Abdullahi G. Sulaiman of **PP**

Professor Abdullahi G. Sulaiman, whom we called "Abu Minant" or "Alhaji Abu", is a brother (in heart and political aspiration) related one way or another, a friend and a political associate. Relating with him since his school days when he was active as House Students Union to his entry into politics when he aspired to be a party candidate for local government election (in 1998), to later years when we were in the PPT together (he is now a member and on a Senatorial candidate aspiration) and later in 2019 a political foe when he was in PDP (as the 3rd for Gwagwada constituency) and now in APC as the Kwara Central Senatorial candidate. Later in 2019 we worked cooperatively and positively together when he was appointed Abu of the NHIA and I was the Senator representing him at the 9th NASS. In nature, four elements we have related closely we have enjoyed each other's brotherly relationship and mutual respect, respect, respect. In these years, I found Alhaji Abu to be intelligent, articulate, honest, courageous and a principled person. He believes in progressive politics that ensure the welfare of the people and development of the society. Abu has good Islamic knowledge, deep understanding of Hausa culture and practices and he combined the 'good one' with professional knowledge of politics and philosophy. These enabled him to discuss and analyse political, social and development issues from broad perspectives. Abu is a good orator and a good campaigner. Abu as a progressive politician has contributed significantly to our community and state through his participation in many developmental projects and his philanthropic programmes in education, health and socio-economic empowerment. I pray our work Alhaji Abu many more, healthy, peaceful

(2)

Successful and prosperous years ahead to enable him to continue to serve humanity.
 Congratulations, Alhaji Abu!

Uthman
 Senator Dr. Ibahim Yahaya Oloriegbe
 Senator representing Kwara Central - 2019-2023 (9th NASS)
 Chairman, Governing Council, National Health Insurance
 Authority (NHIA).
 12th August, 2025.

On this special occasion of the 60th birthday of Professor Abubakar Sulaiman, we find it most fitting to acknowledge and give thanks to Almighty Allah for His favour and blessings upon our family.

From the moment of his birth, our parents recognized that a blessed and golden child had been given to us. With care and guidance, the parents and elders nurtured him into a promising young man. Well-born and well-bred, nature and nurture combined to shape him into a person with a high sense of duty, responsibility, and purpose, an anointed child who grew to surpass ordinary expectations.

By nature, Abubakar is uniquely patient, gentle in manner and deeply respectful. In his journey of faith, he was taken on the holy pilgrimage to Mecca at the tender age of nine years, dedicating his promising life to the will, wisdom, and service of Almighty Allah.

Through dedication and discipline, he has distinguished himself in academics and public service rising to the rank of university professor, Director General, and Minister of the Federal Republic, all at a remarkably young age. We are immensely grateful to Allah for the honours and blessings that his efforts and achievements have brought, not only to our family but also to much wider circles. Our prayers remain for Allah's continued favour, guidance, and protection upon him and all members of our family.

Fondly called Alhaji Abu within the family, Professor Abubakar Sulaiman proudly upholds the family legacy of faith, honesty, kindness, excellence in service, and humility in character.

YOURS SINCERELY

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Alhaji Saka Abdulrahim', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Alhaji Saka Abdulrahim

Muhammad Dele Belgore SAN, C.Arb

Legal Practitioner, Mediator & Chartered Arbitrator

A Birthday Tribute to Professor Abubakar Olanrewaju Sulaiman

"Honourable Minister," as I affectionately call you, today we celebrate a remarkable milestone—your 60th birthday. In reflecting on your journey, I am struck, as ever, by the formidable blend of determination and unwavering focus that has defined your every step. It is only fitting, then, that we pause to honour the very qualities that have propelled you to such heights.

To anyone who has shared even a moment in your company, your steadfastness is unmistakable. When your sights are set, nothing sways you—not distractions, not adversity. You chart your course with clarity, always keeping the broader purpose in mind. Whether making weighty decisions in the corridors of power or simply being present for friends, your resoluteness lights the way for all around you.

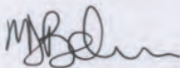
You have carried the title of Honourable Minister with grace and intent. In an arena where it is all too easy to lose focus, your commitment to the task at hand has been your guiding star. Goals were pursued with unshakeable resolve.

Reaching the age of sixty is more than a marker of years—it is a testament to a life lived with meaning. You are a scholar, an administrator, a leader—but above all, you are a person of steadfast purpose, guided unfailingly by your inner compass.

As you turn the page to this next chapter, may your energy and determination remain undiminished. May you continue to inspire and uplift, just as you always have.

Happy birthday.

Here's to new adventures, and to a life lived with conviction and joy.



NOTE

Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman @ 60

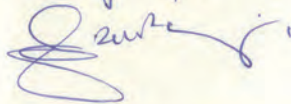
A DIAMOND @ 60

It is with immense honour and gratitude to the Almighty Allah that I write in celebration of my dear brother and friend, Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman as he attains the DIAMOND age of 60.

What we celebrate in Amama, as he is fondly called is not just the day or the age, ~~but~~ ^{the} immense value he has brought to his days in the service of humanity as a scholar, a public administrator, a politician, and as a brother, a friend, and a good human being. His appellation, Amama, which means trust, loyalty and dependability represents the values that he has exemplified beyond doubts.

May the Almighty Allah grant him many more years of good health and even greater accomplishments. Happy Birthday, brother.

Mallam Bolaji Abdullahi



NOTE

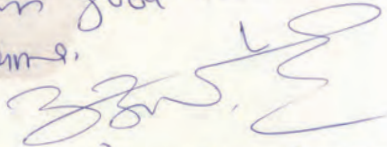
Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman @ 60

TRIBUTE TO PROF ABUBAKAR O. SULAIMAN:
AN ACADEMIC OF REPUTE AND ADMINISTRATOR PER EXCELLENCE

I have interacted very closely with Prof. Abubakar Olenrewaju Sulaiman from diverse perspectives, I find him a very reliable, responsible human being and quintessential person. As an academic, he is solid, resourceful and very deep.

I can also confirm that as an Administrator he is always willing to take on responsibility, always discharging his responsibilities with enthusiasm and never given to frivolities. As a human being, he is very honest, dependable, trustworthy and ever supportive of positive ideas.

I wish him a very happy birthday and many more in good health and Allah's Rakma.


Prof. Wahab O. Egewole, SAN
Vice Chancellor
University of Ilorin

PROFESSOR ABUBAKAR O. SULAIMAN
Former Minister
DG NILDS

I warmly felicitate with you on your 60th Birthday marking at least 40 years of fruitful service to Nigeria and the world. I equally congratulate you on steering the wheel of NILDS successful for the past six years. It is just like yesterday that I handed over the reign of NILDS after 15 Years of establishment and growth under my leadership. My worry in 2019 was with the continuation of the staple programs of NILDS. To my delight, you not only maintained those programs but expanded their scope. I was also delighted that you innovated new programs such as the Democracy Radio which today stands firm as a pillar in public enlightenment on the country's democratic processes and progress.

I also congratulate you for being able to move to the permanent site after a successful commissioning by President Buhari in 2023. I was getting worried that after the failed commissioning program in 2019 before the end of my tenure, the impressive permanent site of NILDS would continue to be unoccupied. However, you were able to pull through to occupy the permanent site despite huge obstacles.

I am happy that you have expanded the administrative structure of NILDS within a short period of time. NILDS today is more than twice the size I left it in terms of both staff and departments. History and posterity will be on your side for not only upholding what you took-over but for enlarging and further uplifting it. My delight is that someone like you took over what was there to build on it and propel it to a higher pinnacle. For that I immensely thank you.

I wish you more prosperous years of service to NILDS and many more years of service to the nation and humanity. Happy 60th Birthday and 60 happy cheers from me to you.



Prof. Ladi Hamalai (MFR)
Former DG NILDS
Jakadiya Mubi Emirate



CITERS TO A BESSOM FRIENDS AT 60
Hails you as I always, and still call you till today, your journey through life has been quite phenomenal. Right from 1979, the year you can take first classes at the Ballah Community Secondary School, and up till this very moment, our friendship continues to blossom in both joy and merriment.
Dearest friend, your life and journey on planet earth characterized by monumental life achievement is though unrepresentative, but not surprising.
It is because, you have always been a fortunate man of the people, who has always had leadership thrown on his lap at every juncture of your life - always.

In retrospect, the various interesting moments we had together in the Secondary School when you and I served as the President and Vice President respectively, for the Muslim Students Society continue to resurface. I recall how your leadership of the Society witnessed tremendous achievement, the high point of which was how you steered both the Principal, the teachers and even colleague students with the help of your presence of the late Tunku of Ilorin and second republic state leader, Dr. Olusegun Sariki, as a function of the Society.

Similar was how your activities earned you the same position of President of the same Muslim Society during your period of presidency at the Kwararua State Polytechnic.

Directors: Tajudeen A. Ibrahim, Mubarak Ibrahim, Lawal Ibrahim (All Nigerian)
Abuja: 9, Colorado Close, Minister's Hill Maidama, Abuja. / Branch: Suite C25 EFAB Shopping Mall, Area 11 Garki, Abuja.
Lagos: 8, Okorodudu Street, By Alake Market, Off Alimosho Avenue, Ikeja - Lagos.
Tel: 08057697216, 08035891585, 08034665332
Email: globallegend04@yahoo.com, globalid@yahoo.com, globalid@yahoo.co.uk



And the friend I commend you for ever overwhelmingly voted as the national President of Ilorin - Ilorin Students Union during your days at the Premier Alimu Bello University.

And your leadership ability of you at the moment, one can vividly recall your relentless services to people of different tribes and religions during your stint as a Sen, going beyond teachers and dedication to mentoring of students, carrying on academic researches and other administrative functions, for decades at the University for national unity, the University of Abuja.

Bessom friend, I see the need to be immensely grateful to the Almighty Allah for the divine favour of intellect life He has given and still making you to live even the years through giving you opportunities to serve your President first, as a member of the Federal Executive Council, when you became a Cabinet Minister for Budget and National Planning, under Dr. Goodluck Johnson President and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria. It is a personal pride for me and many others that, during the period you served your nation as a degged public administrator, Sen, and in public session, Senator, smiled on you again to make you serve as a two-term Director General, National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NIDS).
most gratifying however, is the much towards you give to bring up these positions of Authority thus leading to unprecedented achievements in the annals of all these Governmental Institutions.

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Email: globallegend04@yahoo.com, globalid@yahoo.com, globalid@yahoo.co.uk



My hope and fervent prayer for you is that you continue to live your impactful life, the Almighty Allah never cease to raise you to greater lofty heights so that you continue to benefit the society, and indeed, humanity in general.

Therefore, on behalf of myself and my family, and the team of Global Legend Ltd, I say Congratulations to you and wish you a Happy 60th birthday celebration.

Signed:

Tajudeen

Atiku Dantim Tajudeen
Chairman / CEO
Global Legend Nigeria Limited.

Directors: Tajudeen A. Ibrahim, Mubarak Ibrahim, Lawal Ibrahim (All Nigerian)
Abuja: 9, Colorado Close, Minister's Hill Maidama, Abuja. / Branch: Suite C25 EFAB Shopping Mall, Area 11 Garki, Abuja.
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Email: globallegend04@yahoo.com, globalid@yahoo.com, globalid@yahoo.co.uk

Goodwill Message to my Bussom friend

It is my honor to celebrate a truly remarkable friend on this Milestone 60th birthday.

Today, we are not just marking the passing of time, but celebrating a life filled with grace, wisdom, and unwavering friendship.

To my good friend, you have been a source of inspiration, strength, and kindness - not just to me, but to everyone lucky enough to know you.

At 60, you continue to shine with youthful spirit and a heart full of love. May this new chapter bring you even greater peace, health and joy.

Happy 60th birthday, and cheers to many more years of fulfilment and blessings.

Congratulations my Confidant.

ABDULLAH BOLAKALE SHIRU (ABS)

A.E.

Amina Salihu, PhD, ChMC

Mobile: +234 803 305 6245

Twitter: @amina_salihu

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/amina-salihu-11304641/>

asalihu@macfound.org

aminasalihu@gmail.com; flo@thesppg.org

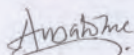
Prof. Abubakar Olanrewaju Sulaiman – Our Eji Owuro

Eji owuro – the morning dew, is an expression for the beauty of the morning in Yoruba. It speaks of an early, untainted beginning, a foundation sturdy, and yet amenable. Professor Abubakar Sulaiman is our *aji owuro*—a pathfinder of our becoming. I first met him at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, as President of the Ilorin Students' Union (ISU) in 1988/89, where I met other indigenes, including 'Ilorin abroad' like myself – people whose parentage was Ilorin but who were raised outside its geographic and cultural milieu. His cohort taught me the revered place of the Holy Quran in Ilorin culture, encouraging me to memorise protective verses. In 2010, Prof. Sulaiman encouraged me to start my PhD at the University of Abuja, where he was a lecturer.

Fast forward to 2015, as Minister for Budget and Economic Planning, he invited my team to review Nigeria's Official Development Assistance Policy. The same year, I was privileged to complete my PhD, examining a gender framework for Nigeria's legislature, which was subsequently adopted as the Gender policy for the National Assembly of Nigeria (NASS) by Director General Ladi Hamalai of the National Institute for Legislative Studies (NILS). Professor Sulaiman, now DG NILDS, was ready to build on his predecessor's work. He approved a MacArthur Foundation-NILDS collaboration to review the 10-year-old NASS gender policy. Prof empowered his head of gender to lead, convened high-level panels of legislators and other stakeholders to discuss the revised policy, where he also participated, setting the stage for the proper implementation of the revised Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) policy.

Prof is one of the most approachable and gender-responsive professionals I know. He consistently brings clarity, humility, fairness, and love to the table, keeping close to his roots and friends from his early days.

Happy 60th Birthday, Sir. Allah ya ja kwana, Igba odun odunkan ni o!



Amina Salihu

Deputy Director, Africa Office, MacArthur Foundation

Pioneer Dean, School of Politics, Policy and Governance www.thesppg.org

Kuru, 2025

TRIBUTE TO PROFESSOR ABUBAKAR SULAIMAN

By

Mr. Mohammed Bello Adoke, CFR, SAN, FCI.Arb

I have the distinct pleasure of writing this tribute in honour of Professor Abubakar Sulaiman and in support of his commemorative book titled "Visionary Leadership: Lessons from Professor Abubakar O. Sulaiman @ 60". I regard him as a friend, a patriot and visionary leader who has dedicated himself to the service of his country and humanity. My association with 'Prof' (as I fondly call him) dates back to his appointment as Honourable Minister for National Planning in the administration of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, GCFR. Many of his cabinet colleagues, including me, held him in awe because of the remarkable manner he was able to grasp the rudiments of his office within a relatively short period of time and the efficiency and effectiveness he brought to bear on the work of the National Planning Commission.

His relationship with colleagues was cordial and respectful. He was approachable and exhibited candour, humility and comportsment in the discharge of his responsibilities. These were rare leadership qualities for a man who had attained the pinnacle of his academic career. I was therefore not surprised when the nation again shortly after leaving office as Minister, rewarded his hard work with his appointment as Director General of the National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies (NILDS). Prof again brought his intellectual and administrative acumen to bear on the work of NILDS, raising its profile to that of a robust national institution of repute. NILDS, under his leadership, has continued to strategically shape legislation and the consolidation of democratic norms needed to deepen Nigeria's democracy.

On a personal level, Prof has remained a friend and gentleman in and out of office. He visited me while I was in exile in Ghana to enquire about my welfare and prayed for the quick resolution of the issues that sent me to exile. As he celebrates this remarkable milestone in his life, I join millions of his well-wishers in praying to the Almighty Allah to continue to shower him with wisdom and the good health required to continue in the service of his country and humanity.

