



**A special report on
NIGERIA**

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Transcription of the interview with
Hon. Mr. Olasupo Shasore, SAN
Honourable Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Lagos
State

Lagos State

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***PANORAMA REPORTS (PR):** Governor Babatunde Fashola, SAN is the first member of the Inner Bar to become a Governor in the country. It stands to reason that his administration has recorded noteworthy steps in the justice administration sector. How are you tackling the issue of law and order to ensure Lagos maintains international status as a hub in Africa? What is your ministry's philosophy?*

Mr. Olasupo Shasore (OS) Our ministry has both a supporting and leading role to play with regards to the initiatives undertaken by Governor Fashola. With regards to improving Lagos' investment grades and bringing it up to international standards, it has become imperative to strengthen public confidence in the institutions that maintain law and order. We have a strong philosophy behind this which is essential and we can see the improvement across Lagos. Public disorder is the environment in which serious crimes can take place. This is not to say however that we consider ourselves a crime destination. We have made a considerable amount of progress. Quality of life is improving, opportunities are being realized and Lagosians deserve to have great expectations.

***(PR)** How are you installing confidence in the police and institutions that deal with law and order and making people aware of the reforms being implemented?*

(OS) The streets are the battle ground for disorder and essential to improving confidence in whether Lagos is effectively dealing with law and order. In the last administration, Lagos State Traffic Management Authority was created to make the streets of Lagos a safer place. We can see changes now. People are respecting traffic regulations and property regulations for example. We have gone a long way. Another area critical to law and order and improving people's confidence is street lighting which has been given a great deal of attention in this administration.

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(PR): Lagos has a population of around 20 million people and is witnessing increased urban migration to Lagos. What challenges does this pose with regards to law and order?

(OS): Due to the opportunities in Lagos state, urban migration to Lagos is an area that represents a great challenge for us. The path is set however with our strategic law and order policy. We are working closely with other ministries with regards to tackling the problems that intensive urban migration poses. Over the next six weeks we are intensifying our media campaign. We are working with civil society groups and leading community and political figures to educate people and tackle the causes of disorder. Under the new administration, our relationship with the Federal government is much improved. We have a program for the re-development of the mega city area. Lagos is a fast growing mega city. The challenges mega cities face are to do with waste management, accommodation and transport. Lagos represents more than 60% of the business opportunities in Nigeria. What is crucial is ensuring that Lagos is the face of Nigeria. It's common knowledge that a lot of the states observe and follow what we do. The challenges first show up in Lagos and we set the pace for Nigeria.

(PR) Security in terms of financial and intellectual property rights is a key issue that would interest the readers of the Wall Street Journal. How sure can investors be that the money they invest in Nigeria will be invested safely and securely?

(OS): The security of contracts and the enforcement of it are essential for any city that aspires to enhance its international position. We know that any international businessman needs to know before they invest in Lagos that the contract and obligation will be respected and we take this very seriously. We have tailored the new arbitration law to match a number of international models. In fact we are making Lagos a hub for arbitration law in the region by building an international arbitration centre in Lagos. The

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plan is to make Lagos an international hub of arbitration in the sub-region by providing a service for the West African sub-region. All the main financial centres, London, New York, Paris, Singapore offer this service. They are known international arbitration centres as well as offering financial opportunities for business people. We are doing the same for Lagos. We believe this will dramatically improve Lagos' image and position not only in Lagos, but in the region and also internationally. As a centre for legal disputes across the region, this will further enhance investor confidence with regard to the effectiveness of the system in dealing with legal disputes. We have already started work on the centre located in the Lekki sub-region of Lagos. There will be multiple hearing rooms and something to emphasize that we have the personnel to fulfil this service. Lagos houses the largest concentration of qualified international arbitration lawyers in Africa. In addition, with regards to foreign investment, we have to ensure that property rights are respected. We also work very closely with customs and excise with regards to issues surrounding piracy and intellectual property. Being a port city we have this responsibility.

(PR): A legal practitioner you are a barrister, SAN you obtained your Bachelor of LAWS from the University of Ife in 1986. You also acquired a Master of Laws degree from the University of Lagos in 1990. You have been in active practice for over two decades and were conferred with the Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) in 2006. You are now dedicated to public service as Attorney General and Commissioner for Justice, Lagos State.

What has given you the greatest sense of achievement over your career?

(OS): I think one moment that has stood out for me was being invited to serve the state. I had always wanted to work in public administration. It was also significant being invited by the governor because I know he is passionate about what he does and I know

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the vision he has for Lagos. My role as Commissioner for Justice has quite a silent role in the administration. It is quite an unglamorous task, but it is crucial to ensure positive growth in Lagos and vital to whether Nigeria becomes one of the top twenty economies as outlined by Vision 2020. I am looking forward to seeing the results of all the hard work currently being undertaken by this administration.

(PR) What would be your final message to the readers of the Wall Street Journal?

(OS) I would ask the readers to be open minded and read between the lines. International investors are welcome to Lagos. Lagos is a place of great opportunity and it is the pulse of Nigeria. As is often said, if you come to Nigeria once, you will come back.

(PR): Mr. Shasore, thank you very much.

End of Interview

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