

Frequently Asked Questions

Introduction

In its over 20 years of operations, the Sahara Group has witnessed an unfolding expansion story that transcends global markets and borders. The Group continues to play a leading role in the Energy Value chain (Power, Oil & Gas) and infrastructure development sectors, bringing energy to life in the process.

Sahara has a pedigree of providing platforms for economic growth in markets where it operates, always seeking to make a difference through its sustainable approach to corporate responsibility.

Over the last decade, Sahara has been involved in initiatives, alliances and activities aimed at developing and strengthening its corporate governance and compliance systems. The thrust of this pursuit of best practice is to ensure Sahara operates a sustainable enterprise that conducts its businesses transparently and efficiently to the benefit of all stakeholders.

Sahara also believes that by applying itself to the highest standards of good governance, it will serve as a model for other businesses to enhance the quest for corporate responsibility and citizenship in Africa and the world. Sahara's membership of the World Economic Forum's Partnering Against Corruption Initiatives (PACI) signposts our firm resolve to this cause.

Pursuant to operating a transparent enterprise, we have provided answers to Frequently Asked Questions about Sahara below. Relevant documents have been attached to some answers where necessary. Sahara restates its commitment to upholding globally acclaimed best practice in all its operations, processes and activities.

Frequently Asked Questions

Below are recurring questions (some arising from media reports) which Sahara Group has received from business partners, potential business partners, independent analysts and researchers. Answers have been provided to the questions. Should there be other questions; Sahara Group will update the FAQ document accordingly in line with PACI provisions.

Group Alleges High Level Corruption in Sahara Group, Aso Rock, NNPC” and “Sahara Group instigates unlawful arrest of Deji Adeyanju”

We are aware of certain defamatory publications titled “Group Alleges High Level Corruption in Sahara Group, Aso Rock, NNPC” and “Sahara Group instigates unlawful arrest of Deji Adeyanju” originally published on or about 3rd May, 2017 and 18th May, 2017 (respectively).

In response to those publications, we state the following:

- I. The publications were masterminded by ‘Concerned Nigerians’, which unfortunately, is a shadowy organisation in Nigeria that is notorious for peddling falsehood and using smear campaigns to discredit and inflict reputational damage on individuals/corporates for political gain. Concerned Nigerians is known for blackmail activities which follow similar patterns of peddling trumped up allegations to make their targets comply.
- II. The organization made these baseless and utterly false allegations against Sahara Group in the publications and its so-called letter, citing a spurious “official document” as the source of its allegations. Concerned Nigerians, under the leadership of its promoter, one Mr. Deji Adeyanju, equally sponsored the publication of stories in obviously compromised online news sites, alleging persecution – apparently in a bid to whip up public sentiments against Sahara Group
- III. After the publication of these falsehoods, Sahara reported the malicious falsehoods to the Nigerian Police Force for investigation. Following the investigation and Mr. Adeyanju’s failure to produce any evidence to substantiate the allegations when invited to do so, Mr. Adeyanju acknowledged that he had been misinformed by his sources and that his allegations against Sahara were untrue and unfounded.
- IV. By a letter dated 31st May, 2017, Deji Adeyanju on behalf Concerned Nigeria Citizens retracted these false allegations and apologized to Sahara Group.
- V. In keeping with our commitment to transparency and business integrity, Sahara Group continues to address issues regarding the Group and documents its position in a ‘Frequently Asked Questions’ document under the Corporate Governance section of our website: www.sahara-group.com.

Story by ZAMBIAWATCHDOG on “Sahara Energy appoints Richard Sakala as spin doc, host Zambian journalists”

Question

Our attention has been drawn to a choreographed smear campaign being sponsored by a supposed credible news online portal; The Zambia Watchdog which remains faceless.

Their most recent article is a totally baseless and false story tagged: “Sahara Energy appoints Richard Sakala as spin doc, hosts Zambian journalists” – which was published on the site on July 12, 2017 (<https://www.zambiawatchdog.com/sahara-energy-appoints-richard-sakala-as-spin-doc-hosts-zambian-journalists/>)

Answer

We hereby state the following for the records;

We state categorically that; The Sahara Group has at no time appointed Richard Sakala or any other individual/organization in Zambia or in any other jurisdictions to execute any media projects or other media relations activities on its behalf.

The claim in the article that \$2 million was paid for the alleged engagement is utterly false, baseless and at variance with Sahara’s unwavering commitment to business integrity.

Sahara Group has a robust corporate communications department that interacts with its various stakeholders as is standard practice for leading conglomerates across the globe.

As part of our commitment to transparency, Sahara Group routinely invites and also takes up requests from reporters from the print, electronic and digital media to tour its facilities and operations across the globe. These tours provide an opportunity for the media to have first-hand experience of the Sahara Brand and to obtain first-hand information on the Group’s activities. This is a standard media relations practice across the globe, especially for leading conglomerates like Sahara whose operations cover diverse cultures and markets.

Sahara has in the past had interactions with news organizations from countries in which we operate, including but not limited to: Nigeria, Ghana, Cote D’Ivoire, Zambia, Cameroon, United States of America, Tanzania, South Africa, South Korea and the United Kingdom.

Some of these media organizations have included, but not limited to: The Economist, Bloomberg, Reuters, Financial Times, Cable Network News (CNN), the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Forbes Africa, CNBC Africa, Joy FM Ghana, Daily Graphic Ghana, The Guardian Tanzania, Business Times Zambia, Channels TV, Nigerian Television Authority, TVC Africa, Guardian, ThisDay, Punch and News Agency of Nigeria, among other media organizations in our locations.

Sahara has severally reiterated its commitment to zero tolerance for political donations – a position that is backed by a policy that guides every member of staff.

Please click [here](#) to see our previous response on the issue

It is important to add that in recognition of Sahara's commitment to spearheading good governance towards rebuilding trust and integrity in business in Africa, one of its Directors, Mr. Tonye Cole recently became a member of the World Economic Forum's "Future of Trust and Integrity Project". Sahara is also a member of the WEF's Partnership Against Corruption Initiative (PACI).

As a leading African energy and infrastructure conglomerate, we remain committed to collaborating with stakeholders across the globe in the quest for promoting business integrity, transparency and sustainable development.

[Story by POINTBLANKNEWS.COM on "\\$50 Billion Oil Fraud" - Update](#)

Question

The story published on the Pointblanknews.com website on October 2, 2015 linked Sahara to a purported oil fraud in Nigeria. It was titled: "\$50Billion Oil Fraud: Diezani, Aluko, Aiteo, Sahara Energy, Omokore, Wabatsoma for Trial".

Answer

Sahara is utterly appalled by the untruth portrayed by the publication and has since clarified the fictitious and baseless allegations in the story – for the benefit of our stakeholders across the world and the general public.

In addition to our press statement and a rejoinder sent to Pointblanknews.com, Sahara has gone ahead to initiate a writ of summons against the principals of Pointblank news. The matter is currently in the Lagos State High Court and the trial will commence soon.

Please click on the **[False Story by Pointblank news, Pointblank rejoinder and Pointblank court paper](#)** links to access the details

[reportsafrique.com publication – document indicts rotimi amaechi over n96 billion corruption document](#)

Question

Our attention has been drawn to the online reportsafrique.com publication with respect to the Rivers State Government judicial enquiry white paper on the probe of the former Rivers State Governor – **"documents indicts rotimi amaechi over n96billion corruption document"**

Answer

We would like to state for the record that we have carried out a comprehensive reconciliation exercise with the Rivers State Government (RSG) and that the RSG are satisfied that they have received all

payments with respect to the purchase of a stake in the First Independent Power Limited power plant in Rivers State.

Please click on the [Rivers State Government](#) link to access the details

Allegations surrounding LNG project in Ghana

Question

Our attention has been drawn to recent articles circulating in the print media, on the internet and social media implying that Sahara Energy made prohibited payments to Government officials in order for a project which West African Gas Limited entered into with the Ministry of Power be approved by Parliament;

and

(ii) That West African Gas Limited is filing claims to recover charter costs which were incurred before it had concluded the project contract.

Answer

We state for the record the following:

In February 2015, West African Gas Limited (WAGL) on the invitation of the Ministry of Power entered into negotiations for the supply of LNG to Ghana to power several of its thermal power plants under its emergency power intervention program. The negotiations culminated with a Gas Supply Agreement being executed in October 2015 with the Government of Ghana acting through the Ministry of Power. The project consisted of, supply of a Floating Storage Regasification Unit (FSRU), dredging of the breakwater at the Tema Port, other port upgrades and the laying of a 8km Gas pipeline.

The project was subsequently sent to the Ghanaian parliament in March 2016 for ratification where it was debated by the Energy and Mines Committee of Parliament and it received the final approval of Parliament on the 20th of October, 2016.

We refute absolutely and categorically state that at no time did Sahara Energy, West African Gas Limited or any of its Affiliates or Agents offer any inducement of any kind to any Government officials in Ghana to facilitate approval of the project.

We are unable to comment on allegations in the online publication that there are/were other competing projects for the supply of Gas and/or Power that would offer cost savings to the Ghanaian Government as we are not privy to any such proposals, discussions, their terms or circumstances nor can we confirm their existence.

We also refute absolutely and categorically any allegations that we supplied a FSRU to the project before having a valid contract for the project. WAGL signed a Gas supply agreement with the Ministry of Power for the project on the 8th of October 2015. The FSRU was supplied in line with the terms of the GSA on 30th May, 2016.

WAGL has not commenced any debt recovery process against the Government of Ghana via the Ministry of Power.

Donations

Question

Our attention has been drawn to online media reports sourced from a Press Statement credited to the Ekiti State Governor, His Excellency, Mr. Ayodele Fayose.

We are particularly disturbed by a portion of the statement that made a misleading and incorrect link between Sahara Energy and election donations: "Most importantly, Nigerians are interested in the \$60 million allegedly donated to the APC campaign by Sahara Energy, on which EFCC has been forced to suspend investigation."

Answer

Sahara is guided by a robust and well-documented donations policy that clearly states that: ***"THE COMPANY DOES NOT MAKE POLITICAL DONATIONS; NEITHER DOES IT SPONSOR POLITICAL EVENTS ON BEHALF OF ANY POLITICAL ASSOCIATION."***

Please click on the [Sahara Group not involved in political donations](#) link to access the details

Nigerian firm suspended at home for profiteering

Question

Our attention was brought to an online publication by the Guardian newspaper in Tanzania alleging that Sahara had been suspended in Nigeria for "profiteering" and faced the possibility of sanctions by Tanzania's Petroleum Importation Coordinator (PIC) for the supply of substandard gasoline under the bulk procurement system.

Answer

The misleading and false profiteering allegation was sourced from media reports in Nigeria. Please see explanation below (Sahara faults DPR suspension order).

On January 1, 2016, Sahara received a letter from the Petroleum Bulk Procurement Agency of Tanzania informing it of the non-conformity to the Tanzanian standard of the MOGAS with delivery laycan of 23 – 25 December, 2015. It has been ascertained that the cargo in question had been confirmed by a reliable Third Party supplier and inspection agents to be in compliance with the standards in Tanzania.

Sahara remains a leading Oil Marketing Company in Tanzania and has participated in subsequent tenders after the replacement of the cargo.

Please click on the [Tanzania MOGAS Supply](#) link to access the details

OPA explanation and update

Question

Issues arising from the Crude Oil Offshore Processing Agreement (OPA) and the National Resource Governance Institute (NRGI) report on OPAs in Nigeria.

Answer

In May 2015, Sahara issued a statement explaining the operations of the Crude Oil Offshore Processing Agreement (OPA). Subsequently in August 2015, the NRGI issued a report titled "Inside NNPC Oil Sales: A case for reform in Nigeria".

Sahara has consistently addressed all the OPA issues transparently and maintains that OPA's are well established mechanisms in the industry globally for the supply of a range of petroleum products and Sahara participated in one such process that was designed, superintended, managed and monitored by NNPC/PPMC.

Please click on the [OPA and OPA Update](#) links to access the details

Suspension of your depot facility at Lagos for selling PMS above Government regulated price

Question

On December 9, 2015, the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) issued a letter to Sahara Energy Resource Limited (SERL) informing the company that they had been selling PMS above the stipulated government approved price.

Answer

Sahara's response to the letter on December 9, 2015, clearly showed that the company could possibly not have been selling PMS above the government approved price as it had zero stock in its storage facilities during the period in question. Sahara followed up its letter to the DPR with a press release faulting the DPR's allegation. This was widely circulated. The purported suspension was never enforced as Sahara was cleared by the DPR.

Please click on the [Sahara faults DPR suspension order](#) link to access the details

Story by POINTBLANKNEWS.COM on "\$50 Billion Oil Fraud"

Question

The story published on the Pointbanknews.com website on October 2, 2015 linked Sahara to a purported oil fraud in Nigeria. It was titled: “\$50Billion Oil Fraud: Diezani, Aluko, Aiteo, Sahara Energy, Omokore, Wagbatsoma for Trial”.

Answer

Sahara is utterly appalled by the untruth portrayed by the publication and has since clarified the fictitious and baseless allegations in the story – for the benefit of our stakeholders across the world and the general public.

Please click on the [False Story by Pointblank news](#) link to access the details

SAHARA Group’s position on ATK sales

Question

Our attention has been drawn to articles circulating in the print media, on the internet and on social media implying that Sahara Group may be involved in the sales of sub-standard fuel and insinuating that one of our companies, So Aviation Fuel Limited had a part to play in PAST AND RECENT AIR ACCIDENTS IN THE COUNTRY.

Answer

The allegations and insinuations are too grave in nature to go unchallenged. Therefore as responsible citizens and stakeholders we have set out the fact to the public and our customers in our press release statement of September 2015 addressing all the issues.

Please click on the [Sahara’s position on ATK sales](#) link to access the details

SO Aviation statement on the issue of Super Absorbent Polymer (SAP) Deposits

Question

The issue relating to the presence of Super Absorbent Polymer (SAP) contaminants introduced during fuel loading into planes.

Answer

Our attention has been brought to a notice issued by the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority on Super Absorbent Polymer contaminants in Jet fuel that may have been introduced during fuel uploads into planes in Lagos.

In line with our commitment to transparency, we have issued a statement which provides clarification on our quality, health, safety and environmental management in our handling operations of Jet A1 fuel for upload into planes.

Please click on the [Aviation Operations](#) link to access the details

["Stolen Assets Recovery: Buhari Demands Fuel Imports from Oil Marketers Implicated In Fraud"](#)

Question

The publication of an article on Sahara Reporters website on June 10, 2015 with the headline **"Stolen Assets Recovery: Buhari Demands Fuel Imports From Oil Marketers Implicated In Fraud"**.

Answer

In line with the spirit of "right to reply" that guides sound journalism, Sahara Group has responded to the allegations made in the article in their reply statement of June 12, 2015 as below;

Dear Sir,

Our attention has been drawn to the article published on Sahara Reporters website on June 10, 2015 with the headline: **"Stolen Assets Recovery: Buhari Demands Fuel Imports From Oil Marketers Implicated In Fraud"**.

Making reference to the unfolding issues surrounding the Offshore Processing Agreement (OPA), the article stated that:

"Among the companies implicated in her "petition," Transfigura was reportedly unable to account for \$80 million, Televeras \$111million, while Aiteo apparently gulped down \$150 million. Other oil firms named in the defrauding of the Nigerian people are Ontario, which failed to account for \$135 million, and Sahara Energy, accused of skipping the payment of \$120 million to the government. Our EFCC source revealed that two companies, Transfigura and Sahara Energy, had made some gesture towards paying back some missing funds.

However, a source at the Presidency told our correspondent that "so far the reconciliation has involved just paperwork and has not scratched the heart of the scam."

We hereby exercise our right of reply to the above referred article as follows:

We would like to state that the reference to Sahara Energy "skipping the payment of \$120 million to the government" is not the true position and that the information provided by your source at the EFCC is grossly misleading. The allegation is at variance with the true position of the recently concluded OPA contract reconciliation. It is imperative for the facts of the matter

to be brought to light to address the concerns of our local, regional and international partners/stakeholders.

For the record, Sahara Energy, as we have reiterated in other media, would like to state that:

- **We made submissions to the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) which showed that the Society Ivoirienne de Raffinage, Abidjan (SIR)/Sahara OPA contract has been fully reconciled and indicates a zero debt position to NNPC/PPMC in crude, cash or products.**
- **SIR and Sahara are both African companies that have continued to prove that business can be done efficiently, diligently, and transparently whilst adhering to best practice and good corporate governance.**
- **The successful implementation and reconciliation of the OPA contract attests to the professionalism of the SIR/Sahara partnership and the OPA has been widely commended as a model that saved Nigeria from a protracted fuel crisis during the contract period.**
- **We reiterate that there has never ever been a default on our part throughout the duration of the contract in line with our track record of excellence and commitment to total quality assurance.**

It is our belief that our rejoinder will be published in your respected medium in line with the spirit of "right of reply" that guides sound journalism - which your organization is known to uphold.

Please accept the assurances of our highest regards.

OPA Update and Unfolding Industry events

Question

This Day Newspaper publication of June 7, 2015 with the headline: – "Oil Traders, NNPC officials Interrogated, Watch Listed in Major Investigation."

Answer

Following the above publication in the This Day newspapers of June 7, 2015 and our earlier explanation of the OPA operations ([OPA link](#)) published on our website on May 14, 2015, we hereby provide an update on the OPA and other unfolding events in the oil and gas sector.

For the records, we have provided additional clarification in our Press Statement published on page XI in the June 9, 2015 edition of This Day Newspaper in Nigeria

Please click on the [OPA Update](#) link to access the details.

Media Reports on perceived persecution of Oil & Gas Operators

Question

There have been media reports suggesting that some of the operators in the Oil & Gas sector are being investigated by State Security Services (SSS) in Nigeria

Answer

Recently there have been speculations in the media alleging travel watch listing and investigation of certain companies within the Oil and Gas sector in Nigeria.

These speculations have been brought to our attention.

Our review of one of the articles showed one of our Directors as being placed on a watch list by the Director of State Services (DSS).

For the record, we state that the mention of Sahara Energy and its Director in the article is not just an affront on our Director and the Sahara Group; it is at variance with our track record of best practice and professional excellence in the sector.

We hereby provide our comment on the issue.

Please click on the [Persecution of Oil & Gas Operators](#) link to access the details.

The Crude Oil Offshore Processing Agreement (OPA)

Question

The operations of the Crude Oil Offshore Processing Agreement (OPA)

Answer

We are aware that, over the past few months, there has been media interest in the crude oil offshore processing agreement (OPA) entered into by Society Ivoirienne de Raffinage, Abidjan (SIR) (for who we act as local agent) and Pipelines and Products Marketing Company (PPMC). It has become increasingly apparent to us, however, that much of this interest is driven by misconceptions circulating in the public domain about the OPA (and other contracts similar to the OPA), how the OPA is operated and its commercial rationale.

We have through this document, elected to provide clarification on our involvement with OPA in keeping with our commitment to transparency and status as a member of the World Economic Forum's Partnering Against Corruption Initiative (PACI).

Please click on the [OPA link](#) to access the details.

The Sahara Story

Question

How did the owners of the Sahara Group come across the resources which they have used in building the business over the last twenty years?

Answer

The Sahara story provides detailed information about the history of Sahara Group's formative years and the growth process that transformed the organization from entrepreneurship powered by the dream of its three founders to the conglomerate the Sahara Group is today.

Please click on the [Sahara Story link](#) to access the details.

The Role of Sahara Group in the Nigerian Oil and Gas Industry Subsidy investigation

Question

What was the role of Sahara Group in the Oil and Gas Industry wide petroleum subsidy investigations in Nigeria?

Answer

This was an industry wide investigation by the Committee of the National Assembly and the Presidential Task Force Committee.

As part of the investigations, all the Petroleum marketers operating in the Petroleum downstream sector were invited to provide documents towards substantiating their subsidy claims over a period.

The House of Assembly committee and the Presidential Task Force committee verified that Sahara's transactions were legitimate.

Please click on the [Oil & Gas Subsidy Investigation link](#) to access the details of the report.

"Swiss traders' opaque deals in Nigeria", Berne Declaration, November 2013

Question

Please clarify the statements in the Berne Declaration report of November 2013 that Sahara Group reimbursed N6.034 Billion to the Nigerian Government that it had received in the form of subsidy payments, the inability to justify a bank statement showing \$33.7 million and being one of the companies that did not import the correct quantity of petroleum products.

Answer

These were part of the allegations that were investigated by the committees set up in Nigeria by the National Assembly and the Presidency.

Sahara Group submitted all its documents to substantiate their claims and was not listed as one of the companies to make refunds to the Federal Government and the reports are public knowledge.

Please click on the [Oil & Gas Subsidy Investigation link](#) to access the details of the report.

"Swiss traders' opaque deals in Nigeria", Berne Declaration, Nov ember 2013

Question

The report header states "**Sahara Energy, a documentary desert**" and alludes to Sahara Group being one of the beneficiaries of the export allocation system of Nigeria's Crude Oil sales. The report further claims that Sahara Group is nothing but a letterbox company.

Answer

In its almost 20 years of operations, Sahara Group has grown to a company with staff strength of over 650 people.

Over this period, Sahara Group has established fully, officially registered and operational offices in Lagos, Abuja, Calabar, and Porthacourt in Nigeria, Accra and Tema in Ghana, Abidjan in Cote D'Ivoire, Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, Geneva in Switzerland, Isle of Man in the United Kingdom, and Singapore.

The Sahara Group's operational office in Geneva Switzerland is located at 7, Quai du Mont-Blanc, 1201 Geneva and has total staff strength of 37 people. In line with Sahara Group's corporate responsibility activities, the Geneva office has partnered with the following NGO's towards providing Corporate Social Responsibilities activities – ESCA (English Speaking Cancer Association) and Le Care and also providing the avenue for the development of clowns on various diseases in the Hopiclowns project towards providing entertainment and relaxation for children and the elderly in hospitals.

The addresses of Sahara Group's registered and operational offices across its various locations can be found on the Sahara Group website – www.sahara-group.com

The Global News Magazine report – Tope Shonubi and Tonye Cole on the run

Question

There was a publication by a local news magazine – Global News which alleged that two of the Directors of Sahara Group Mr. Tope Shonubi and Mr. Tonye Cole had been fraudulent.

Answer

The story was published in the Global News Edition of February 6, 2012 and July 23, 2012 with the headlines; **“Corrupt Marketers Who Collected Money Without Supplying Fuel Exposed”, “Sahara Energy’s Tope Sonubi and Tonye Cole On The Run” and Aig-Imoukhuede’s Panel Fingers Self-acclaimed Pastor Tope Sonubi and Tonye Cole’s Sahara Energy in Fuel Subsidy Scam”**.

Sahara Group instituted a legal action against Global Style Multi-Media Services (the publisher of Global News) and the Editor in Chief for libel. The publisher of the magazine admitted that the publication was libelous and tendered an official letter of apology to Sahara Group and its Directors as part of its obligations in seeking the terms of settlement which were eventually filed as judgment of the court.

Please click on the [Global News allegations](#) to access the details.

[Alleged complicity in the supply of Crude Oil to Tema Oil Refinery \(TOR\)](#)

Question

Sahara Group’s role in the Tema Oil Refinery (TOR) investigation in the allegations that the company was incorrectly paid for the Supply of crude

Answer

The allegations bordered on the fact that Sahara Group was incorrectly paid for the supply of Crude Oil to Tema Oil Refinery. This was thoroughly investigated by the Ghanaian authorities and upon completion of their investigations, it was confirmed that Sahara Group were the legitimate suppliers of the crude and had been correctly paid for the supply made, further Sahara employees were invited by the Ghanaian authorities to testify against the perpetrators in a criminal matter.

Please click on the [TOR Crude Supply](#) to access the details.

[Allegation on the Sale of DPK as aviation Fuel](#)

Question

Sahara Group’s role concerning the newspaper publication that the company was involved in the sale of DPK as Aviation Fuel

Answer

There was a publication in the Nation Newspaper of December 20, 2011 relating to allegations that Sahara Group was involved in the sale of DPK as Aviation Fuel.

Sahara Group in a rejoinder through its lawyers sent to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on December 22, 2011 provided clear explanations on these allegations and all the necessary documents relating to operations in the Aviation business were submitted to the NCAA, the SSS and the DPR who investigated these allegations and found that the allegations against Sahara Group were unfounded.

Please click on the link [DPK False Allegations](#) to access the details.

Sahara Director's service to the nation

Question

The role of one of Sahara Group's Director as a special assistance to the president in Nigeria's recent democratic process

Answer

In 1999, one of the Directors of Sahara Group Mr. Tope Shonubi was invited to serve his country under the government of President Olusegun Obasanjo.

Mr. Tope Shonubi served as a Special Adviser on Youths Affairs to President Olusegun Obasanjo between 1999 and 2003. During the period, he resigned his appointment as a director in Sahara Group. His role entailed the collaboration with the Youth's Ministry as well as the Presidency, in the development of national policy and strategy on job creation, economic empowerment for the development of and growth of entrepreneurship, SMEs and youth development nationwide.

Some his functions during the time include the following

- Liaised with the Youth Ministry and the Presidency, serving as a primary point of contact in the development of national policy and strategy on job creation, economic empowerment for the development and growth of entrepreneurship nationwide;
- Prepared briefing memos and background research to prepare the President for engagements on youth empowerment and entrepreneurship initiatives;
- Supported the President's media activity with respect to youth development and empowerment;
- Worked with the Ministries of Youths & Sports, and Labor & Productivity on strategy for growth of SMEs and youth development;
- Research, prioritize, and follow up on incoming issues and concerns addressed to the President on youths, including those of a sensitive or confidential nature and advise on appropriate course of action;
- Coordinated special projects on youth empowerment throughout the Federation, on behalf of the President;
- Worked closely with the Presidency to keep well informed of upcoming commitments and coordinate events;
- Liaison with Non-Governmental Organizations, student bodies and tertiary institutions;
- Worked with the Presidency on International investment initiatives with a focus on ensuring an enabling environment was created, bureaucratic red tape reduced and efficiency increased;
- Performed other duties as assigned by the President and Chief of Staff.

Ambassador Patrick Dele Cole's relationship with the Sahara Group

Question

There are allegations that Ambassador Dele Cole's meritorious service to his country has been beneficial to the growth and business relationships that were developed by Sahara Group because his son Tonye Cole is a Director of the company.

Answer

Over the years, there have been questions suggesting that Ambassador Dele Cole who served our country meritoriously as an Ambassador to Brazil from 1987 to 1990, and as a Senior Special Adviser on Internal Affairs under President Olusegun Obasanjo between 1999 and 2001 has influenced the growth of the Sahara Group.

It is important to state on behalf of Sahara Group and Mr. Tonye Cole as follows;

Mr. Tonye Cole has been independent of his parents since he graduated as an architect in 1990 and moved to Brazil. His father served for just shy of 2 years in President Olusegun Obasanjo's government from 1999 to 2001 as a Senior Special Adviser on Internal affairs. At no time before, during or after his father's service to Nigeria was he involved, being a part, remotely or otherwise, connected to the business of Sahara.

Mr. Tonye Cole has not in any way benefitted, been aided, abetted or influenced by his father's time in government neither have he or any of the partners of Sahara received any contracts as a result of his father's time in government.

Mr. Dele Cole's service to the government of Nigeria was meritorious. Tonye Cole is proud of his father's service to Nigeria and the fact that his father has maintained a good name before; during and after his involvement in the public sector. His father is now retired and is a well-respected senior statesman in Nigeria, spending his time writing books and articles, most of which can be found online.

While his father's time of service has placed on Mr. Tonye Cole the tag of a Politically Exposed Person (PEP), he remains proud of his father's untainted and meritorious service to Nigeria.

Conclusion

In line with Sahara Group's Corporate Governance and Compliance policy, we reaffirm our resolve to uphold accountability and transparency in all our operations and would periodically update our FAQ's to provide information on our operations. However, this would be without prejudice or compromise on contractual obligations with our business partners.

