



OLUMIDE  
AKPATA

# MY PROFILE

## I am Home-Bred...

I was born on 7 October 1972, and I had my early education in Warri, Delta State. I thereafter attended King's College, Lagos from where I proceeded to study Law at the University of Benin (UNIBEN). I graduated from UNIBEN in 1992, and I was called to the Nigerian Bar on 15 December, 1993.

## I learnt from (one of) the Best...

I served in the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), in Kano State, and upon the completion of my service year, I joined the firm of Dr. Mudiaga Odje & Co. in Warri, Delta State where I was extremely privileged to cut my teeth in legal practice under the tutelage of the late, great sage: **Dr. Mudiaga Odje, SAN, OFR**, who was one of the most seasoned Litigators of his time. It was under **Dr. Mudiaga Odje, SAN**, that I learnt the rudiments of litigation and court room advocacy.

## Templars is Born...

In 1996, I relocated to Lagos and teamed up with my cousin, **Oghogho Akpata**, who had just set up the law firm, **Templars**, the previous year, after honing his skills in the firm of F. O. Akinrele & Co. under the leadership of the legendary **Chief Frank Odunayo Akinrele, SAN**.

From 1996 to date, I have worked with Oghogho, and our colleagues at Templars, in building and sustaining a world class, multi-sectoral and full-service law firm which is now in the 25th

year of its existence and consists of over 100 fee-earners, including two Senior Advocates of Nigeria.

I am currently Senior Partner and Head of the Corporate & Commercial Practice Group of Templars, which comprises the following practice areas: Mergers & Acquisitions; Capital Markets; Corporate Law; Labour & Employment; Immigration; Telecommunications, Media, Entertainment and Technology; and Regulatory Compliance. However, in my over two decades at Templars, I have practised across the diverse areas in which we operate, and I have been privileged to lead or participate in some of the major groundbreaking transactions that have shaped commercial law practice in Nigeria and indeed the Nigerian economy. Some of these include:

- advising the Nigerian Bureau of Public Enterprises on the restructuring and unbundling of the now defunct state-owned electric power monopoly, **National Electric Power Authority**, ultimately resulting in the several successor companies to NEPA and the now largely privatised Nigerian power sector;
- advising on the acquisition of **National Fertilizer Company of Nigeria** by a group of Nigerian investors in a **US\$152 million** asset purchase transaction under the privatisation programme of the Federal Government of Nigeria;
- advising **General Electric** on the strategic acquisition that heralded the establishment of General Electric's oil and gas operations in Nigeria;
- advising **American Tower Corporation** on its **US\$1.05 billion** acquisition of telecommunication towers and passive infrastructure business from Airtel Networks Limited;

- advising **Azura Power West Africa Limited** and its sponsors on the pioneering development and financing of a circa **US\$1 billion** greenfield 459MW independent power plant in Edo State, Nigeria;
- advising **Google Inc.** on the deployment of Google Street View in Nigeria which is a technology featured in Google Maps and Google Earth that promote interactive views along many streets in the world; and
- advising **Diamond Bank** on its merger with **Access Bank PLC** which resulted in the emergence of Africa's largest retail bank (by customers) and one of the largest lenders in Nigeria.

In addition to my aforementioned roles at Templars, I have over the years also developed and deployed the requisite skills that are a must-have for the management of people and resources in an organisation with a current head-count of over 150 people and which operates out of different locations in Nigeria. In this regard, I have, at different times, superintended the activities of the Operations, Human Resources and Business Development divisions of Templars.

I am deeply gratified that this model, which we at Templars continue to adopt in our approach to legal practice, has paid off handsomely, resulting in our phenomenal growth from a 4-man law practice in 1995-1996 to a tier one full-service law firm today.

Indeed, my experience at Templars, which essentially encompasses the bulk of my career as a lawyer, has afforded me invaluable insight into, and an in-depth understanding of, all aspects of legal practice in Nigeria.

# I am a BAR Man...

I began participating in the activities of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), as soon as I joined the law firm of Dr. Mudiaga Odje & Co., as a member of the NBA Warri Branch - as it then was. Upon relocating to Lagos in 1996, I joined the NBA Lagos Branch.

I became more active in Bar activities upon the creation of the NBA Section on Business Law (NBA-SBL) in 2004. I am a foundation member of the NBA-SBL and I worked closely with the pioneer Chairman of the Section, **Mr. George Etomi**, and his team to operationalise the Section after its inauguration in December 2004 by the then President of the NBA, **Chief Bayo Ojo, SAN**. I was also a member of the Planning Committee which organised the very first NBA-SBL Conference that was held in Abuja in March 2006 and which proved to be a transformational conference that set the NBA-SBL on its current trajectory.

My active participation in the NBA-SBL led to my election, in January 2012, as Secretary of the NBA-SBL Council. I was subsequently elected as Vice-Chairman in August 2014 and then as Chairman in August 2016, after which I handed over to the current Chairman, **Seni Adio, SAN**, in August 2018 albeit I remain a member of the Council.

My two-year tenure as Chairman of the NBA-SBL was eventful and impactful. In keeping with its objectives of engendering the professional development of Nigerian commercial lawyers and raising the level of business law practice in Nigeria, the NBA-SBL, under my leadership and with the immense support of my colleagues in Council, was able to achieve, among other things, the following:

- expanding the frontiers of legal practice by creating **several additional subject-matter specific committees** that were, and remain, actively focused on new areas of legal practice with each committee organising periodic seminars and other capacity building programmes across the country for members, with facilitators drawn from leading international law firms, Nigerian law firms and corporate organisations;
- organising **two world-class NBA-SBL Conferences** (2017 and 2018) at which attendees had incisive and enriching sessions, knowledge exchange and extensive networking opportunities with lawyers, clients and prospective clients;
- organising, in partnership with the **International Bar Association**, a free training seminar for over 100 young lawyers on the fundamentals of International Legal Business Practice;
- setting up **SBL Clubs in six universities across the six geopolitical zones** in Nigeria to expand the horizon of law students and enable them, at a foundational level, to develop appropriate interest in contemporary areas of law practice;
- establishing a partnership with the **National Assembly** and the **Nigerian Economic Summit Group**, with support from the **UK Department for International Development (UK DFID)**, to create the **National Assembly Business Environment Roundtable (NASSBER)** as a platform for the legislature and the private sector to engage, deliberate and take action on a framework for improving the Nigerian business environment. That partnership resulted in a comprehensive review of the institutional, regulatory, legislative and associated instruments affecting businesses in Nigeria;

- collaborating with the **Presidential Enabling Business Environment Council** on the ease of doing business in Nigeria which involved the review of extant laws and regulations and the monitoring of the productivity and response time of Ministries, Departments and Agencies including the Corporate Affairs Commission; and
- Inaugurating the **Corporate Counsel Committee** for in-house counsel and setting up a **Task Force** led by **Mr. Ayuli Jemide** to determine the scope of legal work that is statutorily prescribed to be the exclusive preserve of Nigerian lawyers and to work out modalities for enforcing such laws.

## **BARmanship Beyond NBA-SBL...**

Besides my activities at the NBA-SBL, I am indeed extremely proud and grateful to have been an integral part of the NBA in other capacities such as:

- participating actively in the **NBA Section on Legal Practice** where I served as an officer of the Law Firm Management Committee from 2010-2014;
- being an active member of the **NBA Lagos Branch** from 2005 till date where I have served on various Committees of the Branch, including as two-time Secretary of the Building Committee - under the chairmanship of **Alhaji Femi Okunnu, SAN** and **Dr. Wale Babalakin, SAN** in 2012 and 2016 respectively;
- serving the NBA, at the national level, in the following capacities:

- ✓ Member, NBA National Executive Committee from 2014 till date;
- ✓ Secretary, Technical Committee on Conference Planning for the 2015 NBA-AGC;
- ✓ Secretary, Technical Committee on Conference Planning for the 2016 NBA-AGC;
- ✓ Co-Chairman, Technical Committee on Conference Planning for the 2019 NBA-AGC; and
- ✓ Representing the NBA on the Council of the International Bar Association (IBA), from 2014 to 2016;
- working closely with the then President of the NBA, **Augustine Alegeh, SAN** and his team from, 2012-2014, on the following projects:
  - ✓ the reorganisation and retooling of the NBA Secretariat for increased efficiency and productivity;
  - ✓ NBA/Access Bank collaboration which resulted in a N250M per annum sponsorship of the NBA's activities by Access Bank;
  - ✓ NBA/Leadway Assurance collaboration which resulted in the NBA Members Insurance Scheme and which came at a significantly discounted premium and at no extra cost to members; and
  - ✓ fund-raising for the completion of the NBA House, Abuja which was eventually commissioned by His Excellency **Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, SAN, GCON** in August, 2016;

- actively sponsoring and supporting branches of the NBA across the country on various initiatives; and
- being a frequent speaker at several events organised by different branches of the NBA across Nigeria.

## Barmanship Beyond Nigeria...

My interest in the advancement of the legal profession has also led me to participate actively in the IBA where, besides representing the NBA on the Council of the IBA from 2014 to 2016, I serve/have served in the following capacities:

- Vice-Chairman of the IBA Africa Regional Forum;
- Member of the IBA Presidential Task Force on the Future of the Legal Profession;
- Member of the IBA Credentials Committee; and
- Officer/Member of the IBA Anti-Corruption Committee.

## Miscellany/Other Endeavours...

I sit, in non-executive capacity, on the Boards of a number of private companies, some of which I also chair. I am a member of several think-tanks, including the Nigeria Economic Summit Group (NESG) and the United Nations Nigerian Humanitarian Fund (UN-NHF), of which I am a pioneer member.

I am, without a doubt, a gregarious person and when I am not advising on a transaction or attending a client meeting, I love to be in the company of my friends and family or attending social events. I also love travelling and reading the biographies of distinguished personalities.

I am a devout Christian and a member of the Redeemed Christian Church of God.