

**WELCOME ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE ADMINISTRATOR, NATIONAL JUDICIAL INSTITUTE (NJI), HON. JUSTICE R.P.I. BOZIMO, OFR AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 2016 CONFERENCE OF ALL NIGERIA JUDGES OF THE LOWER COURTS HELD AT THE ANDREWS OTUTU OBASEKI AUDITORIUM, NATIONAL JUDICIAL INSTITUTE, ABUJA ON THE 21<sup>ST</sup> NOVEMBER, 2016**

**PROTOCOL**

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the opening ceremony of the 2016 Conference of All Nigeria Judges of the Lower Courts; which is a biennial Conference organized by the National Judicial Institute pursuant to its mandate of continuing education for all categories of judicial officers and their support staff.

This Conference is an avenue for updating your skills and knowledge, thereby further improving the competence and performance expected of you in the discharge of your statutory functions. It also has the refreshing effect of exposing you to recent developments in Law, Practice and Procedure in courts as well as contemporary Legal issues.

Since its inception, the National Judicial Institute has organized Conferences, Seminars, Workshops and Refresher

Courses that have been beneficial to participants. This one will not be an exception. It is also a good opportunity for participants to evaluate common challenges in justice administration and generate ideas on ways to ameliorate these challenges.

My lords, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen, the theme for this year's Conference titled "**The Lower Courts as Veritable Instruments for Justice and Peace in a Democratic Society**" is certainly pertinent and instructive.

A vast majority of cases come before you and quite a number of such cases are concluded in your courts. On this ground, your role as arbiters cannot be overstated in our democratic society.

It is important to state that for the Lower Courts to serve as veritable instruments for justice and peace in a democratic society, they must continually demonstrate deep foresight for productivity, exceptional capacity and remarkable courage in the defence of constitutionally guaranteed individual and institutional rights.

In the sixteen years of democratic rule in this our dear Country, it can be said that the Nigerian Judiciary has witnessed both its low and high moments but in all, the

Judiciary has always come out stronger. The developments in the Judiciary have shown that it would rather uphold the rule of substantial justice rather than technicalities of law. It is important to note that upholding of the rule of substantial justice is actually recourse to peace, and the decisions of courts when based on substantial justice rather than technicalities of law rarely provoke conflict or violence and is mostly celebrated by the society. By doing so, the democratic tenets that will ensure sustainable democracy are upheld for a better tomorrow.

The topics chosen for this Conference are tailored towards enlightening and promoting efficient justice delivery. Therefore, I enjoin you to pay rapt attention to the presentations and contribute freely.

My Lords, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen, let me salute the leadership of the Judiciary under the able stewardship of my lord, Hon. Justice WS.N. Onnoghen, *CFR, FNJI*, who was sworn in on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November, 2016 as the Acting Chief Justice of Nigeria. My Lord, on behalf of all the participants, I say a very big congratulations. My Lord, your presence here today marks your Lordship's first official outing in this capacity to the Institute. To the participants, I say you are all very fortunate

to be the first beneficiary of his lordship's presence. To all Heads of Courts and members of the Board of the National Judicial Institute, I say a warm welcome and thank you for your continuous support to the programmes of the Institute. I also acknowledge the esteemed resource persons, discussants and chairmen of sessions for graciously accepting to take on the various functions assigned to them during this Conference.

My Lords, Distinguished guest and participants, ladies and gentlemen, may I now, with profound humility and utmost respect, invite the Honourable, the Acting Chief Justice of Nigeria, Hon. Justice W.S.N. Onnoghen, *CFR, FNJI*, to deliver the Keynote Address and to formally declare the 2016 Conference of All Nigeria Judges of the Lower Courts, open.

Thank you and God bless us all.

**Hon. Justice R.P.I. Bozimo, *OFR***  
**Administrator,**  
National Judicial Institute