

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY
THE HONOURABLE THE CHIEF
JUSTICE OF NIGERIA AND
CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF GOVERNORS,
NATIONAL JUDICIAL INSTITUTE,
HON. JUSTICE MAHMUD
MOHAMMED, *GCON*, AT THE
OPENING CEREMONY OF THE
NATIONAL WORKSHOP FOR
SECRETARIES, COURT REGISTRARS,
PROCESS CLERKS AND BAILIFFS ON
ETHICS AND ANTI-CORRUPTION
HELD ON 13 JULY 2015 AT ANDREWS
OTUTU OBASEKI AUDITORIUM,
NATIONAL JUDICIAL INSTITUTE,
ABUJA**

PROTOCOL

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the Opening Ceremony of the 2015 National Workshop for Secretaries, Court Registrars, Process Clerks and Bailiffs on Ethics and Anti-Corruption. I am especially delighted to

address our especially hard working and often overlooked class of Judicial Staff. It goes without saying that these categories of Judicial Staff are the backbone and engine room of the Judiciary. Therefore, the need to increase their skill set, improve their performance and build their capacity is certainly key to our ability to ensure efficient and effective administration of justice.

I find the theme of this National workshop: *Improving Staff Performance through Attitudinal Change* very appropriate and germane. This is because the Secretaries, Registrars, Process Clerks and Bailiffs are responsible for almost all the daily activities in Court Administration. You are the first point of contact when members of the public approach the Courts. You are also entrusted with a myriad of duties that

affect the lives and fortunes of Court users. Your performance therefore, either positively or negatively, impacts the effective, efficient and expeditious dispensation of justice. It is imperative for you, as judicial employees to be guided by high ethical standards and the Code of Conduct for Court Employees in discharging your official assignments at all times. Indeed it is the Code that regulates and prescribes the right behaviour and attitude that must be imbibed by court employees in the various jurisdictions across the country. The Rules contained in the Code, spell out the way and manner the Court employees should conduct themselves within and outside their places of work and breach of any of its provisions will constitute gross misconduct, which may attract severe disciplinary sanctions.

It is quite important to remember that your attitude and conduct speaks volumes about the integrity of the Judiciary in the eyes of the discerning public. Therefore, the perception of every person you serve goes a long way towards the sustenance of public confidence, which is very critical to the administration of justice. I have often said that the Nigerian Judiciary is made up of very brilliant, intelligent, erudite and articulate Judicial Officers and staff who are imbued with an unimpeachable character. I therefore urge you not be among the minute minority of unscrupulous persons that want to derail the course of justice and bring the Nigerian Judiciary into disrepute.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the administration of justice is not confined to our Judicial Officers alone; it involves all the staff of the Court. I make bold to say that your duties are

complementary to, and supportive of the role of the Judge. Your failure to work effectively clogs the wheel of justice. As such, you must strive to do your best, perform optimally and play your respective roles efficiently and effectively.

Distinguished participants, let me caution you that your relationship with the Heads of Courts and Judges whom you serve is very crucial. It is very critical that you maintain a good character, loyalty to your Court, honesty, truthfulness and support for your Judicial Officer. In addition, you must have the fear of God in all that you do. Do not allow your personal interest to conflict with your official duties. You must shun acts of impropriety in every shape or form. You must also see to it that you carry out your functions impartially, avoiding all discrimination and do not abuse your office as your role as a staff

of the Court places upon you a significant burden of trust that once misplaced is difficult to recover. I further encourage you to protect the public's interest, act objectively, and keep official documents in your custody confidential and intact.

I have gone through the programme of this Workshop and I find the topics for deliberation apt, pertinent and relevant. I am convinced that the topics slated for presentation will improve the efficiency and proficiency of the participants. In addition, I am of the firm belief that the Resource Persons and Chairmen of Sessions would bring their wealth of experience into play and do justice in their respective presentations. I advise you to pay rapt attention and participate actively in all the deliberations during this Workshop.

Permit me at this juncture to commend the efforts of the Administrator, Hon, Justice R.P.I. Bozimo (rtd.), *OFR*, the Management and Staff of the Institute for organising this Workshop. I also applaud the Administrator's choice of Chairmen of Sessions and the Resource Persons, who are Fellows of the NJI. I commend her for this progressive foresight in selecting the Fellows of the Institute and hope that this initiative will be sustained even in future programmes. Let me also extend my appreciation to the Resource Persons and Chairmen of Sessions for accepting to undertake their respective assignments and wish them all the best. I wish to put on record, my sincere gratitude to the members of the press and I thank them for finding time to be here with us at this moment.

On this note, it is my singular honour and privilege to declare the 2015

National Workshop for Secretaries,
Court Registrars, Process Clerks and
Bailiffs on Ethics and Anti-Corruption,
open.

I wish you all a successful Workshop
and a pleasant stay in Abuja.

Thank you and May God bless you all.

Hon. Justice Mahmud Mohammed, *GCON*

Hon. Chief Justice of Nigeria & Chairman,

**Board of Governors, National Judicial
Institute**