

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY HIS LORDSHIP, THE HONOURABLE, THE CHIEF JUSTICE OF NIGERIA, HON. JUSTICE MAHMUD MOHAMMED, GCON ON THE OCCASION OF THE NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION, NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT THE NATIONAL JUDICIAL INSTITUTE, ON 5 FEBRUARY 2015 AT 10:00 AM**

PROTOCOL

I would like to thank the National Executive Committee of the Nigeria Bar Association (NBA), under the able leadership of Mr. Augustine Oyarhekua Allegeh SAN, for the kind invitation to grace this occasion as a Special Guest of Honour.

I have always considered myself first and foremost a “BAR” man and my attendance at the Dialogue organized by the NBA yesterday, gave me the opportunity to comment on issues of primary interest to our learned profession, which I believe created a greater awareness of our similarities rather than our differences within the Legal Profession. The Bar and the Bench share the same goal- to see that justice is done and seen to be done.

I must commend the efforts made so far by the NBA in supporting the smooth administration of Justice. I hope that this support will be further strengthened by the active participation of the Bar in initiatives which will lead to quicker and more effective disposition of cases in all courts. I am confident that the plans to institutionalize pro bono services for criminal cases are certainly a welcome initiative and a step in the right direction towards helping to reduce our pending cases and the number of inmates awaiting trial.

As the Judiciary resuscitates the constitutional review process, I must acknowledge the efforts of the NBA in this regard. There are obvious areas of concern and dissatisfaction, which require immediate legislative intervention if judicial independence and the rule of law are to be preserved.

I also wish to express my appreciation to the NBA for its prominence in the resolution of the recent dispute between the Judicial Staff Union of Nigeria (JUSUN), and the Federal and State Governments. I urge you to continue to protect the independence and prestige of the Judiciary

regardless of whose ox is gored. The Judiciary, as you are aware, can be heard but can rarely be seen and thus needs the BAR to be its advocate and supporter in the course of the discharge of its task in the administration of justice.

Finally, let me assure you that I am committed to taking concrete steps towards improving the administration of justice in this country thereby increasing public trust and confidence in our legal profession. I ask for the sustained support of the BAR as we work to restore those age long qualities of honesty, sagacity, and moral rectitude to our profession.

It is now my pleasure to formally declare Open, the Meeting of the National Executive Committee of the Nigeria Bar Association. I wish you all successful deliberations.

Thank you

**MAHMUD MOHAMMED, GCON**

***Chief Justice of Nigeria***