

WELCOME ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE NATIONAL JUDICIAL INSTITUTE, HON. JUSTICE R.P.I. BOZIMO, OFR, AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 14TH MARITIME SEMINAR FOR JUDGES, HELD 31ST MAY, 2016 AT THE SHERATON HOTEL, ABUJA

It gives me great pleasure and honour to welcome our distinguished guests and participants to the Opening Ceremony of the 14th Maritime Seminar for Judges, organised by the Nigerian Shippers' Council in collaboration with the National Judicial Institute, taking place in Abuja, the 'Centre of Unity' of our dear country, Nigeria.

Indeed, it gladdens my heart to note that the synergy between the National Judicial Institute, (NJI) and the Nigerian Shippers' Council, (NSC) over the years has recorded remarkable achievements, most importantly by way of expanding the knowledge base of our Judicial Officers in the areas of Maritime and Admiralty law and practice.

The Seminar, I will say has become a platform for Judges, Legal Practitioners, Ship Owners and other Stakeholders in the industry, to cross-fertilize ideas on vital Legal, Economic, Social and Environmental issues affecting the sector.

My lords, ladies and gentlemen, it is common knowledge that the development of the Maritime Industry and Admiralty Law is vital to the development of a nation, as the Industry occupies a very prominent position in the economy of nations, and Nigeria is no exception.

Maritime experts have always stressed the need to have in place a virile policy that would enhance the development of Nigeria's Maritime Sector. Their viewpoint, perhaps, is not out of context because of the Maritime Industry's relevance to Nigeria's economic growth. The pivotal roles of the industry in promoting International trade can never be over-emphasized.

It has also been argued that the development of the Maritime Industry and Admiralty Laws are key ingredients in efforts to engender the country's development. In the light of this, the National Judicial Institute has evolved a proactive approach towards the training needs of our Judges, as the Institute has always been collaborating with Parastatals, Ministries and Agencies of government toward broadening the horizons of our Judicial Officers in specialised areas as we have in the Maritime Sector, thereby making the sector adaptable to emerging global challenges.

The collaboration has also made it possible for Nigerian Universities to offer courses in Admiralty or Shipping Laws, as part of their curricula at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. In order to ensure positive impact of the Maritime Seminar Series on the development of the economy, however, there should be a greater emphasis on practical rather than theoretical issues.

Of importance is the need to duly sensitise judicial officers to their expectations in dispensing justice, as it is imperative for judicial officers to be up-to-date in their knowledge of law and in the awareness of emerging developments in the dynamic field of Maritime Law. Since the law is not static, new problems arise daily as a result of changes brought about by legislation, judgments which overrule previous decisions, as well as improvements in technology and globalisation. It is, therefore vital that Judicial Officers should remain vibrant and up-to-date in their knowledge of the law.

My Lords, ladies and gentlemen, let me at this juncture express my deep appreciation, on behalf of the Management and Staff of the National Judicial Institute, to the Honourable, the Chief Justice of Nigeria, and Chairman, Board of Governors of the National Judicial Institute, Hon. Justice Mahmud Mohammed, GCON, FNJI for giving approval for this Seminar to be held. In a similar vein, we thank most sincerely the members of the Education Committee of the Board of Governors under the chairmanship of Hon. Justice W.S.N. Onnoghen, CFR, JSC, and members of the Board of Governors of the Institute for their support towards the Institute's programmes and activities, especially in the area of 'Continuing Judicial Education' for all categories of judicial officers in Nigeria.

Permit me to seize this opportunity to sincerely commend the effort of the Chairman and Members of the Committee on Maritime Seminar for

Judges, under the able leadership of Hon. Justice I. N. Auta, OFR, Chief Judge, Federal High Court, for working tirelessly in ensuring the successful conduct of the 14th Maritime Seminar.

My thanks and appreciation also go to the Executive Secretary of the Nigeria Shippers' Council, Hassan Bello, FCI Arb. and staff of the Nigerian Shippers' Council for this laudable partnership. We will continue to count on your support in achieving the objectives for which the Institute was established.

To all Invited Dignitaries, Government Officials present, the Chairmen of Sessions, Resource Persons and members of the Press for accepting our invitation to be part of this opening ceremony and for coming to share your wealth of experience and knowledge with us, I say a very big thank you.

I wish you fruitful deliberations. Thank you and God bless you all.

Hon. Justice R. P. I. Bozimo, OFR,
Administrator, NJI