

WELCOME ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE NATIONAL JUDICIAL INSTITUTE HON. MR. JUSTICE R.P.I BOZIMO, OFR, AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE NATIONAL WORKSHOP FOR AREA/ SHARIA/CUSTOMARY COURT JUDGES HELD AT THE ALOYSIUS KATSINA-ALU SEMINAR HALL OF THE NATIONAL JUDICIAL INSTITUTE, ABUJA, ON 18TH MARCH, 2019

PROTOCOL

I am delighted to welcome you all to the opening ceremony of the **2019 National Workshop for Area/Sharia/Customary Court Judges**. This workshop is organized by the National Judicial Institute (NJI) in fulfillment of its mandate to provide Continuing Judicial Education for Judicial Officers and their support staff. It is designed to avail judges of the lower court the opportunity to rub minds and cross fertilize ideas in different areas of law.

The theme of this year's Workshop, **“Improving the Quality of Justice Delivery in the Lower Courts”** is imperative and relevant; as the Institute strives to strengthen and reposition the Nigerian Judiciary to effectively perform its statutory role and improve on the quality of justice delivery.

It goes without saying that, in order to remain relevant in this ever evolving judicial landscape, the lower courts must not only be seen to be just, but must provide quality judicial services to the litigants. In this regard, we must not fail in ensuring that the common man can approach our courts with confidence knowing that access to justice is for all citizens.

Let me crave your indulgence to accommodate the quote of a U.S Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powel, Jr. regarding availability of justice to all manners of people

“Equal Justice under the law..... it is perhaps the most inspiring ideal of our society. It is one of the ends for which our entire legal system exists.... It is fundamental that justice should be the same, in substance and availability, without regard to economic status”.

To this end, the speedy and expeditious resolution of cases before your courts is highly encouraged. The Board of Governors of the Institute has always stressed on the relevant trainings that will enhance the quality of judicial services, hence, the programmes of the Institute are tailored towards improving the quality of justice delivery which will be in sync with best global practices. It is in line with this objective that the topics for this year’s **National Workshop for**

Area/Sharia/Customary Court Judges border on improvement of justice delivery.

Distinguished Participants, for you to be effective in the discharge of your duties as judges of the lower courts where the bulk of cases emanate from, the burden of organizing your chamber and registry lies solely on your shoulders. In line with the foregoing, the issue of time and case management in your various courts will be aptly dealt with. This will ensure that the courts function optimally and reduce backlog of cases where need be. You must employ a more effective case management system which involves maintaining a proper record of all pending and upcoming case files, assigning time frames for each case in accordance with the rules of fair hearing, monitoring the progress of each case, creating an effective communication

network between the court and parties, as your courts are not expected to and should not be held down with technicalities.

My Lords, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen, we must continuously improve judicial performance in recognition of the need to be accountable and responsive to public demands for a judiciary of repute. In this light, you have my assurance that the Institute will not rest on its oars and will continue to work assiduously in examining various areas of the law and come up with programmes that will update, develop and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of judicial services in your courts.

Let me assure you that the topics slated for discussion at this workshop are insightful and informative. It is my hope that the papers will generate robust discussions and interventions that

will serve as a pathway to achieving the much needed improvements towards improving the quality of justice delivery in your courts.

Permit me at this point to extend my most sincere appreciation to the Honourable, the Ag. Chief Justice of Nigeria and Chairman Board of Governors of the National Judicial Institute, Hon. Dr. Justice I. T. Muhammad, *CFR, FNJI*, and other members of the Board of Governors of the National Judicial Institute for their continued support to the activities of the Institute.

Let me also extend my most sincere appreciation to the Chairmen of Sessions and Resource Persons, who are versed in law and boast of wealth of experiences. I sincerely appreciate them for accepting our invitation to take on various assignments

despite their busy schedules. I urge you to listen attentively and participate actively during the sessions

My Lords, distinguished participants, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is now my singular honour and privilege to invite the Hon. the Acting Chief Justice of Nigeria, **Hon. Dr. Justice Ibrahim Tanko Muhammad, CFR, FNJI**, to deliver his keynote address and declare the **2019 National Workshop for Area/Sharia/Customary Court Judges** open.

I wish you all a rewarding stay at the Institute. Thank you and God bless us all. Amen

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