

WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE ADMINISTRATOR NATIONAL JUDICIAL INSTITUTE HON. JUSTICE R. P. I. BOZIMO (RTD), OFR, AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 2016 REFRESHER COURSE FOR MAGISTRATES ON CURRENT TRENDS IN LAW AND ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE HELD AT THE ANDREWS OTUTU OBASEKI AUDITORIUM OF THE NATIONAL JUDICIAL INSTITUTE MOHAMMED BELLO CENTRE, ABUJA ON THE 18TH DAY OF APRIL, 2016

PROTOCOL

It is my honour and privilege to welcome you all to the 2016 Refresher Course for Magistrates on Current Trends in Law and Administration of Justice. The National Judicial Institute (the Institute) is statutorily mandated to provide and facilitate Continuing Judicial Education for all Judicial Officers and their support staff in all areas of knowledge, especially the areas that are key to the performance and discharge of judicial functions. In consequence of this, the Institute's training programmes are designed and administered with the objective of achieving high standards of judicial performance.

This Refresher Course is the first of its kind to be organised for Magistrates and it is intended to refresh, reinvigorate and revive your minds in order to reposition you for optimum performance.

There is no gainsaying that you all occupy an important position in the administration of justice because of the vital role you play in adjudication. Your Courts handle the bulk of the matters affecting the public, and are the closest to the grassroots. About 70% of cases come before your Worships and quite a number of these cases are concluded at the Magistracy level. It is because of this strategic role which Magistrates perform, that the Institute saw the need to organise this Refresher Course.

My Lord, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen, the theme of this Refresher Course is “***Promoting Judicial Performance Through Innovations and Reforms***”. This could not have come at a better time than now. The Judiciary is presently undergoing reforms and innovations. Law Reforms in the Judiciary are essential for the purpose of enhancing and

promoting judicial performance. Recently the Judiciary has undergone a plethora of reforms, among which is the passing into law of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act 2015.

The Administration of Criminal Justice Act 2015 has merged the Provisions of the Criminal Procedure Act and the Criminal Procedure Code and is applicable in all Federal Courts and the Federal Capital Territory. The Act regulates more than just criminal procedure; it covers, in most part, the entire criminal justice process from arrest, investigation, trial, custodial matters and sentencing guidelines. All the provisions of the Act are geared towards ensuring that the system of administration of criminal justice in Nigeria promotes efficient management of all criminal justice institutions, speedy dispensation of justice, and protection of rights and interests of the suspects and victims of crime. *Section 16 of the ACJ Act 2015 makes provision for the establishment, within the Nigerian Police, a Central Criminal Record Registry.*

Section 16(2) provides that there shall be established in every state command, a Criminal Records Registry which shall keep and transmit all such records to the Central Criminal Records Registry.

Section 16(3) mandates the Chief Registrar of the Courts to transmit the decisions of the court in all criminal trials to the Central Criminal Records Registry within thirty days after delivery of judgment. Where there is default by the Chief Registrar to transmit the records, he shall be liable to disciplinary measures by the Federal Judicial Service Commission for misconduct.

Another area of reform is in the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism through which civil matters including land, family and other matters are taken through mandatory mediation in line with the judicature.

Similarly, the Cyber Crime (Prohibition Prevention ETC) Act 2015 and the Evidence for Electronic Transaction Act 2013 provide for electronic filing of cases (e-filing). This is all with a view to enhancing the speedy dispensation of justice.

For this Refresher Course, our Resource Persons include eminent Judges. This is to engender robust and frank discussion, and further deliberate on issues that will promote judicial performance through innovations and reforms. The topics for this Refresher Course are:

1. The Bar-Bench Relationship: maintaining the Balance (Perspective from Bench and the Bar);
2. An overview of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act, 2015;
3. Commitment to Excel as Judicial Officers: Transparency, Ethics and Code of Conduct;
4. Consideration of Applications for bail and No Case Submission in the Magistrates' Courts;
5. Interlocutory Applications: Pertinent Issues for Consideration;
6. Enhancing the Productivity of Judicial Officers: Performance Management and Evaluation;
7. Access to Justice: Exploiting the Use of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Systems;
8. Emerging Issues in Civil and Criminal Proceedings.

9. Admissibility of Electronic Evidence in Civil and Criminal Proceedings;

It is my firm belief that you will benefit immensely at the end of this Refresher Course. I therefore encourage and urge you all to pay rapt attention and make useful contributions.

My Lords , Ladies and Gentlemen, permit me to seize this opportunity to thank the Honourable, the Chief Justice of Nigeria and Chairman, Board of Governors of the National Judicial Institute, Hon. Justice Mahmud Muhammed, GCON, FNJI who has successfully placed the Institute in an enviable position to the benefit of the Judiciary. His Lordship's commitment and vigour to capacity building in the Judiciary must be commended. His resilience and candour to the development of sound and better Magistrates must also be appreciated.

May I also thank all the Members of the Board of Governors of the National Judicial Institute for their unflinching support to the

programmes of the Institute. I will equally extend my appreciation to all the Chairmen of Sessions, Discussants and Resource Persons for accepting to share from their wealth of knowledge and experience with us.

To the Management team and staff of the National Judicial Institute I say thank you for your support and hardwork.

It is now my pleasure at this point to humbly invite the Honourable, the Chief Justice of Nigeria and Chairman, Board of Governors of the National Judicial Institute, Hon. Justice Mahmud Mohammed, *OFR. CON, CFR, GCON, FNJI*, to deliver the Keynote Address and declare the 2016 Refresher Course for Magistrates on Current trends in Law and Administration of Justice, Open.

Thank you and God bless you all.

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