

KEYNOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE HONOURABLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE OF NIGERIA AND CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE NATIONAL JUDICIAL INSTITUTE, HON. MR. JUSTICE WALTER SAMUEL NKANU ONNOGHEN, *GCON, FNJI*, AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE WORKSHOP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AND COMPLIANCE WITH THE ADMINISTRATION OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT (ACJA) 2015, HELD AT THE ALOYSIUS KATSINA-ALU SEMINAR HALL, NATIONAL JUDICIAL INSTITUTE, ABUJA, ON 23RD MAY 2018

PROTOCOL

I am pleased to welcome you all on this auspicious occasion of the two-day workshop on *The Implementation of and Compliance with the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) 2015*, organized by the National Judicial Institute in collaboration with the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, (NIALS).

This workshop could not have come at a better time than now, being one of the legislations that have introduced some innovations towards improving our criminal justice system.

The Administration of Criminal Justice Act, (ACJA) 2015 was enacted as an instrument, which merged the provisions of the two previous principal legislations, namely; Criminal Procedure Act (CPA) and Criminal Procedure Code (CPC). The Administration of Criminal Justice Act 2015 was not designed to do away with the already existing criminal laws in its entirety, but was designed

to preserve and make them stronger by introducing innovative provisions that will enhance the efficiency of the justice system.

It also builds upon the existing framework of Criminal Justice Administration in the country and covers some lacunae observed in the Criminal Procedure Act and Criminal Procedure Code over the course of several decades.

It is worthy of note that this law is very progressive and in line with international best practices with provisions geared towards curing most of the anomalies confronting our criminal justice system.

My Lords, the purpose of this Act, as set out in section 1(1), is to ensure that the system of Administration of Criminal Justice in Nigeria promotes efficient management of criminal justice institutions, speedy dispensation of justice, protection of the society from crime, and protection of the rights and interests of the suspect, the defendant and the victim.

This, my Lords, is a paradigm shift in the criminal justice system of Nigeria, from a punitive approach to a restorative approach, with the needs of the society, victims, vulnerable persons and human dignity at the forefront. With this shift from the law as it used to be, the advent of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act, comes with a number of challenges, especially with regards to its application, implementation, compliance and funding; hence the need for this workshop.

The objective of Administration of Criminal Justice Act will never be attained unless, and until all relevant stakeholders in the criminal justice system are aligned and work collaboratively to ensure that the Act is not just implemented but complied with.

The Judiciary is not unaware of the fact that the bulk of the work lies within its coffers. For this reason, capacity building of stakeholders in Criminal Justice Administration cannot be overemphasized. There is the need for continuous capacity building and reorientation of officials across the relevant criminal justice agencies on the foundational principles, objectives, provisions and benefits of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act, 2015.

It is my hope that this workshop would serve to equip participants with the requisite skills and knowledge required for the efficient discharge of their duties.

The National Judicial Institute on its part will continue to impart Judicial Officers and relevant stakeholders with the information and knowledge in order to achieve the spirit of the Act.

My Lords, may I use this opportunity to urge participants to pay rapt attention, take keen interest and participate actively in all the deliberations during the entire workshop. I must also emphasize that you are expected to make immediate use of all the skills and lessons acquired during this workshop.

Permit me at this juncture to commend the Administrator of the National Judicial Institute, Hon. Mr. Justice R. P. I. Bozimo, and

the Director General of the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, Professor Adedeji Adekunle, SAN, for organizing this enriching and invaluable workshop, thereby improving and raising the standards of the Judiciary and the Administration of Justice in Nigeria.

My appreciation also extends to the Chairman and members of the Education Committee of the Board of Governors of the NJI for putting the programme together.

Let me also express my appreciation to the Chairmen of Sessions and Resource Persons for accepting to undertake their respective tasks.

In the same vein, I will like to express my sincere gratitude to the members of the press for finding time to be with us here today.

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is now my singular honour to declare the **2018** workshop on the **Implementation of, and Compliance with the Administration of Criminal Justice Act 2015** open.

I wish you all fruitful deliberations and a successful workshop.

Thank you and God bless us all. Amen.

Hon. Mr. Justice W. S. N. Onnoghen, GCON, FNJI

Hon. Chief Justice of Nigeria & Chairman,
Board of Governors, National Judicial Institute