

**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 2018 INDUCTION COURSE FOR NEWLY
APPOINTED JUDGES AND KADIS HELD AT THE
ANDREWS OTUTU OBASEKI AUDITORIUM, NATIONAL
JUDICIAL INSTITUTE, ABUJA ON 25TH JUNE, 2018**

Protocol

I am delighted to deliver this Keynote address on this special occasion of the opening ceremony of the 2018 Induction Course for Newly Appointed Judges and Kadis. This induction course, aimed at inculcating ethics in newly appointed Judges and Kadis, is an important feature on the calendar of the National Judicial Institute.

I sincerely congratulate you all on your appointments as the Officers and members of this most hallowed arm of the Government. Your appointment is certainly an affirmation of your integrity, which has been deemed worthy of the exalted office of a Judge or Kadi of a Superior Court of Record.

The theme of this Induction course “*Inculcating Judicial Excellence in Newly Appointed Judicial Officers*” is relevant and instructive. As a strong and independent judiciary, adherence to the rule of law is one of the hallmarks of a democratic society. The theme captures the whole essence of the course, which is to acquaint all of you with the core attributes of a good and eminent Judicial Officer.

To this end, the overall performance of a Judicial Officer on the Bench depends on his commitment to continuous self-development in

the rudiments of adjudication, knowledge acquisition and adherence to the rule of law. It is also important that your Lordships are fully grounded in time-honoured tenets of judicial ethics and the Code of Conduct for Judicial Officers.

In this light, the National Judicial Institute has consistently organised an induction course for newly appointed Judges and Kadis in furtherance of its statutory functions to promote efficiency, uniformity and improvement in the quality of Judicial services in the Superior Courts. As such, the objective of this course is not only to expose newly appointed Judges and Kadis to the practical aspects of judicial functions, but also to prepare you for the challenges and demands which lie ahead.

At this juncture, let me hasten to admonish your Lordships to always be punctual to court sittings. You must be an exemplary Judge and also be seen as manifesting the enviable virtues of the judiciary. This will in turn improve judicial practice as well as contribute to fleshing out what judicial virtues consist of.

My Lords, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is apt to mention that technology continues to march inexorably onward in today's society. As a result, those within the legal community and Judges in particular have no choice but to deploy information technology (ICT) tools in the discharge of their duties. This will definitely aid in managing the pace of cases in your courts. During the launch of the newly retrofitted court and the legal email held at the Supreme Court on 2nd February 2018, I directed that from 16th July, 2018, communication with the court will only be done electronically.

Therefore to ensure compliance, I have further directed that all Heads of Courts acquire the legal email address for their Courts from the Judicial Information Technology Policy Committee (JITPCO).

As Judicial Officers you must refrain from matters of public interest on the Internet and social media. You must also desist from uploading pictures of your personal activities online. In light of the aforesaid, caution is obviously the operative word.

My Lords, in pursuance to the powers of the National Judicial Council to appoint and discipline Judicial Officers, the National Judicial Council has established a system for the evaluation of the performance of Judicial Officers of Superior Courts. This system is regulated by a Performance Evaluation Committee of Judicial Officers of Superior Courts of Records. The Committee's mandate includes evaluating, assessing, monitoring and supervising the performance and general conduct of Judicial Officers in the discharge of their judicial functions and administration of justice. Your Lordships are compulsorily mandated as Judicial Officers to make quarterly returns of the cases disposed of in your courts, by filing and submitting your Performance Evaluation Forms to the Secretariat of the Committee through your Head of Court. The Committee has a duty to assess the forms submitted, grade and make necessary recommendations related thereto.

On this note, distinguished participants, I am inclined to draw attention to the canons of your adjudicatory duties, as Judicial Officers, especially as it relates to issuance of Interim Injunctions Ex-parte. The Code of Conduct for Judicial Officers of the Federal

Republic of Nigeria states that Judicial Officers must avoid the abuse of the power of issuing Interim Injunctions, Ex parte. In addition, I must not fail to emphasize that the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA), which proscribes hearing preliminary objections in criminal cases until judgment, is a Statute which participants must embrace and become familiar with.

The ACJA has introduced innovations to criminal justice administration and Judges must ensure that the provisions of this Statute are adhered to.

It is also pertinent to note that the speedy resolution of disputes must be your watchword as justice delayed is justice denied.

Consequently, the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms must be embraced to encourage speedy resolution of disputes in your courts. I have published a Practice Direction on the issue of invocation of the jurisdiction of the court in commercial contracts with arbitration clause without the parties first going into arbitration as agreed upon in their contract. The Practice Direction has been circulated to all Heads of Courts and must be adhered to for the expeditious hearing of cases.

On the relationship between Judicial Officers, the Bar and the Public, it should be cordial at all times. I hope you will all adhere to these words of wisdom and also pay rapt attention to the entire course programme designed for you.

My Lords, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, at this point, I wish to thank the Administrator of the Institute, Hon. Mr. Justice R.P.I.

Bozimo, OFR, management and staff of the Institute for successfully organizing this Induction Course. My gratitude also goes to the Chairman and members of the Education Committee of the National Judicial Institute.

I must in particular, thank the Chairmen of Sessions and Resource Persons who have been carefully chosen to share their wealth of experience and knowledge with us.

I thank the members of the press for being with us. You have become an inseparable partner with the Judiciary in the enthronement of modern, transparent judicial reportage in Nigeria.

My Lords, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, it is now my honour and privilege to, on behalf of the Nigerian Judiciary, welcome the participants to the noble and eminent Nigerian Judiciary as I declare the 2018 Induction Course for Newly Appointed Judges and Kadis Open.

I wish you all a very successful and fruitful Induction Course.

Thank you and God bless us all, Amen and Amen.

Hon. Mr. Justice Walter Samuel Nkanu Onnoghen, GCON, FNJI
Chief Justice of Nigeria and Chairman,
Board of Governors of the National Judicial Institute