

**AN ADDRESS BY HON. JUSTICE MUHAMMAD SAIFULLAHI
MUNTAKA-COOMASSIE, OFR, CON, CFR AT THE VALEDICTORY
COURT SESSION IN HONOUR OF HIS RETIREMENT FROM THE
SUPREME COURT BENCH ON 10TH FEBRUARY, 2016**

My Lord, the Honourable the Chief Justice of Nigeria, Hon. Justice Mahmud Mohammed, My Lords, Retired Chief Justices of Nigeria here present, My Brother Justices of the Supreme Court of Nigeria both serving and retired, My Lord, the President of Court of Appeal, Hon. Justice Zainab Bulkachua, My Lords, Heads of Courts and Judges of various jurisdictions here present, Hon. Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Learned Senior Advocates of Nigeria, Our Esteemed Royal Fathers here present, Distinguished invited Guests, Gentlemen of the Press, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, today is a gift of God, which is why we call it the Present. On a day like this, there is no other thing I should do than to give gratitude to the Almighty Allah. He has, in his infinite mercy and benevolence, preserved my life, guided me passionately to this day of my retirement and equally offered me good health with a blessed family that is complemented with a future which looks brighter and more promising than the past.

The journey through the webs and tapestry of life though cannot be conclusively said to be juicy, there is, no doubt, some pleasurable moments to treasure and savour. For this reason, I am morally compelled to cherish each moment of this auspicious occasion as it will never return again.

In life, so many things happen that obviously run contrary to our dreams, hopes and aspirations. Sometimes, it could be in career choice, the choice of a partner or even in posting to preferred areas of industrial engagement. But in the face of any form of emotional or physical discomfort, I have fervently prayed to the Almighty Allah to construct in my heart the courage to withstand those things I cannot change.

One thing I have learnt early in life is that since it is humanly impossible to change the direction of the wind, I have to master the art of adjusting my sails to always reach my destination safely. With this modest philosophy of life, I have been able to meticulously navigate through the foibles of life to reach where I am presently, and that literally offered us the reason to gather here today.

As it is at the moment, I can confidently say, with all sense of humility and responsibility that I am an accomplished man. It is a fact that what one gets by achieving his goals can never be as important as what he becomes after achieving his goals. Trials may come, temptations may sneak in and even frustration may becloud the horizon of success but in all, I make bold to say that no obstacle can pointedly decimate the firm resolve of a determined soul.

On this unique occasion of my life, I am pleased to invite history to be the sole witness that will impartially testify to the passing of time by illuminating reality and vitalizing memories which will in future bring us tidings of the past. It is evident that immediately after this valedictory Court session, I shall cease to be an active member of the Supreme Court Bench. To Allah be the glory as my retirement from service is neither as a result of ill-health, disability or anything untoward but strictly in adherence to the provisions of Section 291(1) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 as amended, which we all swore to uphold and respect.

It provides that, “A Judicial Officer appointed to the Supreme Court or Court of Appeal may retire when he attains the age of 65 years and shall cease to hold office when he attains the age of 70 years. As it were, I had the inalienable right and option to retire at the age of 65 but I opted to wait until today to bow out while marking my 70th birth-day anniversary right before this galaxy of colourful and glamorous well-wishers and loved ones. My understanding of section 291(1) as a trained lawyer is that I am not retiring from offering further services to my fatherland but only ceasing to hold office in the capacity of a Justice of the Supreme Court of the

Federal Republic of Nigeria. I believe am not wrong!

All the past speakers have said so much about me based on their knowledge of me and what I represent to them. Now is my turn to tell my own story in my own way and in my own words. At least to tell the world who Muhammad Saifullahi Muntaka-Coomassie is, where he is coming from and where he has reached as at today. I

am very sure that at the end of this short historical journey, some records may have been directly or indirectly put right in the public domain.

I was born on 10th February, 1946 in the ancient city of Zaria in Kaduna State. Our family came from Kusada Village in Katsina. As we were later made to understand, they had some problems with the then Emir of Katsina with regards to certain appointments which were to be made in the village. In the face of this conflict, some

members of my family decided to leave the village in protest and subsequently migrated to Kumasi in the then Gold Coast (now Ghana). They were cordially received and adequately hosted on arrival in Ghana. The Hausa Community there unanimously appointed Mallam Sallau as Imam in Kumasi.

The British Colonial Masters later appointed him as the Chief of Hausa Community in the whole of Ghana. Incidentally, one of our parents was born in Kumasi, Ghana and he decided to retain Kumasi as part of his names. He later coined the name as 'Coomassie' to make a difference in spelling but retaining the same pronunciation. Most members of Mallam Sallau's family are now bearing 'Coomassie'. The man in question was Father of Alhaji Ibrahim Coomassie, the former Inspector General of Police who incidentally is my first cousin. My father, Sheikh Muntaka-Coomassie was the younger brother to Alhaji Ahmadu-Coomassie. This Ahmadu-Coomassie was the first Permanent Secretary in the old Northern Region.

In a nutshell, that was how some of us, though Nigerians, ended up acquiring the

name, Coomassie which got its roots from the Kumasi of the Ashanti extraction in Ghana. My father was a great Sheikh and a renowned Islamic Scholar who was addressed by many as professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies. He was at one time the Assistant Chief Inspector of Area Courts in the whole of Northern Nigeria. He later became Instructor in Institute of Administration, Zaria. As for my mother, she was a full time house wife who devoted all her time in moulding us with the best of care and fear of Allah. That has largely helped us in attaining great heights in life.

I started my primary education in 1953 in Town School at No.2, Hancin Kare Ang., Kahu Zaria City in Kaduna State. There was actually a mild drama between me and my father immediately the idea of my enrolling in primary school was mooted to him. I could still remember how furious he was on hearing that I would be starting school.

He bluntly refused to allow me to be registered in the primary school. It remained so until one Mallam Nuhu intervened by promising my father that it was going to be

a good effort if he yielded his ground and allowed me to resume school. There was that widely held misconception and apprehension that children who acquired Western education were automatically lost to civilization.

On my first day at school, I could still remember how strange and odd I was. I must confess that I was quite dirty in school. So much so that when the school authority was making some appointments of pupils into key offices in the school, like Health Prefect, Head Boy, Labour Prefect and the rest, a certain female teacher,

Mrs Clara Kitchner pointed at me and announced to the hearing of everybody on the assembly ground that she was appointing me as the '*Sarkin Dauda*' of the school,

meaning the Chief of Dirty pupils. I was so embarrassed that I attempted to run away from school and hide myself away from the prying eyes of the pupils who were busy chanting the new unpleasant title.

However, as luck would have it, much later in life, precisely in 1977, that same

lady who was now elevated to the position of Education Officer, ran into me in Kaduna Township when we were pursuing our Law School allowances. On that fateful encounter she was forced by the reality of the time to reverse herself and the unappealing title of '*Sarkin Dauda*' that she gave me in school. There and then, she conferred on me the much more fascinating title of '*Sarkin Tsabta*' meaning Chief of Neat Students. That very encounter boosted my confidence and equally inflated my ego so much so that I began to walk tall around Kaduna metropolis with some air of panache.

Growing up in the village, was both riveting and fascinating. Whenever I cast my mind back to the days of my youth, I am always overwhelmed with joy and feeling of complete fulfilment. So many things happened to me early in life that would have made me not to be alive to be so honoured today. There was one particular incident

that cannot go unmentioned at a unique occasion like this. There was this mountain in Zaria that was very slippery and children of our time being very adventurous, suddenly cultivated the habit of climbing to the peak of the mountain which contained fragments of rocks and then start rolling down in fast cascade. That dangerous play would go on from sunrise till sunset. And I, being too much given to rough play and undiluted adventurism, decided to do same after watching them with great admiration from a distance.

On one fateful evening at exactly 7pm when all the children were already at home, I decided to sneak out of the house and ran to the mountain. It was already getting dark when I arrived there. Without much ado, I embarked on the adventure of mountain climbing. On getting to the peak, I set my self loose to cascade freely to the foot of the mountain. After repeating the deadly exercise the third time, I suddenly slipped into coma right inside a cave sandwiched in between two large rocks. I remained unconscious for three days right in the womb of this mysterious cave without water and food. It was on that fateful third day, while still lying motionless in the cave that I started hearing a voice that sounded like that of my

father calling my name.

With some little consciousness now sipping into me, I mustered some strength to answer the much awaited call. The search party led by my father was shocked to see me in such an enclave in an unconscious state. The first question my father asked was, "Saifullahi, have you eaten? And I said 'no' in a very faint voice. He then asked again, "have you taken water since the past three days?" And I replied again in the negative. They looked at each other and said, "This is indeed mysterious." Then I was just eight and half years old. The belief that incident generated in the whole of Zaria then was that the spirit took me hostage. Indeed, if there is any cat with nine lives here in our midst today, I think I am the one.

If my parents thought that that unpleasant incident would curtail my stubbornness, they were indeed mistaken. Much as my father tried to make me concentrate at school and probably become one of the best Islamic scholars, I often veered off the path of his wise counsel to do those things that suited my exuberance. I still remember my escapades at the private Islamic school my father enrolled me to study Arabic and Islam. At the school, I ran into a boy who possessed all the negative attributes it took to be my friend. It didn't take time for us to ignite a mutual spark to tag along the path of stubbornness and unseriousness which I was then reputed for.

As part of our game plan, we mutually agreed to get a comfortable and alluring playground where we would be reporting everyday for play instead of going to school. We would get dressed for school with our bags only to end up at the playground where we would be till close of school and later join other serious students home. That continued for two months without my parents knowing until the proprietor of the school, Mallam Ladan Magajiya reported me to my father who gave me the beating of my life and chained me like a criminal even though I confessed that I was lured into the act by Ibrahim, my partner in crime

who was much older than me.

My father made sure that my legs were chained for three weeks and equally warned Ibrahim to stay far away from me. For those tortuous three weeks, I was sleeping, bathing, eating and going to school in chains like a coup plotter because he said I was only intelligent in the wrong way. The embarrassing aspect of it was that my mates, friends and neighbours would gather and be ridiculing me and my manacle (or *Mori* in Hausa). In all honesty, I became a changed boy thereafter and began to behave well.

Life in elementary school and even up to high school was generally interesting and fascinating. Our parents were more concerned about education, especially Islamic education which my father placed a great premium. He did so much to navigate me through that course of life. To fulfil his desire, I had to get admission to Arabic Teachers College, Sokoto in 1965 and passed out in 1967; and later School of Arabic Studies, Kano between 1969 and 1971. I also did a short Sharia Course in Khartoum

University, Sudan in 1975. I was Arabic Teacher at Sultan Bello Primary School, Anguwan Sarki, Kaduna between 1963 and 1965. I also taught Arabic and English briefly at Riganchikun - rimary School, Kaduna before moving to Tudun Wada Primary School, Zaria in 1968. I was later appointed principal of my former school, Provincial Arabic School, Fada, Zaria city.

There was t is issue of overseas school of Oriental African Studies which was whispered to me by my friends. I immediately sat for it and passed very well. That automatically qualified me for preliminary studies in English and Arabic Studies at Bayero University, Kano, in 1972 where I spent one year and was remarkably successful in the examinations. Still basking in the euphoria of that success, a friend of mine who was to do his studies at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, called Illyasu Dalhatu went on to smuggle my name into

the admission list to read Law at the University without my knowledge and consent. As a matter of fact, I had long decided to toe the path of my father by settling for Islamic studies in Bayero University.

I was shocked to see my name conspicuously displayed on the page of Newspaper that I had been offered admission to study Law at Ahmadu Bello University. I quickly protested to register my resentment for such ambush but the University authority said the admission would not be cancelled, arguing that in Africa and Nigeria in particular, there was high demand for people who were both knowledgeable in Common Law and Sharia. So they decided that I should continue in the common law study to help fill the gap. That wasn't a good music to my ears as I had made up my mind to continue in my Islamic studies at Bayero University.

Buoyed by the strength of my choice of career, I decided to run away from Ahmadu Bello University. But to my greatest amazement, when I got to Bayero University with the hope of resuming my Islamic studies, they bluntly told me that there was no evidence whatsoever that they were going to continue with me as a student there. Conspiracy of destiny it seemed! With the weight of that outright rejection and palpable frustration, I had no other choice than to make a U-turn to Ahmadu Bello

University to continue my study of the much touted Common Law to match my opulent background of Sharia Law. That was more of the hand of destiny that had surreptitiously swung the pendulum in my favour.

Life on the campus of Ahmadu Bello University's Institute of Administration, Kongo Zaria was pleasurable and exhilarating. The study of Common Law had helped in broadening my horizon and whetting my mental appetite. Our Dean, Faculty of Law was Professor Ibrahim Khalif who later became the Attorney-General of the

Republic of Sudan. There were good lecturers like Baba Shani, Maaji Shani, S. S. Ameh, SAN, Dr Vincent Achimu, Jil Cotterrell and particularly the amiable Dr Samuel Mosugu, SAN, who influenced my life tremendously.

However, for the umpteenth time, the joy of finally embracing the study of Common Law at Ahmadu Bello University was again threatened and almost truncated as my father whose mind had been so tuned to Islamic Studies led a one-man riot squad to the University campus to protest my admission into the programme. He summoned the Director of the Institute of Administration, Prof. Tukur who was just like his son, to his house and warned him sternly to dismiss me immediately from school because he [my father] did not want his son to read law, and that instead, he should acquire Islamic education.

The Director, who was visibly shaken by that verbal attack, quietly persuaded him to handle the case in the best way possible to avoid any vestige of confrontation with the school authority. Later, the Director called me to his office and confessed to me that my father was indeed a tough man and a hard nut to crack. He expressed his utter dismay to hear a father seeking for the withdrawal of his child from such an elitist course like law. He, however, told me to keep calm and go about my studies as he had already mapped out a strategy to cage my father's rage.

He eventually persuaded my father to give him some time to work out my dismissal as it would be preposterous and out of sync with the University policy to dismiss a student who has neither committed any offence nor performed badly in his examinations. That seemed to be a blow below the belt to my father as he reluctantly agreed and left me to continue my studies with the hope that the stubborn boy would sooner than later misbehave in the school and earn an automatic dismissal which would be to his admiration. Fortunately for me, I finished my programme with Second Class Division.

Some of my elementary schoolmates include Dr Aliu Mohammed, popularly called Mairiga who is now a lecturer at Ahmadu Bello University. There was also Ibrahim Mua'zu, former Managing Director of Port Harcourt Refinery, who was admitted into elementary school the same day with me. Dr Dalhatu Sarki Tarfida, former Nigerian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom was two years my senior in elementary school. Others are Alhaji Surajo Haruna, currently a district head in Kajuru Local Government Council of Kaduna State, Adamu Sarki Fada, the Deputy Grand Khadi of Kaduna State, and several others. Unfortunately, some of them are late now, like Mohammed Dikko, Abdu Dikko and others.

At Ahmadu Bello University and the Nigerian Law School, I was fortunate to

share classrooms with great men and women endowed with rich character content that are still very much around and contributing immensely to national development. The list is long but suffice to say that those who readily come to mind are Hon. Justice Zainab Bulkachua, President of the Court of Appeal; Hon. Justice Ibrahim Auta, Chief Judge of the Federal High Court; Hon. Justice Fati Abdulsalami Abubakar, Chief Judge of Niger State; Abraham Yisa, Private legal practitioner; Hon. Justice Aisha, Chief Judge of Sokoto State; Adamu Dangana, a private legal practitioner and renowned banker; Hon. Justice Bwala, late Shaba Dagachi, and of course, my brother Justice, who is today on the Supreme Court Bench with me, Hon. Justice Clara Bata Ogunbiyi, JSC.

There is one man I hold in very high esteem not just because I worked with him early in life but for the fact that he paved the way for my sojourn in the judiciary. He is Hon. Justice Dahiru Musdapher, former Chief Justice of Nigeria. Shortly after my National Youth Service programme at the Ministry of Justice, Ilorin, Kwara State, as Pupil State Council in 1978, I returned back to my roots in Zaria and subsequently got a job as State counsel in Kaduna State Ministry of Justice. On one fateful day, while I was relaxing with some of my fellow State Counsel in our office, Hon. Justice Dahiru Musdapher who was then the Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, North Central State walked up to us and to my greatest surprise, he bowed before me and addressed me as "Your Worship."

I was lost in thought as I could not understand why such a highly placed state actor could bow before a little, less known Junior State Counsel like me. When I eventually summoned courage to ask why he was doing that to me, he said that he had just given me appointment as Associate Magistrate. Though it was cheering news, I wasted no time in telling him that my father who had been averse to Western education and its associated Common Law would not like it. But he stood his ground saying that my father would not do anything and that if at all he puts up his usual protest and disapproval of the appointment, I should immediately alert

my mother to counter him. That was what I actually did to contain my father's alarming protest as my mother never hid her joy and satisfaction with the new appointment.

Though my mother tried her best to douse his anger, my father never took it lying low. After some months, he took his protest to the Chief Judge, late Justice Shehu Mohammed by ordering him to dismiss me from Magistracy as he would not want to see his son work as Magistrate who will be dispensing justice that is rooted in the common law as against Sharia. The Chief Judge was shocked to hear that from a father who ought to be happy and proud of his son's accomplishments. But he never allowed my father to have his way. He told him point-blank that it would be a hard decision because he too [the Chief Judge] whom my father had severally praised as a good man was doing the same work that I was appointed to do and nothing bad has come out of it.

He made my father believe, though spuriously, that I enjoyed scholarship from the North Central State Government so, to suddenly dismiss me from magistracy without fully paying back the amount spent on me will attract dire consequence. But my father wouldn't take any of those threats as he told the Chief Judge that if the government decided to offer me a scholarship to study Common Law, they did it at their own risk as he never gave his consent to do so.

He later retreated after the Chief Judge convinced him to allow me work for some time to pay back the debt from my salary before they finally dismiss me from Magistracy. I was later appointed a Judge of the High Court of Kaduna State in November 1988. Surprisingly, my father was the first to congratulate me with an inspiring letter, advising me to be of good conduct by living above board like Hon. Justices Mamman Nasir and Mohammed Uwais who had been role models to many aspiring lawyers. Before going to the High Court, I served as Senior Magistrate

from

1979 to 1983, Chief Magistrate, 1983 to 1986, Secretary, Magistrate Association of Nigeria, Kaduna State Branch; President, Magistrate Association of Nigeria, Kaduna

State Branch. In-between those positions, I had served as Deputy Chief Registrar 1986 and Chief Registrar, Kaduna State Judiciary between 1987 and 1988.

I still remember vividly what a former CJN, Hon. Justice Mohammed Bello of blessed memory said while swearing me in as Justice of the Court of Appeal on 6th September, 1993. He said, “I sincerely hope one day you will be equally sworn in as Justice of Supreme Court.” To the glory of Allah, that prayer was answered in no distant time and I am now happily bowing out of the Supreme Court today. At the Court of Appeal, I served in different divisions across the country. These include: Port Harcourt, Jos, Abuja, Benin, Ilorin and Ekiti where I was the pioneer Presiding Justice. In all these states, I interacted and got acquainted with great men and women who have shaped my life by deepening my knowledge and appreciation of the rich cultural diversity of Nigeria.

My married life has not been too favourable. That is the aspect of life I can say without equivocation that I am less fortunate though I always thank Allah the Most High. It is saddening that I have only two surviving children out of five children given to me by my first wife who is now late. Three of the five children died at infancy. The surviving ones include a male and female. The female is happily married and blessed with children. While the younger one, the male just graduated from a University in Malaysia. Even at this age I still want to have children, as I am intensifying my prayers on daily basis for God to bless me with more. At one time I had four wives but now, they are three as one had died.

With due respect, I urge the Legislative arm to closely be watching the decisions of the Supreme Court. If the Supreme Court makes any decisions, without anybody

telling the legislators to act, they should immediately follow suit by making laws that will holistically encompass such decisions. The Supreme Court has no legislative powers to make laws but only interprets the constitution and any legislation which is not outside the constitution. It doesn't amount to asking for too much if the Judiciary requests the legislature to effect certain amendments to the existing laws.

There is no room for the legislature to delay whatever amendments sought by the judiciary. I would also like to solicit for mutual respect and relationship between the

legislature and judiciary. Similarly, there should be amendment of the constitution to stop interlocutory appeals from coming to the Supreme Court. It should be ended at the Court of Appeal. The number of Supreme Court Justices should also be increased from the present 17 to the constitutionally approved 21 to have the required full compliment and also ease the work load on their lordships. From my experience, an elevation to Supreme Court is an elevation to hard work, restlessness

and sleeplessness. I have to bring this aspect to the fore for the public to know and appreciate the enormity of work done by the justices of the Supreme Court to keep the country moving on the right track of law and order.

The Nigerian Judiciary has been grossly underfunded and neglected over the years and that has negatively impacted on the infrastructure and personnel 'within the system. For sure, it reduces productivity, increases frustration and deflates morale. It's on record that within the space of one year, the Judiciary Staff Union of Nigeria

(JUSUN) had gone on strike for a record three times, and the third one was more of an indefinite strike that virtually paralyzed court activities for several months, thank God for the timely intervention of the current CJN, Hon. Justice Mahmud Mohammed. Even as I speak now, some states are still having issues with their respective judicial arms.

That is not a good omen at this stage of our nationhood. The constitution provides for separation of power and independence of the three arms of government. I am using this medium to appeal to governments at all levels to free the judiciary from the bondage it has been subjected to over the years. Let it not just be said to be independent but should indeed be seen to be transparently independent. There shouldn't be any strings attached. We would not also like to negotiate our

financial independence. Let the judiciary take its destiny in its hands. Enough of being fed with the crumbs from the master's table.

I have devoted 38 of my 70 years to service to my fatherland. I came into service with great enthusiasm and expectations but unfortunately, I am today retiring with marginal satisfaction. My regret, from all indications, is the regret of many of my retired colleagues. The Nigerian Judiciary is only third arm of government on paper. It has always been treated like a paper Tiger in the scheme of things. I want to use this opportunity to call on the relevant authorities to put the judiciary in a proper perspective. It should be placed and treated as the third arm of government in every meeting and programme as enshrined in the Constitution.

The Chief Justice of Nigeria, being the head of the Nigerian Judiciary should always be recognized immediately after the Senate President. The CJN is the number four citizen of the country and should be so treated in all government's programmes. There is also the issue of justices' and judges' salaries which are still very far from an ideal package to take home. Effort should be made by the relevant authorities to increase the salary and also work out measures to improve the welfare of judicial officers, especially after retirement.

Sincerely, retired justices should be accorded the benefit of annual medical treatment locally and abroad, if the need arises to go for foreign medical care.

Retiring

justices of the Supreme Court who are not CJN should be granted some amount of money to build their own houses to avoid the embarrassment of living as tenants after reaching the pinnacle of their career in service to their fatherland. As it is presently, it is only those who occupy the office of Chief Justice of Nigeria that are

being taken care of after retirement by providing them with befitting accommodation built by the government.

I cannot end this speech without showing my appreciation to all former Chief Justices of Nigeria, starting from Hon. Justices M.L. Uwais, S.M.A. Belgore, I.L. Kutigi, Katsina Alu, Dahiru Musdapher, Mariam Aloma to the present, Hon. Justice Mahmud Mohammed, GCON, who has been assisting me since we were in Court of Appeal together. His regime is quite unique and from all indications, it's going to be a herculean task for any future CJN to easily surpass his achievements, especially his effective management of human and material resources. I could recall his mature intervention in the misunderstanding between a former CJN and myself. He came out strongly to say that injustice should not be done to anybody or any judicial officer especially a justice of the Supreme Court. With that show of courage and impartiality, the issue instantly died a natural death and justice prevailed.

The Nigerian Bar Association has been very active in the pursuit of the cause of justice. The leadership of the Association has maintained a healthy relationship with the Bench and that is quite encouraging. All the same, I will still call on the current executive of the NBA to further strengthen the relationship between the Bar and Bench. The slogan shouldn't be on paper alone, it should be practicalized. You must keep the flag aloft.

I will be failing in my speech if I do not thank Hon. Justice Wali, JSC (rdt); Justice Mustapher Adebayo Akanbi, former President, Court of Appeal, founding Chairman of ICPC and the Wakili of Ilorin, late Justice Shehu Mohammed, Justice Saidu Kawu also of blessed memory and Aliyu Salman, SAN, former Attorney General of kwara State. I so much appreciate and cherish the healthy relationship I had with all my colleagues in Supreme Court and former colleagues at the Court of Appeal. May the soul of Justice Okunola, JCA rest in peace. Hon. Justices I. T. Mohammed, JSC, Dalhatu Adamu, JCA and Zainab Bulkachua, JCA were my close associates at the Court of Appeal. My cousin, Alhaji Ibrahim Coomassie,

former Inspector General of Police and current Chairman of Arewa Consultative Forum and Sadauna of Katsina, has been a pillar of support to me. I have learnt a lot from him and have carefully trailed the path he charted in his rise to statesmanship.

I wish to use this special occasion to thank my wives and children for being supportive. A peaceful home presents a peaceful and organized man, so I can confidently say that I am a product of peaceful home. My senior wife, Kulsum (Uwargida) was married to me by my father. But when I gained my independence to make my own choice, I had to marry two other wives, Rahmatu the Princess of Safana, and Habiba Nana whose father, Baba Shani was my lecturer at ABU. My appreciation also goes to my former Secretary, Mrs Elebute and my current Secretary, Mrs Victoria. My supporting staff, Ishaya, Idris, James, Sunday (Danladi), Thomas and Emmanuel have been very committed and dedicated to duty. They have really done their best and have never disappointed me.

ALHAMDU LILLAH WASSALAMU ALA RASULUHUL KAREEM (S.A.W.).

Thank you very much for keeping a date with me. May Allah bless you all.