

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE HONOURABLE, THE CHIEF JUSTICE OF NIGERIA, AND CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF GOVERNORS NATIONAL JUDICIAL INSTITUTE HON. MR. JUSTICE W.S.N ONNOGHEN, GCON, FNJI ,AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON ASSET TRACING, SEIZURE, FORFEITURE, AND MONEY LAUNDERING, ORGANISED BY THE ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL CRIMES COMMISSION (EFCC) IN COLLABORATION WITH THE NATIONAL JUDICIAL INSTITUTE HELD AT THE ANDREWS OTUTU OBASEKI AUDITORIUM, NATIONAL JUDICIAL INSTITUTE, ON 25<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 2017.**

## **PROTOCOL**

It is a great pleasure to deliver the Keynote address at this occasion of the opening ceremony of a 2-day capacity building workshop organized by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), in collaboration with the National Judicial Institute for Justices and Judges and other stakeholders in the fight against corruption.

The theme of the workshop, *“Emerging Trends in the Investigation and Prosecution of Economic and Financial Crimes,”* is apt and in line with current realities in modes of investigation and prosecution of corruption cases in Nigeria. The theme is tailored to address pertinent issues confronting the Commission in a bid to strengthen it towards achieving its core objective. I must say that the timing for this collaborative workshop couldn't have been better than now. It further complements my recent directives to all Heads of Court to compile and forward to the National Judicial Council, (NJC), comprehensive lists of

all corruption and financial crime cases being handled by various courts and to designate Special Courts to handle these cases.

My Lords, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen, there is no gainsaying that the role of the Judiciary and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) are vital in the fight against corruption in Nigeria.

The Judiciary is an important stakeholder which has a crucial role to play in ensuring that, sustainable solutions to the mounting legal challenges to the success of the fight against corruption are sustained. This workshop will bring to the fore the challenges faced by the Commission as well as pontificate on the solutions, and expose stakeholders to global best practices in the investigation and prosecution of financial crimes. In this regard, as a prosecutorial agency, you must ensure that all material evidence is meticulously gathered and properly linked to the facts of a case as the Court is not Father Christmas that will give what you did not ask of it. The Supreme Court decision in *Ekpenyong & Ors. V. Nyong & Ors (1975 2 S.C. 71 at page 80)* is instructive in this vein.

Corruption in Nigeria, as elsewhere in the world is a complex and multi-faceted problem that cannot be solved in isolation. The reality of its effect is the socio economic threat it poses to Nigeria as a nation. Apart from distorting key macroeconomic indices, corruption ensures that basic amenities are unavailable. It suppresses economic growth and undermines the sustainable management of natural resources. It also breaches fundamental rights, undermines national security, exacerbates poverty and promotes instability. It does not only threaten the concept of constitutional governance but also degrades the institution of democracy and the rule of law. The implication of corruption in the

society is devastating and the seriousness of the offence cannot be overemphasized.

The independence of the judiciary is constitutional and cannot be undermined in the fight against corruption, as it is sacrosanct that we continuously maintain our oath of office. However, how well the judiciary dispenses justice especially in matters relating to financial crimes is not entirely in the hands of the judiciary. It is the joint responsibility of the judiciary, the Commission as well as other relevant agencies. It is a product of hard work, transparency and integrity of stakeholders. With the coming into effect of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) 2015, and the recent designation of Special Courts to handle corruption cases, an enduring success in the fight against corruption in Nigeria is assured.

My lords, distinguished participants, over-sensational reporting of financial and economic crimes by some members of the media is becoming a huge source of distress. Many of these cases are openly analyzed and decided on the pages of newspapers and television stations that play host to some legal practitioners. In some cases, the character and integrity of the Judges involved in these cases are impugned. Unfortunately, Judges have no opportunity to defend themselves. I therefore call on members of the press and legal practitioners to desist from this practice.

As we are all aware, there is now speedier dispensation of trials not just in respect of high profile cases but for all cases. These cases are being dealt with expeditiously to instill public confidence in the criminal justice system and the fight against corruption. Recourse to unnecessary technicalities employed by litigants and their Counsel are no longer tolerated by the Courts. Our decision to designate some Courts for these

cases would certainly aid in expeditious disposal. It is my hope that by so doing, the bulk of lingering corruption cases will be expeditiously determined.

My Lords, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen, while recognizing the great effort of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to rid Nigeria of the menace of corruption, the Commission, must however, operate within the ambit of the law and should not infringe on the fundamental rights of defendants. I therefore urge the Commission to eschew illegal detentions and ensure that suspects are charged to court promptly after investigation has been concluded.

Let me commend the Chairmen of Sessions and Resource Persons for agreeing to share their wealth of experience with participants. To the participants, it is my fervent prayer that at the end of this programme, you will all leave with a renewed desire and zeal in the discharge of your duties.

Thank you and God bless us all. Amen.

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