

OPENING REMARKS DELIVERED BY

HON JUSTICE I. U. BELLO, CHIEF JUDGE OF THE

FCT, AT A 3 DAY WORKSHOP ORGANIZED BY THE

MAGISTRATES' ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA (FCT

CHAPTER) FOR MAGISTRATES IN THE FCT HELD

FROM 27TH -29TH JUNE 2016

PROTOCOLS

I was delighted when the Magistrates' Association of Nigeria (MAN Abuja chapter) intimated me of their desire to hold this workshop. I was elated because the court had desired to hold a workshop of this nature, but unfortunately, that desire never got off the ground. Gestation in the judiciary is sometimes a lengthy process. As such, it was with open

hands that we spared nothing to encourage the facilitation of this exercise. Be assured that initiatives such as this will continue as it undoubtedly helps us to bridge the gap created by our training needs and budgetary challenges.

A Chinese proverb, which has found approval in our daily lives, suggests that, the man who does not learn is dark, like one walking in the night. Learning is the light that opens up the windows of the soul to the realities of the present and the possibilities of expanding the frontiers of the scope of our work. It is therefore in a bid to sharpen your accuracy, diligence and skills in the discharge of you duties as Magistrates that I did not hesitate to approve this training programme when the idea was muted and communicated to me. It is my hope that, though I know you are generally not deficient in your knowledge of the law, there is no harm in

the quest for more knowledge or, the regurgitation of what you already know. As you are no doubt aware, your task as magistrates is an onerous one that must be discharged with utmost diligence and circumspection.

Today, there are drastic changes in the administration of justice and the magistracy has much more to do to make sure the entire system of justice administration continues to serve the public as well as it should by making the system more accountable, and more transparent, to victims and to the public. Some of these changes include the increase in the jurisdiction of magistrates, the passing of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (2015), signing of the Child Right Enforcement Procedure Rules , expectation of

speedy trials in both criminal and civil cases, to mention but a few.

This training is therefore a good opportunity to provide insight into the work of magistrates to make it more efficient and central to our justice system. I am specifically delighted that the topics to be covered include very contemporary legal issues, ranging from your handling of interlocutory applications, and the covering of certain aspects of the innovative provisions of the ACJA including restorative justice, plea bargain, sentencing and recording of evidence. Other items for consideration are, practices regarding the recovery of premises in the FCT, summary trials, and very importantly, code of conduct and judicial ethics for magistrates. I see a wonderful opportunity here, to strengthen our capacities by drawing on the experiences of others.

Complacency is said to be the enemy of study. We cannot really learn anything until we rid ourselves of it. Consequently, I urge you all to approach the sessions with an open mind and an unquenchable thirst to learn. Take the opportunity provided by this training to sharpen your skills by taking advantage of your resource persons who have had vast experience garnished by their years of composite practice as judges of this court.

I have no doubt that the next three days will be well spent. Also in the same breath, on behalf of the beneficiaries of this exercise I express my sincere appreciation to my brother judges who will be facilitating and presenting papers in the course of this workshop. Though very busy with other responsibilities, Your Lordships have made out time to be here. I truly commend your dedication.

I would like to further extend my sincere thanks to everyone who had a role in the success of this exercise and to assure you again that we shall spare nothing to encourage initiative such as this that add value to the system.

Having said all this, this is an opportune time for me to declare that the workshop may now commence and I wish everyone fruitful, engaging and enlightening discussions.

Thank you.