In the name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful.

It is with humility that I ask for permission to recite a portion of chapter 46 verse 15 of the Divine book.

“O my Lord! Grant me that I may be grateful for the favour which thou has bestowed upon me and upon both my parents, and that I may work righteousness such as thou mayest approve, and be gracious to me in my issue. Truly have I returned to thee and truly do I bow (to thee) in Islam”.

I prayed because Allah has been merciful to me. He gave me life. He gave me good health. He gave me strength. He gave me family. He gave me a profession and indeed He gave me the opportunity of being the beneficiary of this Valedictory Session of the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory of our dear Country, Nigeria. To crown it all, He made me the first Chief Judge of this Court to be accorded this Honour in the 33 year history of this Court.

My second task is to appreciate all of you who are gathered here this morning to share with me the joy of this day which marks the happy closure of a chapter in the journey of my life. I am not in doubt that you will join me in prayers so that it may please the merciful Lord, to bless the remaining phase of my life with good health, full contentment and devotion to His service and humanity. I am also not in doubt that you will permit me to especially appreciate the Hon. Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Mohammed Bello Adoke SAN for all the positive roles he played in my appointment process and for the support and cooperation he gave me since I assumed the leadership of the Federal Capital Territory Judiciary. Despite his busy schedule, he gave me the rear honour of attending almost all our Judicial Service Committee meetings. During our maiden meeting he pledged full support to my leadership and assured me also, of attending all the meetings of the Committee and he kept his promise. Not only that, he participated actively and effectively in ensuring that my visions for the Federal Capital Territory Judiciary are positively realized. You are indeed a gentle and honourable man. I thank you most sincerely for all your efforts and contributions. I wish also to appreciate and thank the Hon. President of the Customary Court of Appeal, Hon. Justice Moses Bello for allowing me to tap from his vast experience of being a member of the Federal Capital Territory Judicial Service Committee for 23 years. Though he joined us not long ago, the Grand Kadi, Hon. Ibrahim Abba has shown an enviable maturity and support in promoting the cause of fraternity of the Federal Capital Territory Judiciary. He is a Soul blessed with a rear gift of appreciation. To the Hon. Judges of this Court, the Hon. Kadis of the Sharia Court of Appeal and the Hon. Judges of the Customary Court of Appeal, I owe an endless gratitude for the beautiful and humbling relationship and for accepting my dream of creating a family among us. The Chief Registrars, all our able Directors, our Magistrates, Area Court and Customary Court Judges and the other support staff of the Federal Capital Territory Judiciary, the secretary of F.C.T./JSC and the support staff, I pray for Allah’s mercy and protection. I thank you all my dear members of the Federal Capital Territory Judicial family. I thank you also for making my task of complying with my dear mother’s charge to take each and everyone one of you as my brother or sister easy. Allah bear me witness that, on my part, I have lived a life of just that. Mr. Abdul Ibrahim and His Royal Highness Chief Asara A. Asara, our two members of the F. C. T. Judicial Service Committee, are truly blessing and asset to the service of the F. C. T. Judiciary. They are God fearing, fair minded, just and honourable men. I will cherish your good company. Kindly, accept my sincere appreciation for your contributions to the service. To the Hon. Minister of the Federal Capital Territory Senator Bala Mohammed, I say a big thank you for the cordial relations we shared in the area of the Federal Capital Territory Judicial administration.

I now turn to appreciate those who played role in my life. I begin with my dear father, Mallam Bukar Mohammad and mother Hajja Fatima Goniram for being the source of bringing me forth to this life; for nurturing me; moulding me; training me and preparing me for the task of embarking on my life’s journey and for their blessings which made me what I am today. May Allah have mercy on them and reward them and admit them both into His garden of bliss Al – Jannatul Firdaus. Amin. To my nursery teachers, my Quranic teachers and all those who taught me from my primary through to my University and every being who increased me in knowledge, I pray to Allah to reward them in His own way.

I was born on the 31st day of March, 1950 in Mafoni ward Maiduguri, Borno State. My father, Mallam Bukar Mohammed was a native of Mallam Maja town of Dikwa Emirate. He was a Quranic teacher. He left his home town to Maiduguri in pursuit of further education where he met my mother, Hajja Fatima Goniram, daughter of an accomplished Quranic teacher, Goni Bukar. The Union was blessed with ten children, seven girls and three boys. I was the sixth child. All the five before me were girls and have since departed this sinful world. My immediate junior brother, Bukar Bukarambe, is a research Professor at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, Victoria Island, Lagos. Next to him was Maryam. She too has departed to the great beyond. Mohammed Kasim, the third boy in the family and immediate junior brother to Maryam has also crossed the river of death. Our last born, Zainab is married with children and grand children.

I started my nursery education so early in life that I cannot remember my exact date of enrolment. What I can remember is, that I was always taken to the school located in Yerwa boarding Senior Primary School by Bintu an elder Sister to my classmate Abba Zubairu (popularly called Abba Captain) because of his rather pronounced bow legs and playful nature. I got enrolled into Yerwa Central Primary School, Maiduguri in 1959. Our headmaster was Mallam Musa Sheikh Awwal. He was fair complexioned, Shiwa-Arab by tribe and a disciplinarian to the core. During my primary school days, I was also attending Quranic School in the evenings. My first Quranic teacher was Mallam Kori and later I moved to Mallam Ibrahim. Because of my background in Quranic School, I was occasionally assigned to take Islamic Religious knowledge classes when I got to class seven. When I left Maiduguri to Kano for my post primary education at the School for Arabic studies, Kano in 1966, I could hardly speak Hausa language. My school mates therefore make fun of my poor command of the language. The school was not boarding so we were staying in rented apartments. My landlady was a Kanuri woman who had lived in the city for about forty years. Her name was Yachellu. Strangely, for all the years she spent in Kano, her Hausa was hardly better than mine. She was a kind hearted, generous and humorous old lady. Her first husband’s name was Ibrahim so she never calls me by name and had special interest in my well being. I appreciate her kindness and pray to Allah to have mercy on her. In my set, seven of us came from Borno Province. The other six are, Professor Tijani El-Miskin, Alhaji Umara Mustapha (a retired Principal of Mohammed Goni College of Legal and Islamic Studies), Amb. Ibrahim Mai Sale Abba-Kura Jibrim Haruna Idrisa Timta (a retired Head of Service in Borno State), and Hamidu Gambo. There I met many students who came from the various Provinces of the North. Those I can remember include Hon. Justice Saifullahi Muntaka Commassie J.S.C., Professor Munzali Jibrin, Bamanga and Justice Shehu Atiku, the retired Chief Judge of Kano State. Later, His Royal Highness, Alhaji Tijani Ibn Saleh, the Emir of Gazargamo in Yobe State, Professor Abubakar Mustapha, and Sheikh Musa Mohammed, the Chief Imam of the Abuja National Mosque among others, joined us. Our teachers were so kind and helpful. Mrs. Aisha Lemu, a British woman who later married Sheikh Ahmad Lemu (the retired Grand Kadi of Niger State) was our English teacher. Mr. David Onyiloye was our Arithmetic teacher. He was not happy with my poor performance in his subject so he graciously offered to couch me in his house in Kundila Housing Estate in the evenings after school hours. My pass in Arithmetic WAEC examination was due to the most generous assistance I got from Mr. Onyiloye and I remain grateful. Arabic language was another subject I was not comfortable with and I knew I must pass that subject to get my Grade II Teacher’s Certificate. I therefore devoted much time to it and got credit in my final examination. This feat turns to be a problem to further my education by causing me two and a half years delay. The Commissioner for Education, North Eastern State, late Mallam Ibrahim Biu, who doubles as the Chairman of the States Scholarship Board insisted that whatever course I will persue, must have a combination of Arabic language. I told him it wasn’t because Arabic was my best subject but because I put a little more effort to ensure that I made it but, he would have none of it. Thus, while I was looking for a school acceptable to him, I took up appointment with the then Borno Native Authority Education Department as a class Teacher and was posted to Gomboru Primary School in Maiduguri. I was the only Grade II Certificated teacher in the school at the time so, I was asked by the headmaster Mallam Baba Bosoma, to take all the subjects in class 6. I moved with them to class 7 and they sat for their Common Entrance Examination under my tutelage. Happily all but one made it. In 1973, I got admission into the Faculty of Law, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria to read for my Diploma in Sharia and Civil Law. We were the first set of that programme which includes among others, His Royal Highness Tijani Ibn Saleh, Hon. Justice Abdulkadir Jega JCA, Hon. Justice M. M. Dodo, Late Abdulkadir Wase, Hon. Grand Kadi Abubakar Shetima (Rtd), Ambassador Ibrahim Mai Sule, Shettima Kaumi Alkali Kalli, a retired foreign service officer, Sheikh Musa Mohammed and late Kani Bappah. I got credit in my final result and was offered admission to read for my LL.B Degree in Sharia. Meanwhile, University of Maiduguri offered me LL.B. (Common Law) and I opted for the latter. There I had the privilege of being taught by Professor Niki Tobi who later took up appointment on the Bench and retired as a Justice of Supreme Court. Professor Olusegun Yerokun is another able Nigerian lecturer who taught me. We were 16 in our class. The only female among us, Mrs. Beatrice Iliya, is now a Judge in Gombe State High Court.

After my call to the Bar in 1981, I worked briefly in Borno State Sharia Court of Appeal. At a very tender age, I had the privilege to man the Registry of the Court and was introduced to the beauty of team work and good working relationship by the Hon. Grand Kadi and his two Kadis. They were Hon. Grand Kadi Baba Kura Imam, Kadi Shettima Mohammad Abani and Kadi Musa Kida. The Grand Kadi retired before his retirement age to enable Shettima Mohammed Abani get into the office. He too left before he was due to allow Musa Kida the chance to retire as Grand Kadi. All the three are now of blessed memory.

In August 1982, I moved to the Ministry of Justice Borno State as a State Counsel and rose to the rank of Ag. Senior State Counsel before I was appointed Magistrate Grade I in August, 1984. As a Magistrate, I worked in Maiduguri, Biu and Bama before I was appointed Secretary Judicial Service Commission in 1989. I became Director of Area Courts in 1990. In that capacity, I was directly in charge of 85 Area and Upper Area Courts in what is today Borno and Yobe States and I had the privilege of paying inspection visits to all these Courts but Yunusari Area Court because the bridge linking Geidam and Yunusari town was damaged at the time. I also had the honour of seeing to the establishment of 11 new Area and Upper Area Courts during my tenure. In 1991 I was appointed Chief Registrar of the Borno State High Court. My appointment as a Judge of this Court was made on the 9th of November, 1992 and was sworn in on the 10th of December, 1992 by late Hon. Justice Mohammed Bello in Lagos.

When the issue of my appointment to the F. C. T. High Court Bench was mooted, I objected to the idea. My Governor then, Governor Maina Maaji Lawan, who is now a Senator of the Federal Republic called me to his office and told me I was going without asking for my reasons. I responded thus: “Your Excellence, I am only a Civil Servant and not a Civil Slave.” But the Governor would have none of this. He insisted that I was going and I had no choice. At that point, my Chief Judge, Hon. Justice Kaumi Mohammed Kolo (Rtd) came to my rescue and asked what was my problem, I responded by saying that I had an aged mother and my junior brother Professor Bukar Bukarambe had left to the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, in Lagos. That if I also leave to Abuja who will give her food? To this Hon. Justice Kolo advised that I see my mother and tell her what was going on. I did and she graciously gave me her permission and blessings adding that, I should bear in mind that when I go, those members of staff I will meet and work with, are my brothers and sisters. That if death comes to them, I will be the one to bury them and if it comes to me, they will be the one to bury me. With these words, she prayed for Allah’s blessings and allowed me to come. We were three in our set, the other two were Hon. Justice Sidi Bage now on the Court of Appeal Bench and Hon. Justice Bassey Ikpeme of the blessed memory. With our appointment, the number of Judges of this Court rose to nine. Hon. Justice M. D. Saleh was the Chief Judge. Permit me to appreciate him and place on record my gratitude for the role you played in my appointment process and for leading this Court for close to twenty years. May the merciful Lord reward you richly for pioneering the establishment of F. C. T. Judiciary and for your simplicity and easy going nature. The foundation of the F. C. T. Judiciary bears your name, Hon. Justice Mohammed Dahiru Saleh. You are the father of this institution and so it shall be for all times. On behalf of the F. C. T. Judiciary today, by the special grace of the Almighty, it is my solemn duty and privilege to acknowledge you, honour you and pledge our loyalty and collective appreciation to you sir.

My first test came when my brother Hon. Justice Usman Kusherki died in the National Hospital here in Abuja and we carried his body for burial in his home town, Kusherki. After the interment, I was sitting by his grave side pushing sand on the grave. The thought of what my mother told me came to me and I was over taken by uncontrollable emotions. I saw in truth what she told me. May Allah have mercy on them both. I did not ask to come here, I did not lobby to come here, I did not want to come here. But destiny played its role. I am grateful to Allah who shaped my destiny. I am also grateful to Hon. Justice Kaumi Mohammed Kolo and Senator Maina Maaji Lawan for finding me worthy to represent our State at the Federal Judiciary. I am equally grateful to my mother for giving me her motherly blessing and allowing me to venture into the Federal Judicial Service.

At this juncture, I crave for your indulgence to allow me bore you on my upbringing. My upbringing was a case of two extremes. Both were meant to instill in me the virtue of speaking the truth. My father chose the inducement approach. He gives me money or extends words of praise each time I speak the truth even if what I did was destroying his valuables. He will only add, do not do such again. My mother on the other hand will go as far as to scare me by threatening to burn my mouth if I ever tell lies. Thus, either way, I grew up keeping to speak the truth. I started ripping the benefits of that teaching when I was still young. The Hon. Grand Kadi Baba Kura Imam (of blessed memory) saw this in me and he quickly drew me close to himself. Over time I earned his trust so much that he was comfortable giving his open cheques and consulting me over issues that were far beyond my age. My honour and integrity were never questioned. Hon. Justice Kaumi Mohammed Kolo is another human being who taught me a lot in my life and in preparing me to stand to the task of my chosen career. Hon. Justice Kolo as Chief Judge of Borno State, comes to the office 7.30 a.m. and never allows his work for the next day. He never respects money but what a man is made of. He always tells us he respects character and hard work. Each time Magistrates or Area Court Judges are appointed, he tells them, those of you who are looking for honour and promotion of the cause of justice are welcome into our fold but those of you who are looking for money, you should please leave before we show you the way out. His Lordship shows more interest in attending to the welfare of his Judges than attending to his own needs.

When I came to this Court, I related closely with my brother Justice Sidi Bage JCA. He knew Abuja much more than I did so we drove round the city in his car after office hours. The other Senior Judges were friendly. The members of support staff were and indeed are tolerant and nice. However, like any new environment, it took me sometime to adapt. When the number of Judges increased and Justice L. H. Gummi took over the leadership as the second Chief Judge, he lifted the Judiciary from its previous position of being a work place to that of a family level. He did his best during his tenure and made the F. C. T. Judiciary to be the envy of many Judiciaries in this country. Even with the last Thursday fire incidence in the Probate registry, our Maitama Court Complex remains a beautiful edifice to the Glory of Allah and his committed industry. When he left, he did me one honour. He prayed for me and blessed me. That singular act, is what I cherished the most for it made me feel I have achieved the task set for me by my father which is, to seek for the appreciation of my Superiors. His Lordship, who is now by the grace of the Almighty Allah, his Royal Highness, acknowledged my loyalty to him and blessed me for that. Today, by special grace and mercy of Allah, the honour fell on my shoulder to acknowledge on behalf of my brother Judges and all the other members of the F. C. T. Judicial family, all your good works in the service of this Judiciary. May Allah be with you and bless your reign as Emir of Gummi. We acknowledge your achievements while in office and extend our gratitude and appreciation to you, your Highness Sir.

I am not in doubt that Allah has blessed this Judiciary and I pray that it may please Him to continue to shower His blessings, mercy and protection upon us all. Permit me to place on record the excellent relationship the Judges of this Court have accorded to me. If I have succeeded in making us a united family, I say All praise be to Allah, the Lord of mankind.

From this day, I will have enough time for my wives and children and grand children. I appreciate you all for your patience and your prayers. May Allah reward you abundantly and bless you in His own way, Amin.

With these words, I conclude my story and end my address. May Allah forgive my mistakes.