

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY DR. ALEX A. IZINYON, SAN, OFR AT
THE SPECIAL VALEDICTORY SESSION OF THE HIGH COURT OF
THE FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY IN HONOUR OF HON.
JUSTICE ISHAQ USMAN BELLO FNIALS, CHIEF JUDGE OF THE
HIGH COURT OF THE FEDERAL CAPITAL TERRITORY ON HIS
RETIREMENT ON 5TH JANUARY, 2021**

On behalf of our Chairman Body of Senior Advocates of Nigeria (BOSAN), Abuja Chapter, Alhaji Abdullahi Ibrahim, SAN, CFR, I congratulate my lord the right Honourable Justice Ishaq Usman Bello for his meritorious and invaluable service to the Judiciary and by extension, to the Nation as the Chief Judge of the High Court of Federal Capital Territory. We felicitate with you on this joyful occasion of your successful completion of your tenure. We salute you for your invaluable contribution as the Chief Judge of the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory.

It is usual and apt on an occasion of this nature to x-ray the tenurial stewardship of the honoree. Before then, looking at his lordship this morning piecing through the facade of the face mask that has restricted full view of the facial examination, my lord still looks radiant, ebullient, robust, strong and energetic defying the 65 years old age as seen in his birth record of 5th January, 1956.

Writing on retirement at 65, the famous writer **George Burns** was pissed off when he poignantly enthused:

“Retirement at 65 is ridiculous. When I was 65 I still had pimples.”

My lords, distinguished ladies, and gentlemen, my lord still show pimples, showing even though he is retiring but he is not tired.

He was born on 5th January, 1956 in Zaria, Kaduna State.

He attended Government Secondary School Katsina State, between 1972 and 76, where he obtained his West African School Certificate (WASC). He got his IJMB Certificate in Katsina College of Arts, Science and Technology in 1979.

He obtained his LL.B (HONOURS) in Civil Law from the prestigious Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna State, in 1982, and his LLM in International Criminal Law from the same University in 2008. My Lord holds a Ph.D (LLD) (HONORIS CAUSA) from the Caribbean University. He is currently undergoing a Ph.D Law Programme. Honourable Justice Bello equally has to his credit, a Certificate in International Criminal Law as well as a Certificate in Administration of International Criminal Law from the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, Lagos.

The record of his sojourn blow by blow till he was sworn in as the Chief Judge of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja on 28th May, 2015 bear eloquence of a jurist of diligence, focus, hard work, perseverance to attain this position and the laudable achievements which these attracted. Permit me to rely on the famous quote from *Williams Shakespeare* in **Twelfth Night Act 2 Scene 5** when Malvolio said: *“Some are born great, some achieve greatness and some have greatness thrust upon them.”*

Oscar Wilde the famous writer added to the dilemma of old age when he said:

“The tragedy of old age is not that one is old, but that one is young.”

Not done yet the renowned author **Anthony Powell** in a penchant manner, put the scenario thus:

“Growing old is like being increasingly penalized for a crime you haven't committed.”

Indeed my lord though born great with the standard of those days for the ability to attend both primary and secondary school obtained the West African School Certificate (WASC) and proceeded to obtain the IJMB certificate and obtained his Bachelor of Law Degree, he *achieved greatness* and never had it dropping at his door step as seen in the pursuit of post graduate degree and various working experiences. Not done yet, he is currently a doctorate student.

My lord upon assuming office as the Chief Judge of the Federal Capital Territory, built on the existing legacy left by his predecessors initiated by my noble lord, **Hon. Justice L.H. Gummi**, now the Emir of Gummi, followed by the next successor Hon. Justice I. M. Bukar. This trend must continue.

He was not careless in handling the affairs as assigned by his predecessors, thus he could be entrusted with greater task and responsibility. **Albert Einstein** put it this way, *“Whoever is careless with the truth in small matters cannot be trusted with important matters.”* He studied the past to get the insight into the future. CONFUCIUS once said: *“Study the past if you would define the future.”*

His lordship left on one in doubt about his *vision*, his *mission* and his *values*.

They are aptly reproduced in the programme set on for the occasion.

Vision: *To establish an excellent judiciary with impeccable integrity.*

Mission: *To ensure effective and efficient justice delivery in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.*

Values: *Justice is built on public trust and confidence. The Federal Capital Territory, Abuja Judiciary benefits from the trust and confidence by rendering services that meet the needs, yearnings and aspirations of the Public.*

This vision remains clear and in focus, hence the recorded achievements. It is akin to the word of that Black American Army General who became United States of America Secretary of State **Collin Powell** who said:

“A dream doesn't become reality through magic; it takes sweat, determination, and hard work.”

It is the great determination and hard work of my lord that have produced the achievements recorded within the brief period.

My lord within the period built **men**. These are fellow Judges, Magistrates, Area Court Judges, Sharia Court Judges and Administrators in the judiciary. That is the best legacy for a leader to leave. It is in affinity with an Indian proverb which says:

“If you are planning for one year plant rice. If you are planning for ten years plant trees, if you are planning for 100 years plant people.”

My lord has planted these people and the inevitable harvest is the legacy created. We salute my lord.

He set out to achieve the **vision**, the **mission** and the **values** with equanimity of mind, fortitude, doggedness, tenacity of purpose not minding the challenges and oppositions ahead. He had in mind the words of wisdom of the famous Novelist **Daniel Defoe** (1609 – 1731) author of **Robinson Crusoe** when he said:

“I take my man Friday with me.

Wherever God erects a house of prayer,

The Devil always builds a chapel there;

And 'twill be found, upon examination,

The latter has the largest congregation.”

My lord demonstrated the leadership and team spirit to achieve these. It reminds us of the exclamation of the world acclaimed humanist **Mother Theresa** when she said: ***“I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.”***

Yes, my lord threw the stone and the ripples are the supportive, creative and innovative brother Judges who share in these **visions** and their actualisation. The body urge that this bond continue and the new leader to continue on the team spirit and build on it. My lord is born a leader, who knows his way and can show it, fitting squarely to the aphorism of the best selling author **John C. Maxwell** who said: ***“A leader is one who knows the way, and shows it”***.

He was never afraid to set out without any qualms of error or mistake. **It has been said that a person who never makes a mistake never tries anything new” (Albert Einstein)**. One cannot therefore forget some of those humble achievements within this brief period. They are:

“As Chief Judge, FCT Abuja, Hon. Justice Bello accomplished the following infrastructural development feats:

- 1. CREATION AND COMMISSIONING OF JUDICIAL DIVISIONS AT BWARI, GWAGWALADA, & NYANYA/KARU.***
- 2. CREATION AND COMMISSIONING OF ZUBA MAGISTARTE COURT COMPLEX.***
- 3. CONSTRUCTION OF HONOURABLE JUSTICE MOHAMMED UWAIS MULTI-PURPOSE CONFERENCE CENTRE AT GUDU.***
- 4. CREATION OF WITNESS SUPPORT UNIT***
- 5. CREATION OF FAST TRACK COURTS.***
- 6. RENOVATION OF THE HIGH COURT COMPLEX AT KWALI.***

7. ***RENOVATION OF THE HIGH COURT COMPLEX AT GWAGWALADA.***
8. ***CONSTRUCTION OF 3 NEW HIGH COURT BUILDINGS AT GWAGWALADA.***
9. ***CONSTRUCTION OF 3 NEW MAGISTRATE COURTS AT GWAGWALADA.***
10. ***RENOVATION OF THE HIGH COURT COMPLEX AT KUBWA.***
11. ***CONSTRUCTION OF 111 HOUSING UNITS AND INFRASTRUCTURE FOR JUDGES, MAGISTRATE AND STAFF OF THE HIGH COURT OF THE FCT, ABUJA AT A LOCATION BEHIND M.D. ABUBAKAR POLICE BARRACKS, DEIDEI, ABUJA***

The contract for this project is being handled by Brains and Hammers, one of the most reputable building construction firms in Nigeria.

My Lord, Hon. Justice Ishaq Usman Bello, as Chief Judge, has carried out the largest number of legal reforms in the annals of the FCT Judiciary. Some of these legal reforms worthy of mention are:

1. ***Child's Right Act (Enforcement Procedure Rules) 2015. This activated the provisions of the Child's Right Act by setting out guidelines and procedures to be followed in implementing that law.***
2. ***Practice Direction on Sentencing guidelines for FCT Courts (2016), revised and updated in 2020. This is to streamline the custodial sentencing process, making it more reliable, predictable and consistent.***
3. ***Practice Direction on Judgment Enforcement in Civil Cases (2016). This has helped accelerate the rate at which judgments are enforced, thereby forestalling the frustration of the process.***
4. ***Practice Direction on the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (2017). It is interesting to note that this Practice Direction has been found to be so invaluable in justice dispensation that it was recommended for adoption by all states by the then Hon. Chief Justice of Nigeria, HON. JUSTICE WALTER ONNOGHEN.***

5. *A bench Book of Best Practices (2017). This is a documentation of the experiences and thoughts of the Courts over time in the handling of complex financial crime cases.*
6. *Practice Direction on the service of Processes for the High Court of the FCT (2018).*
7. *FCT Urban and Regional Planning (Appeal Procedure) Rules, 2018.*
8. *Revision of the High Court of the FCT Civil Procedure Rules (2018). It is instructive to note that the old version of the Rules has been in operation since 2004. His engagement with his brother Judges and other stakeholders in the justice sector to achieve this feat is highly commendable.*
9. *Creating an Electronic Document Management System (EDMS), a software system for centrally organizing and storing large volumes of digital court documents.*
10. *Improvement on the platform for the Electronic Filing System which is also known as E-Filing. A platform for filing and service of court processes by litigants electronically.*

In keeping with his vision of making the ABUJA MULTI-DOOR COURT (AMDC) a force to be reckoned with in Dispute Resolutions, My Lord built and equipped a befitting place for it at Gudu, named HON. JUSTICE MOHAMMED UWAIS DISPUTE RESOLUTION CENTRE. The CENTRE expeditiously handles disputes through Arbitration, Meditation, Negotiation and various other legally recognised means of resolving disputes.”

Despite the demands and commitment in the forgoing above my lord still have time to sit and preside over cases and deliver judgment therein to give a final seal of permanent legacy in the erudite Judgment and Rulings for posterity sake of time, five of such are:

1. ***AMBASSADOR SAIDU ADAMU DAURA VS. JUMMAI GWALEM & 3 OTHERS. IN SUIT NO.: FCT/HC/CV/1804/2009***

2. ***MRS. HENRIETTA O.M. TALABI (formerly pearse) VS. FEDERAL CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY & 4 ORS. IN SUIT NO. FCT/HC/CV/1227/2007.***
3. ***FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA V. CHIEF OKECHUKWU EMMANUEL CHUKWULOZIE & 3 ORS. IN SUIT NO. FCT/HC/CR/39/2008.***
4. ***FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA VS. UMAR MUSA IN SUIT NO. CR/7/2004.***
5. ***FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA VS. IKECHUKWU OBIDIKE & ORS. IN SUIT NO. FCT/HC/CR/50/2006.***

In the first case which was a criminal case under Section 19 of the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act (ICPC), his lordship convicted the Defendants accordingly.

The second case is a civil matter involving land dispute in the Federal Capital Territory which revolves round unlawful revocation of land by FCDA. Judgment was given to the Plaintiff accordingly.

In the third case another civil case revolve round contract and issue of right of first refusal involving sale of house in Federal Capital Territory, Judgment was given to the Defendant.

In the fourth case was a criminal case, his lordship discharged and acquitted the four Defendants who were standing trial under Section 26(1)(c), 22(5) of the Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Act (ICPC).

The fifth case is another criminal case where the five accused persons were standing trial relating to culpable homicide under Section 221 of the Penal Code. Here his lordship discharged the defendants as the Prosecution failed to prove the case against them.

It is pertinent to point out the observation of my lord which runs through his quest in the attainment of speedy trial in criminal cases where his lordship deprecated the tardiness of prosecution in criminal trial.

This is what his lordship said:

“I must take time to start that this case has indeed suffered a protracted period of delay principally due to the absence of one of the prosecution’s witnesses who was said to be on international assignment at Darfur. The matter kept on dragging awaiting his arrival for protracted period of time before any meaningful progress could be made. This is not good for our judicial system and indeed the entire administration of justice; it is an attitude that must be avoided if the integrity of the system is to be sustained in the eyes of the public.”

Norman S. Poser writing on the erudite jurist **Lord Mansfield** in the book **Justice in the Age of Reason** said *“As a Judge, Mansfield was a brilliant, valiant, daring and resourceful. He possesses not only great intellectual courage but moral courage as well.”* Permit me to put in place of Lord Mansfield, my Lord, Honourable Justice I. U. Bello, CJ. He is an enigma of unparalleled proportion.

My lord in the arena of Federal Capital Territory Judiciary and the nation at large **came, saw and conquered**. He is a jurist per excellence.

Finally, the body is concerned with the unending feud, factions and fighting among members of the many branches of the Nigerian Bar Association in Nigeria. It is on the increase.

This has not been the practice years back. It is however a signal of the lack of discipline, control, greed and egoistic cleavage by some of our members. We must give peace a chance and must yield to one another in order to achieve peace and fight a united battle and peaceful co-existence.

Our body is in torch with the Nigerian Bar Association to stem this tide and where possible invoke disciplinary measure on members who are not prepared to abide by the Constitution, advice but pursuing selfish agenda with a view to tearing apart the Nigerian Bar Association.

To this end we plead with the judiciary to be wary in coming to rescue or intervention and granting in most cases conflicting Orders from the same Judicial Divisions in the same branch. This is scandalous and defeats the cooperation between the Bar and the Bench which has been the seamless web for our mutual co-existence and cooperation.

We urge your lordships to exercise some restraint even if we fail as we are putting our house in order to avoid washing our dirty linens in the public.

CONCLUSION

Towards the end of this write up my last daughter **Alexis** walked into my study.

She saw me still at my desk in the early hours and quipped, if I needed any of my favorite green teas, (a minimum of 3 sachets in one big cup) or my Riven Alkaline coffee, I replied thanks.

She then asked what I was working on this far time of the night. I informed her that I got a late notice to deliver a valedictory speech for a noble jurist who did us proud in the Federal Capital Territory. She said oh that is great but don't forget to include where he has failed too and that a speech of this

nature is usually full of praises, successes, encomiums and laurels without failures. When she left I ruminated on what she said, went back to my write up and on what my lord have done, to see the failures, after all there is nothing wrong in periscoping the errors of a leader or ruler to see if he did well or failed woefully. After all, a King was weighed on scale of balance to determine whether he performed, he was found wanting and got the notorious slogan –*mene mene tekel upharsin – meaning thou art weighed in the balances and are found wanting.*” Unfortunately I have periscoped all my lord’s sojourn and he was not found wanting at all.

It reminds me of a saying of **Oscar Wilde** where he said “*It is absurd to divide people into good and bad. People are either charming or tedious.*”

My lord is *charming* not tedious. He is an indefatigable Jurist. He is vibrant, valiant, humble, purposive, creative, devoted, tenacious, innovative and a quintessence gentleman at all times. His wit is infectious. His sense of humour is bullet pointed.

He is not giving to peccadillo or **de minimis** but focus on the substance. He is a tolerant Judge unlike a Judge in 2008, in a murder trial at Woollich Crown Court, London, a Mobile phone rang out but as the Judge grimly scanned the court to locate and reprimand the thoughtless culprit he realised the ringing was coming from inside his red Judicial robes. “*I didn’t think I had it with me today*” he told the court.

We will miss you. We congratulate you again, we congratulate your family who provided the needed atmosphere for you to achieve these successes. We wish you a robust and well deserve rest in retirement but with kind admonition that your brain is still enlivened and must be kept as such for longevity sake as strongly admonished in the classical work **IKIGAI – The**

***Japanese Secret to a Long and Happy Life* by Hector Garcia and
Frances Miralles**

Thank you.

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