

AN ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE JUSTICE E. F. IKPONMWEN ON THE
OCCASION OF THE VALEDICTORY SESSION OF THE HONOURABLE JUSTICE
CROMWELL OSAMWONYI IDAHOSA AS HE RETIRE FROM OFFICE TODAY,
25TH JANUARY, 2017.

Today we are gathered to pay tribute to the Honourable Justice Cromwell Osamwonyi Idahosa as he takes his bow from the bench having served meritoriously and attained the statutory age of 65 years. We are here to say an official and very public farewell to our own gentleman Chief Judge. His Lordship, for whose sake we are here was born on 25th day of January, 1952 to the late Mr. Perry Obaruduagbon Ikpomwonsa Idahosa and Madam Eunice Omosede Edokpayi in Benin City.

He attended the prestigious Immaculate Conception College, Benin City for his West African School Certificate, thereafter he proceeded to the elitist Edo College in 1970 for his Higher School Certificate. In 1971, he gained admission in the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) Ile-Ife to study law, he attended the Nigeria Law School and was called to the Nigerian Bar on 2nd of June 1976. His Lordship did his National Youth Service in the Ministry of Justice Cross River State at Ikot Ekpene (now part of Akwa Ibom State). He then started active private legal practice in the law firm of C. O. Ihensekhien & Co and later established his own from i.e. C. O. Idahosa & Co. I count myself most fortunate of all my colleagues as I had the singular privilege of having prosecuted some cases as a State Counsel with

his Lordship then as a private legal practitioner and having him appear before me when I was a Chief Magistrate Grade I before joining him on the High Court Bench, a period spanning from 1980 till date i.e about thirty-six years.

In 1993, His Lordship was appointed and sworn in as a Judge of the Edo State High Court. Since his elevation to the High Court Bench, he has served in several capacities in addition to carrying out his primary duties as a judge. He has chaired commissions of inquiring, sat as a member of election petition tribunal and chairman of a Local Government Election Petition Panel among other ad hoc duties. His Lordship has attended several Local and International Conferences.

On 18th November, 2009, His Lordship was sworn in as Acting Chief Judge, Edo State before being sworn in as Chief Judge on 21st March, 2010. His Lordship is also the Chairman of Edo State Judicial Service Commission. In May 2012 he was appointed into the National Judicial Council as a member for a two year tenure. His Lordship is a member of the Board of Governors, National Judicial Institute, as well as a member of the Body of Benchers.

On this very auspicious occasion of His Lordship's Valedictory Court Session, we salute his dedication and commitment to duty as well as his professionalism which spanned years. This duty saw him work till the very

last days of his retirement e. g. posting of some Judges, Prison visits to Ubiaja Prisons, Oko Prisons and Sapele Prisons, Visit to High Court Ekpoma and its environs, visit to High Court Auchi, even delivering judgement at the twilight of his tenure as he said while addressing dignitaries at the High Court Ekpoma. Other achievements to His Lordships credit includes:-

- 1. The creation of the Criminal and Civil Division of the High Court**
- 2. The eradication of missing police case files through the purchase of photocopiers to duplicate police case files at the stage of remand of accused persons in the Magistrates' Courts.**
- 3. Establishment of the Edo State Justice Sector Reform Team.**
- 4. Launch of the Edo State High Court (Civil Procedure) Rules 2012**
- 5. Inauguration of the Edo State Family Court**
- 6. Inauguration of the Multi-Door Court House**
- 7. Launch of the Family Court Civil Procedure Rules**
- 8. Launch of the Multi-Door Court House Rules**
- 9. Swearing in of Sixty-six Notaries Public**
- 10. Establishment of two additional magisterial districts**

11. Facilitated the increase in jurisdictions of magistrates in both civil and criminal matters.

12. Inauguration of Irrua High Court and Usen Magistrate Court.

13. Creation of the Website for the Edo State Judiciary

We must therefore use this valedictory ceremony as ample opportunity to thank His Lordship for his dedication to duty and cause of justice. I also need to acknowledge the fact that all his brother judges in a private valedictory meeting held yesterday concluded that the tenure of his Lordship was peaceful. There are a myriad of experiences, too many to mention, that have impacted on us in a memorable and meaningful way. Permit me to mention some of these memories to show the good nature of this iconic Chief Judge. We also recall the happy memories we shared with his Lordship like his telling us how his mother taught him to sit back after every prayer so the prayer would sink in properly instead of walking off!!!. I recall the peals of laughter we often hear resounding at meetings which reflect the vibrant and happy times we shared with his Lordship.

We are here this afternoon also to show our respect and love for the retiring Chief Judge of Edo State, the Hon. Justice Cromwell Osamwonyi Idahosa. It is with deep pains that we must remember that his Lordship assumed office as Chief Judge of Edo State after the unfortunate demise of the

Honourable Justice Micheal Irobun Edokpayi in November 2009. At the Valedictory of the Late Chief Judge, His Lordship in his speech showed the very soft and humane side of his person when he broke down in tears. The High Court Bench often and usually creates a bond of friendship among great minds and we in Edo State Judiciary are truly brothers. Hon. Justice C. O. Idahosa has spent over 24 years on the High Court Bench and about 7 of those years as Chief Judge. His Lordship has always been a good listener and a 'go to' person. He has a way of putting everyone at ease.

Hon. Justice C.O Idahosa is not type of Judge that Pats-Acholonu JCA (as he then was) spoke of in the case of Onyejekwe V the Nigeria Police Council (1996) 7 NWLR (Pt. 463) 713 thus “Learned trial Judge --- immersed himself into the water of disputation and came out causing waves and not ripples in his methodology of approach.”

His Lordship is known to be calm and manoeuvres well in reaching his decisions, never one to cause waves. He always holds the scale of justice in such a way that it is balanced and not unnecessarily controversial. His Lordship has aptly been described as gentle, neat and fatherly. I had cause in a the write up on him to refer to him as “Cromwell the genteel”. We of Edo State Judiciary are proud of the legacies His Lordship is leaving behind and we salute him for his stoic candour exhibited while he sat as Chief Judge of Edo State. His Lordship is married to his adorable wife Mrs. Adesuwa Helen Idahosa and they are blessed with children and are grand parents.

May I crave your indulgence to pay fitting tribute to the delectable spouse of the retiring Chief Judge, Mrs. Adesuwa Helen Idahosa who by calling is a nurse and it is evident she brought this to bear in caring for our Chief Judge

ensuring he remained as dashing as he looked when he started practice as attested to by no less a person than the Enogie of Ekpoma.

We salute the Chief Judge for raising a stable family. Anyone who knows our Chief Judge would know he delights in his family and cares for them. As he retires we are confident that he would enjoy a peaceful loving and warm family life.

I must not fail to thank His Lordship profusely for making the transition process seamless and smooth. He started the process early and saw it to a logical conclusion. For this I am immensely grateful. I also want to thank all our guests that came from far and near to grace this occasion especially the Justices of the Supreme Court and Court of Appeal, Chief Judges Learned Senior Advocate, Chiefs and other dignitaries including my own beloved spouse Chief E.O. Ikponmwen. We appreciate you all for taking out time from your busy schedules to honour our invitation.

Finally It is with mist feelings and my singular honour to bid our quintessential, erudite and convivial Chief Judge fare well on behalf of Edo State Judiciary and to assure him that by the grace of God his legacies would not only be maintained but strengthened further for the benefit of our father land. I also want to wish His Lordship a HAPPY BIRTHDAY as he adds another year today.

God bless you and we wish you safe journey as you return to your various destinations.

Thank you.