

SPEECH DELIVERED BY EDE ASENOGUAN ESQ. CHAIRMAN
NIGERIA BAR ASSOCIATION (NBA) BENIN BRANCH ON THE
OCCASION OF THE LAUNCHING OF THE EDO STATE FAMILY
COURT (CIVIL PROCEDURE) RULES 2017 AND THE
INAUGURATION OF THE FAMILY COURT EDO STATE AT THE
HIGH COURT COMPLEX ON THE OF 9th DAY OF JANUARY, 2017

Your Excellency, the Governor of Edo State,
The Rt. Honourable Speaker of the Edo State House of Assembly,
The Honourable, the Chief Judge of Edo State,
Other Judges of the Edo State Judiciary here present,
The Solicitor-General and Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Justice,
Learned Senior Advocates of Nigeria here present,
Your Worships, Magistrates of Edo State Judiciary,
Your Honours, President and Member of Customary Courts,
Chairmen of Nigerian Bar Association Benin, Auchi, Ekpoma, Igarra and
Uromi Branches,
Members of the Bar,
Our Chief Launcher and Other Launchers,
Our Eminent Invited Guests,
Members of the Press,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Kindly permit me to at this stage to adopt and rely on the already well established protocol.

For me, it is indeed a double honour to present this speech at this very August gathering. A gathering that will go down in history and reverberate across the four corners of the globe as what we are doing

here today will place Edo State amongst the few states in the country that have established the Family Court to cater for the rights of children as envisaged by the Child Rights Law of Edo State 2007.

It is double because, I served as a Member of the Committee that drafted the Rules, and also as a Member of the Committee for the Implementation of the Family Court of Edo State. This was even before I became Chairman of the Benin Branch of the NBA. So our efforts as a Committee is coming to fruition today, and as Chairman of the NBA, the Bar is delighted that the Family Court is finally being inaugurated in Edo State.

It is noteworthy that the Child Rights Law was promulgated by the Edo State House of Assembly since 2007, and has been in force since then. However, it has taken a decade for us comply with the Provisions of S.149 of the Law.

S.149 Provides:

“There shall be established for each Local Government of the State a Court to known as the Family Court (in this law referred to as "the Court") for the purpose of hearing and determining matters relating to children.”

I must at this stage commend and salute the courage, determination and doggedness of my Lord, the Honourable, the Chief Judge of Edo State, Hon. Justice C. O. Ldahosa who in spite of the very lean resources available to the judiciary, has by this occasion today, kept faith with his vision of seeing to the establishment of the Family Court before he hands over the baton of leadership of the Edo State Judiciary to another.

When he inaugurated the Family Court Committee sometime in 2014, he had charged the Committee then to do everything possible to produce the Rules and work out other details as it was his dream to have the

Family Court working before he leaves office. My Lord, today that dream is a reality I congratulate you.

On behalf of the Nigerian Bar Association, I wish to congratulate every Edo indigene, especially the Governor of Edo State Mr. Godwin Obaseki. This milestone achievement is happening few months into his assumption of office as Governor. I wish to state that, even though, we are inaugurating the Family Court today and launching the Rules, the point must be made and seriously too, that the Edo State Judiciary is in dire need of infrastructural transformation, human capital rejuvenation as well as conducive and inspiring incentives for Judicial Officers including those of the Lower Bench. In this regard, we urge the government to look at our court rooms and premises and provisions of vehicles for Magistrates and Area Court Presidents.

Your Excellency, We will not fail to seize this opportunity to remind you of our demand for the financial autonomy of the Judiciary which some states are already enjoying (including our Sister State of Delta.) You did promise the Bar that the Bar and the Judiciary will be given their due attention when you become Governor. Your Excellency today, you are Governor. I believe it is time to walk the talk.

Permit me Your Excellency to draw your attention to the fact that, the traditional and time tested tradition of the formal opening the legal year for 2016-2017 legal year is yet to be performed. This legal year is almost half way gone.

Also, it is now common knowledge that my Lord, the Hon. Chief Judge will be retiring in a few days from today. We believe that as it is the tradition, a befitting Valedictory Court Session is held in his honour to mark his retirement from the Bench. We are by this medium informing that, there are 2 other Judges that have retired from the Edo State Judiciary whose formal and official pull out (Valedictory Court Session)

have not been performed. I appreciate the fact that these retirements were not during your tenure but you agree that government is a continuum, especially where the transition is within the same political party.

We are hopeful that, you mean well for the State, but we must emphasize that the judiciary must be given its due priority as the 3rd arm of Government.

I believe that issues relating to children both Civil and Criminal will enjoy better and faster attention now that there is a specialized court dedicated to handling such cases. I encourage my colleagues to take out time to study the law (Child Rights Law) and the Rules of the Court and take advantage of the provisions therein as we strive to put smiles on the faces of our clients.

I also must commend the efforts of the Ministry of Women Affairs and some NGO's in the State and other International Organisations that took interest in Edo and also agitated for the establishment of the Family Court.

We are happy that today, our collective dream of caring for the Rights of our children has been given a boost by this inauguration today. Certainly, our children are vulnerable and violated. They sure deserve better and I believe that no effort should be spared in ensuring that the Rights of Children are protected and enforced whenever or wherever same is breached or violated.

I must not fail to thank our Chief and other Launchers as well as other invited guests. Please join us in sensitizing our people that Edo State now has a Family Court and that violators of children and their rights should take note.

For us at the Bar, we shall continue to ensure that we collaborate with every and any individual, group or agency whose aim is the advancement of Edo State and her people and we will not shy away from the enemies of Edo State and her people, these ones we shall continue to challenge and confront fiercely and fearlessly. We are confident that Edo can and certainly be better.

Thank you all.

EDE ASENOGUAN ESQ,

CHAIRMAN NIGERIA BAR ASSOCIATION (NBA) BENIN BRANCH