

GOODWILL MESSAGE FROM THE HON. JUSTICE E. F. IKPONMWEN – CHIEF JUDGE OF EDO STATE ON THE OCCASSION OF THE 2017 LAW WEEK OF THE NIGERIA BAR ASSOCIATION BENIN BRANCH

PROTOCOL

I am indeed privileged and honoured to have the opportunity of addressing you today at this year's Law Week for lawyers of the Nigeria Bar Association Benin Branch. I am grateful to the Chairman and executive members of the NBA for the kind invitation to chair this landmark yearly and very useful law week training for lawyers with the theme fighting corruption within the rule of law in a democracy.

May I first and fore-most use this opportunity to thank the leadership and members of the Benin Bar for their support and out pouring of love for me during my swearing in as Chief Judge of Edo State in January, 2017.

This law week and its theme offers a platform for us all to improve our callings as both worshippers and officers in the temple of justice thus creating a better society. As often stated, corruption is a cankerworm that has eaten deep into

the fabric of the Nigerian society. It has been rightly adjudged the bane of Nigeria's problem which needs head on tackling. Corruption is not confined to Nigeria, it is worldwide and affects the growth and development of many nations. It causes under development, economic stagnation, poverty, infrastructural decay, collapse of values and dehumanization.

Corruption has been defined severally, but Transparency International defined it as "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain". This therefore hurts everyone whose life, livelihood or happiness depends on the integrity of people in position of authority.

Another author Susan Rosa Ackermen stated that it is "distinct behaviours that violate the trust placed in a public officer. It involves the use of public position for private gain"

Corruption can be found in all facets of our society. In the judiciary it has unfortunately reared its ugly head. This is strange because the judiciary is entrusted with the authority to punish crimes emanating from corrupt practices as provided for in section 98 of the Criminal Code and replicated in the Independent and corrupt practices and

other related offenses Act, Code of Conduct Act, Money Laundering Act e.t.c.

Corruption includes behaviours that deviates from ethics, morality, tradition, law and civic duties. Any act that deviates from and contrasts acceptable standard is a corrupt act.

In the case of *Biobaku V. the Police* (1951) 20 NLR 30 P.31 the court held that “the receiving of offering of some benefit as a reward or inducement to sway or deflect the receiver from the honest impartial discharge of his duties” is a corrupt act.

Successive Nigerian Governments have sought to fight corrupt practices and this has not yielded much fruit in my respectful view thus giving rise to the much publicized statement by Mr. Nuhu Ribadu, one time Chairman of E.F.C.C when he said “when you fight corruption, corruption fights back”. Professor Chinua Achebe of blessed memory in his book, “The trouble with Nigeria” (1983) stated that “keeping an average Nigerian from being corrupt is as difficult as keeping a goat from eating yam”

However, I am of the view that every right thinking, morally sound and integrity driven Nigerian has a duty to fight corruption and must start by being the example of these qualities i.e. having integrity, being honest and morally sound with good character.

I therefore whole heartedly congratulate the Nigerian Bar Association, Benin Branch for choosing to fight corruption. Lawyers must desist from those practices that are corrupt for they are the “eyes” of the society.

It is hoped that at this Law week you aim at identifying the corrupt practices prevalent in the judicial system where you ply their trade and find lasting solution to them.

The average Lawyer is trained to be courageous and to speak out. To know of corrupt practice anywhere and not to have the courage to speak out is as deadly as the corrupt practice itself.

It is on this note I welcome all to this law Week and wish you a very successful Law Week.

