

**RE: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES FOR THE CONTAINMENT OF COVID-19
ISSUED BY THE PRESIDENTIAL TASK FORCE ON COVID-19**

Ref. No. NJC/CIR/HOC/II/658 May, 2020

To: All Heads of Courts/Judicial Bodies,
Federal and States Judiciaries.

**RE: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES FOR THE CONTAINMENT OF COVID-19 ISSUED
BY THE PRESIDENTIAL TASK FORCE ON COVID-19**

This Circular is imperative following the Guidelines issued by the Presidential Task Force on COVID-19 for the phased easing of the lockdown and having regard to the fact that the National Judicial Council, as Your Lordships are aware, had constituted a Committee to, inter-alia, come up with urgent practical strategic measures to be instituted in order to ensure that Courts continue to function despite the lockdown and the COVID-19 Challenges. These measures are expected to include recommendations on how the Courts could leverage on Technology to hold virtual sittings or remote hearings.

2. In addition, the National Centre for Disease Control had made an announcement to the effect that we are now at Community transmission phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, it is a fact that many of our Judges and Justices are in the high risk category in terms of age bracket, resulting in many having underlying condition that make them more vulnerable to the virulent manifestation of the disease once infected. Hence, we cannot afford to put them and their families at risk by allowing a haphazard resumption of Court without clear Guidelines and Protocols that will safeguard the health and wellbeing of the Judges, Lawyers, Court Staff as well as Members of the Public.

3. It is however observed that some Courts, without awaiting the outcome of the NJC Committee, have resumed and continued to conduct proceedings as if normalcy has been restored.

4. It is for the aforementioned reasons that all Heads of Courts and Judicial Bodies are directed to continue to abide by the NJC Circular No. NJC/CIR/HOC/II/656, dated 6th April, 2020 until the following measures are put in place:-

- i) Guidelines on the use of appropriate Technology on virtual or remote hearings issued by the NJC;
- ii) Strategic measures and Guidance must be provided for Courts where physical hearings must be held and they must do so sparingly and in line with appropriate regulations and guidelines issued by the NJC, and the health protocols approved by the NCDC. This should cover things like access control, infrared temperature detector/thermometer, space requirement per person, physical distancing within the Court premises, protective gears, sanitation and periodic decontamination of the Courtrooms amongst other measures;

iii) Every Court/Judicial Body Administrator is required to provide adequate safety equipment like face masks and sanitary stations with hand washing facilities to the Judges, Justices, Staff and general Court users;

iv) In line with the Guidelines for the phased easing of the lockdown by the Presidential Task Force, only Staff on the Grade Level 14 and above shall resume duty.

5. All Heads of Courts/Judicial Bodies are hereby directed to bring the content of this Circular to the notice of all Stakeholders in justice administration, please.

Hon. Dr. Justice I. T. Muhammad, CFR
Chief Justice of Nigeria and Chairman
National Judicial Council.