

# **PRACTICE DIRECTIONS FOR VIRTUAL COURT SITTING/HEARING IN THE EDO STATE JUDICIARY**

In exercise of the powers conferred on me as the Chief Judge of Edo State by Section 6 (6) and Section 274 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), Section 53 (1) of the High Court Law, (2018) Cap 65 Vol. III, Laws of the Defunct Bendel State of Nigeria 1976 (as applicable in Edo State) by virtue of Section 4 of Act No. 41 of 1991, Section 49 of the Magistrates Court Law, Section 68 of the Customary Court Law No. 2 of 1984, The Administration of Criminal Justice Law Edo State 2016 and by virtue of all other laws enabling me in that behalf.

**I, Honourable Justice Daniel Iyobosa Okungbowa**, Chief Judge of Edo State of Nigeria, do hereby issue the following Practice Directions:

## **1. APPLICATION**

This Practice Directions shall apply to all the High Court Divisions, all Magistrates' Court and all Customary Courts in Edo State, parties, counsel, court staff involved in such proceedings and such other persons as may be allowed by the Court.

## **2. OBJECTIVES OF THIS PRACTICE DIRECTION SHALL BE:**

- a. To provide a frame work for conducting virtual court sittings.
- b. To ensure the timely and efficient disposal of cases.
- c. To ensure the use of suitable technology.

- d. To ensure the efficient use of available judicial and administrative resources.

The method by which Virtual Court Sessions will be conducted shall be as directed by the Court in accordance with the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), applicable Laws, Rules and this Practice Direction.

### **3. CONDUCT OF VIRTUAL COURT SESSIONS/ COURTROOM DECORUM**

- a. The virtual court session shall be conducted as the court deems fit.
- b. Virtual hearing shall maintain the same decorum as physical courtrooms and all the courtesies and protocols applicable to a physical court shall apply to virtual court proceedings.
- c. Interruptions, background noise, and inappropriate conduct shall not be tolerated.
- d. The presiding Judge reserves the right to mute, remove, or sanction participants for misconduct.
- e. Considering the nature of the virtual court session, lawyers are expected to be concise and precise in their submissions and adopt already lodged documents, without having to repeat the content of the documents.
- f. Costs, if directed to be paid, shall be paid within the prescribed time, commencing from the date on which the order convening proceedings through video conferencing is received.

#### **4. MODE OF VIRTUAL COURT SITTINGS/HEARINGS.**

- a. The court may on its own motion or on an application by a party, schedule cases for virtual court sessions.
- b. Parties and Counsel shall liaise with the registry for the purpose or scheduling hearings.
- c. Where a virtual court session is scheduled, the registry shall communicate to the parties involved through email, WhatsApp or any other electronic means as the court may direct, informing them of the following:
  - i. The date and time of the session.
  - ii. The intending business of the day.
  - iii. The electronic means of joining the virtual session.
  - iv. The "Meeting ID" and;
  - v. The Password.
- d. Before any virtual hearing, the registry and the ICT Division of the court shall liaise with all counsel on record to ensure that suitable facilities are available, such as: fast-speed and reliable internet connectivity; Uninterrupted Power supply; end -user hardware/devices (i.e desktop, tablets, smart phones - any one of these or a combination thereof); collaborative platform (e.g. Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Google Meet, Skype or any other audio or video communication method approved by the court).
- e. The court shall thereafter direct:
  - i. An appropriate communication method for the hearing; or
  - ii. An adjournment, if a virtual hearing is not possible.
- f. Notice of a virtual court session shall be stated on the cause list and on the official website of the Edo State Judiciary.

- g. Only parties and their lawyers, agents and counsel are authorized to join the virtual court session platform. However, members of the press and other external participants may be accredited by the court to attend the virtual court session.

## **5. ATTENDANCE AND IDENTIFICATION**

- a. Participants must join the virtual court session at least 20 minutes before the scheduled time.
- b. Legal practitioners shall appear in official attire.
- c. Parties and witnesses shall identify themselves on record.
- d. The court will require that parties provide means of identification as recognised by the Federal Government of Nigeria or State Government. For foreigners, identification shall be by means of international passport, national identity card issued by their home country, resident permit, or any other valid travel or immigration document recognised by law.

## **6. PUBLIC ACCESS AND RECORDINGS**

- a. Virtual proceedings are to be conducted in open court, unless ordered otherwise.
- b. Proceedings of the virtual hearing shall be recorded by the court.
- c. The court may live stream the session or allow limited online public access.

- d. Unauthorized recordings, broadcasting, or rebroadcasting is prohibited and an infraction of this provision and will be deemed as contempt of court.
- e. Certified true copy (CTC) of the virtual proceedings shall be made available upon request and on the payment of the relevant fees.

## **7. FILING AND SERVICE OF PROCESSES**

- a. Notwithstanding the provisions of the High Court of Edo State (Civil Procedure) Rules 2018, the Edo State Magistrates' Court (Civil Procedure) Rules 2018, and the Edo State Customary Court Rules, 2018, service of court processes may be effected by email, whatsapp or as otherwise directed by the court.
- b. Such service in paragraph (a) above shall constitute good and proper service.
- c. Where an electronic mode of service is employed, time shall prima facie begin to run from the date the process was sent and successful delivery of messages shall constitute sufficient acknowledgement of service.
- d. Service of processes shall be approved by a screenshot from the electronic device used in sending the process showing the date and time of dispatch of same to the other party.

Where there is no electronic filing system and pending the institution of such electronic filing systems, hard copy/paper based filling at the court registries shall continue to be the default filing process for litigants.

## **8. PRESENTATION OF EVIDENCE**

- a. Evidence may be presented via screen sharing, document upload, or any secure method approved by the court.
- b. Where physical evidence is necessary, parties may be directed to submit such at a designated court registry through a recognized courier service.

## **9. TECHNICAL CONTINGENCY**

In the event of technical failure, the court may:

- Adjourn the matter.
- Switch to an alternative platform.
- Reschedule as deemed appropriate.

## **10. ADOPTION OF WRITTEN ADDRESSES**

- a. The court shall have discretion in the allotment of time to counsel for making submissions or adopting addresses.
- b. Adoption of written addresses shall be in compliance with the provisions of the rules of court.

## **11. JUDGMENT AND/OR RULING**

1. The court may deliver its rulings and judgments in a virtual court session.

2. The court shall, through the registry, notify counsel and parties by email or whatsapp of the date reserved for the delivery of judgment and ruling.
3. Considering the nature of virtual court sessions, the court will only deliver a summarized judgment and ruling by reading out just the decision, while the certified true copy (CTC) of the full judgment and ruling containing the full analysis of the decision of the court will be forwarded to parties electronically.

## **12. AMENDMENT**

The Hon. The Chief Judge may review this Practice Direction and/or issue further directives as the need may arise.

## **13. CITATION:**

This Practice Directions may be cited as Edo State Judiciary Virtual Court Sitting/ Hearing Practice Directions, 2025.

## **14. EFFECTIVE DATE/COMMENCEMENT**

This Practice Direction shall come into force on the.....<sup>1st</sup> day of September....., 2025.



**HON. JUSTICE DANIEL IYOBOSA OKUNGBOWA  
CHIEF JUDGE  
EDO STATE**