

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE CHAIRMAN OF NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION
AUCHI BRANCH ON THE OCCASION OF THE CHIEF JUDGE OF EDO STATE
HONOURABLE JUSTICE CROMWELL. O. IDAHOSA PRE-EXIT VISIT TO AUCHI ON
17TH JANUARY 2017**

PROTOCOL

On behalf of the Nigerian Bar Association Auchi Branch, I welcome my Lord the Honourable, the Chief Judge of Edo State and his entourage to Auchi. Not too long ago, on the occasion of this Branch's first Annual Dinner and Lecture, you honoured us with your presence. It is a great pleasure to have you again in our midst, this morning on the occasion of your pre-exit visit.

Without mincing words I make bold to say that the relationship between the outgoing Honourable Justice C.O. Idahosa, the Chief Judge of Edo State and the NBA Auchi Branch has been very robust, to some of us it is akin to that between a mother and a child. We recall with nostalgia the period between 1999 and 2004 when my Lord C.J. presided over the Auchi Judicial Division of the High Court of Justice Edo State, which then included the now Fugar and Agenebode Judicial divisions. Prior to my lord's posting to Auchi, the court was congested with cases; litigants and lawyers alike were becoming frustrated with the apparent inactivity of the court. Some of us who were still at formative stage were worst hit, clients were not ready to pay appearance fees until they were sure the court would sit, our practice was mainly at the lower courts yet we needed to learn the art. Then Honourable justice C.O. Idahosa entered the scene.

At the time my Lord arrived at Auchi, there was no befitting accommodation; he has to make do with the Magistrate's quarter. However, my Lord, the honourable Chief Judge was not deterred; he understood the enormity of the task and quickly settled down to perform his duties. He revived the court; every working day was a sitting day for him. To him Auchi was a home where he even spent his weekends in order to do the job. The High court came alive, the court's cause list became manageable and the litigants' confidence rekindled. My Lord did not stop at that; he offered effective leadership to the lower courts under his supervision.

My Lord was not done; he believed that a formidable Bar was a sine-qua-non in the administration of justice and therefore encouraged us to build one. Indeed, he personally performed the swearing in of the F. A. Okanigbuan led executive then. He promised to ensure that Auchi Bar is recognised at Edo State Judiciary functions like opening of legal year and valedictory sessions. It was therefore not surprising that after doing a tour some members of this branch approached the Hon. Justice Constance Momoh (now retired) who was then the Chief Judge to extend my Lord's stay at Auchi Judicial Division by, at least, another year. In a rare demonstration of love for this Branch, the Honourable, the Chief Judge of Edo State accepted. Thus when he took up the mantle of leadership, of the State judiciary, we simply chorused "our own is now the C.J.+"

Despite the difficult conditions, my Lord had to operate as the Chief Judge his tenure witnessed some landmark achievements. A few of these are the creation of new judicial divisions of the High Court, introduction of the Edo State High Court (Civil Procedure) Rules 2012, creation of Criminal Divisions of the High Court and more recently the introduction of family court and the setting in motion the machinery for the introduction of the multi-door court system.

Unfortunately due to financial constrains some courts like the one my Lord when he served here are still in dire need of renovation. We pray that this relief would be reflected in your handover notes. The issue of financial autonomy- a case the Judiciary Staff Union Edo State chapter fought for and for which they were not paid salaries for the period- has not still been resolved. This is another "relief "we are praying the "Court" to reflect in the handover notes.

We have no doubt that the sojourn of Hon Justice Cromwell O. Idahosa at the Bench is a success story. My Lord C. J. you knew that this time would eventually come when you would have to bow out but we do hope that as you take your exit you will continue to make your wealth of experience available to the legal profession, Edo State and indeed the nation in any capacity you may be called upon. On behalf of NBA Auchi Branch, I wish you a fruitful and peaceful retirement. Once again welcome home.

Thank you.