



BODY OF BENCHERS NIGERIA

PRESS RELEASE ON THE JUST CONCLUDED CALL TO BAR CEREMONIES **RE: MATTERS ARISING**

The Body of Benchers successfully conducted Call to Bar Ceremonies held on 6th and 7th December, 2022 at the Body of Benchers Complex during which 4,711 new wigs were admitted to the Nigerian Bar. The Call Ceremonies were presided by the Chairman, Body of Benchers, Chief Wole Olanipekun, CFR, SAN and had over a hundred members of the Body of Benchers in attendance. Notable among the Benchers present include the Vice Chairman, Body of Benchers, Hon. Justice Mary U. Peter-Odili, CFR, Chief Justice of Nigeria, Hon. Justice Olukayode Ariwoola, GCON, past Chief Justices of Nigeria among whom are Hon. Justice S. M. A. Belgore, Hon. Justice Mahmud Mohammed, GCON and Hon. Justice W. S. N. Onnoghen, GCON. Others include Hon. Justice Umaru Abdullahi, CON who is a former Chairman of the Body, Life benchers, Presiding Justices of the Court of Appeal Divisions, Chief Judges and Attorneys General, Chairmen of the National Assembly Committees on Judiciary and Representatives of the Nigerian Bar Association.

While presenting his address, the Chairman of the Body of Benchers emphasized on the need to provide adequate remuneration for young lawyers and urged the new entrants to exhibit high sense of decorum, nobility, respect and courtesy to courts and the seniors in the profession. The Chairman stressed on the need to ensure adequate welfare package for Judicial Officers by drawing the attention of the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, President Muhammadu Buhari which so far has yielded the desired result going by the steps taken by the Federal Government. The Body has engaged a reputable Accounting firm to come up with a comprehensive report that will proffer a lasting solution to the issue of Judges welfare.

It is on record that the Media (Print and Social Media) has been agog with reports regarding the call by the Nigerian Bar Association for the Chairman of the Body of Benchers, Chief Wole Olanipekun, CFR, SAN not to preside over the Call to Bar ceremonies. This widely circulated call, has saturated the media space, from Sunday, 4th December, 2022 till now.

At the meeting of the Body of Benchers held on Monday, 5th December, 2022, which notice was given on 14th November, 2022, the sole item for discussion was consideration of the Report of the Screening Committee of the Body, preparatory to the Call to Bar Ceremonies. The report was duly considered and approved. Under AOB, the President of the Nigerian Bar Association informed members that he had written a letter to the Chairman of the Body to which the Chairman stated that

although he had not read the letter as it was not yet brought to his attention, he was aware of the fact that it had already been circulated in the media, particularly the Social Media, and that despite the fact that the letter was personally addressed to him and not to the Body, he was prepared to wave all his rights as he would want it discussed, one way or the other in view of the contents of the letter which centred on his personality and integrity. The NBA President then stated that he sent the letter to members' mails in the evening of Sunday, December 4, 2022 and also made copies of the said letter and brought to the meeting, but majority of the members responded that they were yet to receive such mail. Some members were of the view that the letter was definitely not ripe for consideration, assuming it was meant or addressed to the Body. The said letter was received at the Body of Benchers Secretariat at 9.32am on Monday, 5th December, 2022.

In spite of all the comments and contributions of members, the Chairman still passionately pleaded that the matter be taken and made reference to a previous letter written in July, 2022 on the eve of Call to Bar Ceremonies. Majority of members were of the view that the Chairman drop his insistence that the matter be conclusively decided, bearing in mind several factors including the fact that majority of the members did not receive the email, coupled with the fact the Call to Bar subject was too important and central to the Body and the content of the letter was not such that could be taken under AOB. Furthermore, the letter was addressed to the Chairman, Body of Benchers, therefore, there is need for the Chairman's response to be received for proper consideration.

It was therefore resolved that the matter be taken at the Emergency Meeting of the Body scheduled to take place in January, 2023, at a date to be communicated to members. Thereafter, the motion for adjournment of the meeting was moved. The Body frowned at the use of the Social Media platform in forwarding sensitive official communication.

I have been directed to issue the above statement following the repeated calls made seeking information on the conduct of the Call to Bar ceremonies and the position of the Body of Benchers on the call by the NBA for the Chairman, Body of Benchers to recuse himself from presiding over the Ceremonies. To the glory of God, the Call to Bar Ceremonies were successful.

Dated this 8th Day of December, 2022.



Daniel M. Tela, Esq
Secretary, Body of Benchers