NBA UMUAHIA BRANCH
LAW WEEK 2025
KEYNOTE ADDRESS

by

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Theme:

TENACIOUS CLOGS
IN THE WHEELS OF JUSTICE DELIVERY IN NIGERIA

Delivered On Tuesday, November 18, 2025 At The Opening Ceremony Of The 2025 Law Week of the Nigerian Bar Association, Umuahia Branch.

Protocols: Your Excellencies, my lord the Chief Judge of Abia State, my lords, spiritual and temporal, the Hon. Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice, fellow members of the Inner Bar, Mr./Madam Chair person, my dear colleagues of the utter bar and distinguished members of the Nigerian Bar Association, Umuahia Branch, invited guests, gentlemen of the 4th estate of the realm, ladies and gentlemen.

First of all, I commend the Branch Executive and the Law Week Committee for selecting a deeply reflective and relevant theme - ***"Tenacious Clogs in***

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PUBLICATIONS: 1. **"Onyeama: Eagle on the Bench"** (A Biography of Nigeria's 1st Substantive Judge at The Hague); 2. **Analysis of the Fundamental Rights Enforcement Procedure Rules 2009**; 3. Chief Editor: **Socrates of the Supreme Court-Oputa JSC Through The Cases** (Volumes 1 - 9); 4. **Pre-Trial Proceedings & Front-Loading**; 5. **Prosecutors Handbook for the Ministry of Justice** (2013); 6. Editor-in-Chief: **Citizens Rights & Mediation Journal, Ministry of Justice, Enugu** (2010 - 2019); 7. Editor-in-Chief: **Court of Appeal Reports** (2015 till date); 8. **Enhancing Romance in Marriage** (2010); 9. **Needed! Good Husbands; Involved Fathers** (2014); 10. Articles: (a). Essays in Honour of Hon. Justice C.M. Chukwuma-Eneh JSC; (b). Essays in Honour of Professor Jadesola Akande; 11. Diverse articles in Journals and Newspaper Law Pages.

the Wheels of Justice Delivery in Nigeria."

The topic is at once evocative and sobering; challenging us, Bar and Bench, to look ourselves in the mirror and confront what we have allowed our justice system to become. It is timely and necessary, demanding candour, introspection, and the courage to look inward and call things by their rightful names.

1. PREFATORY REMARKS:

a) Before addressing the core issues, it is important to reflect briefly on the words behind the theme. In choosing the theme, I see that the word *'cog,'* which is traditionally used with 'wheel,' was replaced by *"clog."* The saying I have heard of is *"cog in the wheel of progress."* *A cog in the wheel of progress is an informal term for a person who is a small, often insignificant but necessary part of a large organisation or system. In short, it refers to a person who performs a minor role within a larger enterprise.*

b) However, your choice of *'clog'* in place of the traditionally used *'cog'* was a play on words, exhibiting linguistic excellence. I congratulate you.

c) The word *"clog"* denotes an obstacle, a hindrance, a weight that impedes motion. *"Tenacious"* suggests persistence, obstinacy; refusal to let go.
Thus, *"tenacious clogs"* are those stubborn, almost immovable impediments that have, over time, fastened themselves to the wheels of justice delivery in Nigeria - so that, no matter how hard the system tries to move, progress remains painfully slow.

d) These clogs are not new; they are old, deep-seated, and institutional. They persist because they have been tolerated, even normalised. Yet, as every lawyer knows, justice is the very soul of civilisation, and the rule of law, the fulcrum thereof. Without it, there can be no peace, no order, no prosperity.

e) In this address, the term *"justice delivery,"* refers to the entire dispute resolution and rights enforcement mechanism within the judicial architecture.

f) From filing a matter in court to final determination and execution thereof, *"justice delivery"* encompasses the adjudicatory work of judges and magistrates, and the supporting administrative, infrastructural,

and procedural mechanisms which ensure that justice is not merely done but seen to be done.

g) Few topics could be more urgent or more deserving of our collective attention.
h) The prophet Micah captured this eternal truth when he declared, *"What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"* (Micah 6:8).
i) Justice, therefore, is not only a legal duty; it is a moral and divine imperative.

2. THE FIRST CLOG is constitutional.

Inoperativeness of the Second Alteration Act 2010 vis a vis Sections 233 of the Constitution and 24 of the First Alteration Act.

a) It is conceded that Section 233 (3) of the 1999 Constitution made provision for appeal to lie with the leave of the Supreme Court or the court below. However, by virtue of the Second Alteration Act, 2010, **Section 233** of the Constitution and S. 24 of the First Alteration Act were completely substituted with a new Section 233.
b) The new Section 233 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Second Alteration Act), 2010 only provided for appeals to the Supreme Court of Nigeria as of right.
c) Appeals which used to lie to the Supreme Court with leave were thus not made provision for by the Second Alteration Act. Appeals to the Supreme Court can only be over matters which traditionally were as of right.
d) In the circumstances, applications filed at the Supreme Court for leave to appeal, are, with the greatest respect, dead on arrival as the Supreme Court no longer has the power to grant such applications.
e) However, this 2nd alteration has been observed mostly in breach for the following reasons:

i) Some copies of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in circulation rather than reflecting the 2nd Alteration, reflect the position before the 2nd Alteration. This brings us to the settled conclusion that the Constitution of the Federal Republic should not be printed by just any person but by designated institutions like the Government Printer, etc. The current situation where different versions of the Constitution of Nigeria with particular respect to S. 233 is quite frankly, scandalous.

ii) Apart from the above, the Supreme Court appears to have continued to take appeals requiring leave, like appeals raising issues of fact and mixed law and fact. These are appeals requiring

leave of the Supreme Court, and thus, by the operation of the new S. 233 introduced by the 2nd Alteration Act, cannot be appealed to the Supreme Court. If the Supreme Court has started to enforce S. 233 as reengineered by the 2nd Alteration Act, I do most solemnly apologise. But I do solemnly posit that failure to implement the S. 233 brought in by the 2nd Alteration Act has constituted a major cog in the wheel of Justice Delivery at the very apex court in Nigeria because that court is significantly overwhelmed by the sheer volume of appeals. This volume of appeals is a significant clog in justice delivery at the apex court. Appeals are known to last 10 – 12 years at the Nigerian Supreme Court. I did one from 2008 – 2020 when judgment was delivered. If the 2nd Alteration S. 233 is implemented, the clog of delay at the apex court will be removed.

iii) We humbly urge the Supreme Court to give effect to the new provisions of Section 233 as contained in the Second Alteration Act Section 233 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2010.

2. THE SECOND CLOG - Inadequate Infrastructure and Manpower

a) One of the most visible of these clogs is the chronic insufficiency of court halls, judges, and magistrates.
We wake up each day in a country of over two hundred million people served by barely one thousand five hundred courtrooms across all tiers of court. The result is predictable - a mountain of pending cases, weary judges, frustrated litigants, and delayed justice. Justice delayed is justice denied is more than a trite aphorism.

b) In 2010, I attended the International Bar Association conference at Vancouver, Canada - a city of just about three million people. My colleagues and I went on a tour of the court complex, which was not far from the conference venue. On one side of the road, was a court complex of sixty high courts, and on the other side was a Magistrates Court complex of a similar number of courts. Out of curiosity, we got into one of the courts. There were two lawyers, one judge, and only one case on the cause list that day. I was astonished. That experience struck me deeply. It demonstrated how profoundly under-resourced our justice system is.

c) I inquired from the Court Administrator (what we call DCR) if those sixty courts were for the entire State – the province of British Columbia,

and he said no, they were for Vancouver alone; that Victoria, the capital city next door had its own similar number of courts.

d) **Nexus between the economy and the courts.** The German company which wanted to invest in Nigeria but fled after considering the delays in justice delivery underscores this point. If a single city in Canada can sustain sixty courts, what justification is there for a state like Abia to contend with a fraction of that capacity?

e) I have long held the view that Abia State, for instance, should have no fewer than one hundred (100) High Courts so that judges are relieved of unsustainable burdens and matters are concluded within reasonable time.

f) Numbers alone do not suffice. Courtrooms must be properly resourced. Judges must have research assistants, court administrators, and dependable electronic systems. Adjournment culture must be tackled not by scolding but by equipping. Without such measures, exhortations to do better will be hollow.

g) In Nigeria, we have judges who begin sitting at 9 a.m. and rise long after 4 p.m., with lists of over thirty cases. The difference is not in intelligence or diligence, but in institutional support.

h) When one judge handles the workload meant for ten, both quality and speed suffer.

i) **Procedural delay:** A related issue is procedural delay. Our civil and criminal processes remain slow, paper-based, and outdated. Digitization of filing, case scheduling, and judgment delivery must now become a national policy priority. Without procedural reform, infrastructural reform will yield little.

j) The National Judicial Council, the State Governments, and the Bar, NBA especially, must make this a collective crusade. Because justice delayed, in our context, is not only justice denied - it is also justice abandoned.

3. THE THIRD CLOG - Remuneration and Professional Integrity

(a) The third clog lies in the economics of our practice - the undervaluation of legal services and the gradual erosion of professional dignity.

(b) The truth is that many lawyers, especially younger ones, are struggling to survive. Out of that struggle, some are compelled to drag out matters unnecessarily, file needless applications, and contest every adjournment - not because it serves their client's case, but because that is the only way to keep

earning appearance fees. When this becomes the pattern, justice itself suffers.

(c) Our profession has, over time, been quietly devalued. We compete unhealthily, we undercut one another, and in the process, we reduce the public perception of the legal profession. Yet it is a fact - no nation can rise above the moral and material condition of its lawyers.

(d) That is why I must commend the Nigerian Bar Association for the important progress made through the Remuneration (Legal Practitioners) Order of April 2023. It is a landmark step toward restoring value and fairness to legal work.

(e) For the first time in a long while, there is a framework that gives structure to professional fees and discourages the unhealthy underpricing that has weakened our profession.

(f) However, the major challenge remains implementation and regulation. The Remuneration Order is only as strong as its enforcement. Many lawyers are unaware of its contents; others know it but ignore it. The NBA must take its regulatory role more seriously - not just issuing policies, but ensuring compliance through active monitoring and sanctions.

(g) The Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Committee (LPDC) must also wake up to its duty. Regulation is not only about punishing professional misconduct; it is also about maintaining the standards and integrity of the profession. When lawyers consistently undercharge or engage in sharp practices to get briefs, it brings the profession into disrepute - and that, too, is misconduct. Yet the LPDC has largely failed to intervene in these matters.

(h) The Remuneration Order will only have meaning, if we, the Bar, take ownership of it. The NBA must not only issue regulations - it must enforce them. Law firms must not only know the Order - they must implement it. And clients must be made to understand that quality legal representation comes at a fair, not token, cost.

(i) Advocacy is a noble service - it is not a hustle. When lawyers are decently compensated, they are better positioned to act with dignity and independence. But when we allow ourselves to be treated cheaply, we make the law cheap - and, by extension, justice itself.

4. THE FOURTH CLOG - The Quality of Appointments to the Bench

(a) The fourth clog concerns the process by which we appoint our judges and magistrates. Salaries are good now, and many lawyers want to go to the bench.

(b) If we desire a high-quality Bench, we must draw from the deepest wells of competence, character, and courage. We ought not to appoint judges on the basis of familiarity, seniority, or convenience.

(c) I respectfully propose that judicial and magisterial appointments should involve a transparent process of *peer review.*

I propose that peers be invited to depose to affidavits about the temperament, integrity, and professional standing of those being considered. I propose that senior advocates, retired judges, and independent assessors also contribute to the evaluation.
(d) Thankfully, a decision has been taken to publish names of potential nominees for the bench just as is done with prospective SANs.
(e) A judge should not only be learned in law but sound in judgment, even-tempered, and morally upright.
(f) This reform will, hopefully, attract our best minds to the Bench, restore public confidence, and elevate the quality of justice delivery.

5. THE FIFTH CLOG - Weak Judicial Independence

a) Persistent threats to judicial independence.
S. 81 (3) and S. 121 (3) – Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999.
S. 81 (3): Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999.
"The amount standing to the credit of the
(a) Independent National Electoral Commission,
(b) National Assembly, and
(c) Judiciary, in the Consolidated Revenue Fund of the Federation shall be paid directly to the said bodies respectively; in the case of the judiciary, such amount shall be paid to the National Judicial Council for disbursement to the heads of courts established for the Federation and the States under S. 6 of this Constitution."[2]
S. 121 (3): Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999.
"Any amount standing to the credit of the
(a) House of Assembly of the State; and
(b) Judiciary, in the Consolidated Revenue Fund of the State shall be paid directly to the said bodies respectively; in the case of the judiciary, such amount shall be paid directly to the heads of the courts concerned." [3]
In many states, the judiciary still depends on the executive arm for funding, vehicles, and even official accommodation. A judge who must beg the executive for budget releases cannot be truly independent. Until the judiciary is financially and administratively autonomous, justice will remain vulnerable to subtle influence.

6. THE SIXTH CLOG - Enforcement of Judgments

(a) Weak enforcement of judgments. A judgment that cannot be enforced is a hollow victory. **My personal experience.**

[2] S. 81 (3) Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
[3] S. 121 (3) Ibid.

(b) Government agencies often disobey court orders with impunity. We are aware of various decisions granting bail concerning El Zak Zaki (leader of the Shiites) and erstwhile Chief Security Officer, Col. Sambo Dasuki, all observed in breach.
(c) This culture of disobedience not only frustrates litigants but undermines public faith in the courts, thus weakening the judiciary as an institution. A judiciary that cannot enforce its own decisions becomes an institution of frustration, not redress.

7. THE SEVENTH CLOG - Access to Justice and Legal Aid

For millions of Nigerians, justice is simply too expensive.

(a) **Filing fees in court**,

(b) **Transportation** (The delay in justice delivery, which causes cases to last seemingly endlessly thus becoming too expensive for the litigant to continue leaving their business to go to court for years either to give evidence or press for personal justice), and

(c) **Legal fees**

Are often beyond the reach of the average citizen. A true justice system must be accessible to all - not only to the wealthy. The Legal Aid Council must be strengthened, and the culture of Pro Bono representation encouraged. Every branch of the NBA should maintain a functional Pro Bono scheme, particularly for vulnerable groups. A justice system that excludes the poor cannot claim to be just.

8. THE EIGHTH CLOG – The Quest for the Rank of Senior Advocate of Nigeria

a) The eighth clog is one that we, as lawyers, must have the courage to admit: the unintended consequences of the pursuit of the rank of Senior Advocate of Nigeria.
The SAN rank is a noble recognition of excellence, integrity, and contribution to the law. Yet, over the years, the quest for it has spawned certain unhealthy practices within the profession.
b) It is an open secret that many frivolous appeals at the appellate courts emanate from lawyers seeking to qualify for the rank. The result is a flood of cases that burden the already overworked Justices of the Court

of Appeal and the Supreme Court. Matters that could have been resolved through professional counsel or alternative dispute resolution find their way up the judicial ladder - not for the cause of justice, but for the counting of cases.

c) This development has poisoned professional priorities and distorted our justice ecosystem. Instead of discouraging unmeritorious appeals, we now find a steady stream of them- each contributing to the mountain of pending cases that the Supreme Court, Courts of Appeal and courts of first instance are struggling to clear.

d) We must return the SAN rank to its true essence - a recognition of excellence, not excess. It should reward depth, integrity, scholarship, and contribution to the profession, not the mere accumulation of case files. If necessary, the criteria should be recalibrated to emphasise quality over quantity, and substance over form.

e) **I HAVE TWO SUGGESTIONS IN THIS REGARD.**

1/ ADAPTING THE WAEC/WASCE CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECTS TO THE SAN PREFERMENT PROCESS IN THE ADVOCATE CATEGORY; and

2/ CREATION OF TWO STREAMS FOR THE ADVOCATE CATEGORY.

1/ ADAPTING WAEC/WASCE CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECTS TO THE SAN PREFERMENT PROCESS IN THE ADVOCATE CATEGORY;

i. For the purpose of the West Africa School Certificate Examinations, subjects used to be classified into groups. I do not know if it still like that:

   1/ Mathematics – **Compulsory**; 2/ English Language – **Compulsory.** 3/ Science Subjects. 4/ Art Subjects. 5/ Social Sciences. 6/ Fine Art/Technical Drawing, etc. 7/ French/African Languages. 8/ Religious Knowledge, ETC.

ii. English and Mathematics categories were compulsory, while you had to choose between a minimum of six and a maximum of nine subjects from four groups.

iii. You could not write your WAEC in your best six to nine subjects if they all were from two or three categories. You had to drop some and add some in order to meet with the prerequisite of six to nine subjects from four groups. The

raison d'etre for this being the need for candidates to have broad-based education.

iv. SUGGESTIONS FOR THE ADVOCATE SAN CATEGORY:
It is hereby suggested that the Legal Practitioners Privileges Committee adopt subject matter classifications in order to, among others, reduce the number of frivolous appeals as well as produce SANs with as broad-based expertise as possible. The subject matter classification now suggested are:
1/ Criminal Causes Generally; 2/ Criminal - Capital Offences; 3/ Civil - Commercial/Company; 4/ Civil – Land; 5/ Pre-Election Causes; Election Petitions; Electoral Crime Offences; 6/ Arbitration; 7/ Professional Appeals arising from the Medical & Dental Practitioners Disciplinary Committee, Legal Practitioners Disciplinary Committee, Military, COREN (Engineers), ARCON (Architects); 8/ ETCETERA.

v. **How will frivolous appeals be cut down by the above suggestion?** Today, you can become SAN if you get even 10 pre-election matters and drive them through the appellate courts. You could pretend not to notice the fact that 5 of them are statute-barred. And argue them through the appellate courts, waste everybody's time, lose all ten but meet up with the numbers. However, if you were required to bring 5 appeals from five groups as above outlined, lawyers will get one or two from each group.

vi. Thus, in order to qualify to apply for the rank under the Advocate Category, (a) at the level of the Supreme Court; you will be required to have a minimum of one judgment each from a minimum of the four groups listed; and (b) at the level of the Court of Appeal; you will be required to have a minimum of two judgments each from a minimum of the four groups listed. (c) For courts of first instance, no classifications are suggested.

2/ CREATION OF TWO STREAMS FOR THE SAN ADVOCATE CATEGORY.

To really reduce the number of cases coming to court due to the quest for the rank of SAN, a second stream is hereby proposed. The current sole stream for SAN is 20 – 5 – 4 (3) - that is, 20 judgments at the High Court, 5 judgments at the Court of Appeal and 4 (or 3) judgments at the Supreme Court; all being obtained within 10 years.

The proposed second stream is 100 (one hundred) high court judgments, 1 (one) Court of Appeal and 1 (one) Supreme Court, all obtained within 10 years. **Raison d'etre:** If a second route to the rank of SAN is created requiring lawyers to have one hundred high court judgments obtained within 10 years, two things will emerge. One, an end to frivolous adjournments, and Two, an increase in pro bono cases. Both of these will be salutary to the justice delivery sector.

9. THE WAY FORWARD - Moral and Institutional Renewal.

The tenacious clogs we have identified are not destiny. They are choices. They persist because we have allowed them to. They will disappear the day statesmen arise in the national and local spaces and decide, as a profession and as a nation, that justice must no longer crawl in Nigeria. Unfortunately, there is an abject lack of statesmen in Nigeria.

We must therefore commit to a threefold renewal: **institutional, professional, and moral.**

I. Institutional Renewal

We must first fix the structure that carries justice. Our courts are overstretched, underfunded, and in many cases, physically unfit for purpose. Judges sit in rented halls, staff work in cramped offices, and basic technology is absent.
Institutional renewal means investment - not more talk. It means state governments building more courtrooms, the National Judicial Council reviewing the ratio of judges to population, and the judiciary adopting technology that makes filing, tracking, and delivery of judgments faster and more transparent.

If one Canadian city can have sixty functioning courts, surely a state like Enugu or Abia or Delta in oil-producing Nigeria, can have a hundred well-equipped High Courts, and another one hundred well-equipped Magistrate

Courts. We can no longer treat justice as a luxury. It is a core service that must be properly funded. The government must see the judiciary as an essential arm, not a dependent department.

II. Professional Renewal

The second level of renewal is professional. As lawyers, we must take an honest look at ourselves. Too often, our ethics have been compromised by unhealthy competition, poor mentoring, and a misplaced focus on titles and appearances rather than substance.

Professional renewal means rebuilding the culture of integrity in practice. Senior lawyers must mentor younger ones, not just in law but in values. The Bar must take discipline seriously - whether in the misuse of the SAN rank, the abuse of court processes, or the undercutting of fees.

It also means revisiting the way we practice: embracing mediation and technology-driven case management, reducing frivolous cases and appeals, and putting the interest of justice above the interest of ego. A strong Bar makes for a strong Bench - and vice versa.

III. Ethical Renewal

(a) Finally, we must renew our moral compass. Justice is not a trade; it is a trust. When a client gives you a case, when a judge takes an oath, when a lawyer signs a pleading - each is acting as a trustee of justice.

(b) I AM OF THE VIEW THAT PROFESSIONAL ETHICS SHOULD BECOME A COURSE IN THE FACULTY OF LAW OF ALL UNIVERSITIES. IT SHOULD BE TAUGHT FROM COVER TO COVER, EVERY ACADEMIC SESSION. THE SYLLABUS SHOULD BE REPEATED EVERY SESSION UNTIL THE STUDENT GRADUATES, AND THEREAFTER REPEATED IN THE LAW SCHOOL. **Why do I so posit? Because what a young man or woman started studying or learning every year from the impressionable age of about 18, for the next six years, is more likely to stick and form part of his/her mental blood stream.**

(c) We must recover that sense of duty. Our words, our fees, our filings, our judgments, all must reflect integrity.
As lawyers and judges, we are officers of the court and custodians of public trust. When we cut corners, we don't just fail our clients, we weaken the justice system itself.

(d) The Bible says, *"Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people"*[4]. The Greek philosopher, Plato, did consider justice to be the most important virtue for both individuals and the state, stating that *"justice in life and conduct of the state is possible only as it first resides in the hearts and souls of the citizens;"*[5] that *"justice is the first virtue of social institutions."*[6] And again, the Bible stipulates *"But let justice roll on like a river, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."*[7]

(e) The message is the same: a society that abandons justice cannot prosper. Can this be the reason for the ever backward movement of Nigeria? May it change.

(f) A nation that denies justice denies itself peace. And a Bar that tolerates injustice, no matter how subtly, betrays its calling.

9. CONCLUSION - A Call to Recommitment

(a) My dear colleagues, the challenge before us is to remove these clogs, one after another, until the wheels of justice in Nigeria can move freely once again.
(b) Here in Nigeria, we do not lack the intelligence or ability - we only need the will to fix what we all know is wrong. Let us not give up. The Nigerian legal profession has produced men and women of great courage who have shown, by example, that change is possible.

(c) We remember **Gani Fawehinmi, SAN**, who fought fearlessly for justice and accountability, even when it was dangerous to do so. He stood fearlessly against tyranny and oppression, often at great personal cost, insisting that no man is above the law.
(d) We recall **Chief Rotimi Williams, SAN**, whose leadership helped shape the foundation of the legal profession as we know it today.

(e) We celebrate **Femi Falana, SAN**, whose unrelenting voice for human rights and accountability continues to challenge our institutions to higher standards.

[4] Proverbs 14/34
[5] The Republic by Plato
[6] A Theory of Justice by John Rawls, 1971.
[7] Amos 5/24

(f) How about **Prof. Chidi Odinkalu**, **Olisa Agbakoba SAN**, **Prof. RACE Achara** and lately, **JS Okutepa SAN**?

(g) And beyond these well-known names, there are hundreds of silent achievers - magistrates in our local courts, young lawyers handling pro bono cases, and senior lawyers mentoring the next generation with integrity and patience.

(h) It is time for all of us - Bench and Bar alike - to take responsibility for improving the justice system. We cannot continue to lament without acting.

(i) Let us work together to make our courts places where people can truly get justice, not places of delay and frustration.
(j) Always remember that the courts were not built for lawyers. The courts were built for the citizen to come get justice. We must not stand as clogs on the path of justice.

(h) Let us conduct ourselves as professionals of honour, not hustlers chasing appearance fees.
(i) Let us rebuild the dignity of our calling, remembering always that the lawyer's duty is not only to win cases, but to uphold the cause of justice itself.

(j) And as we do this, let us hold on to the clear instruction of Scripture:

> *"Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow."* - **Isaiah 1:17**

(k) That is the true spirit of our profession - to use the law not just as a tool of power, but as an instrument of fairness and hope.

(l) As the 16th U.S. President, Abraham Lincoln, a lawyer, used to pray. May God give us the might to do the right.

Thank you.

By my hand this 18th day of November, 2025 at Umuahia.

Ikeazor Ajovi Akaraiwe, SAN