



NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION

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STATEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION, MR YAKUBU CHONOKO MAIKYAU, OON, SAN, IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 2023 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

8 March 2024

The Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) is delighted to join the rest of the global community to celebrate our women on this year's International Women's Day. 8 March every year is set aside to celebrate our women and their outstanding achievements and contributions to the society. As an association, the largest and most influential Bar on the continent of Africa, we are happy to celebrate all the female members of the legal profession.

We are proud of the trail-blazing achievements and the value-added contributions of our ladies, both at the Bar and on the Bench, to the administration of justice in Nigeria and the world at large. We consider it worthy to celebrate the landmark accomplishments the Women of the Bar have continued to record since the enrolment of Mrs. Stella Jane Marke [nee Thomas] on 16 November 1935, as the first Nigerian female lawyer. It is gratifying to note that 89 years after that milestone enrolment, the number of women at the Bar have continued to rise exponentially.

In this wise, I must acknowledge and celebrate specially the female trailblazers in the legal profession, who shattered glass ceilings to reach for the stars and thus paved the way for other women to follow. They include Mrs Victoria Ayodele Onejeme – the first female Attorney General in Nigeria; Chief (Mrs) Folake Solanke, OON, CON, SAN – first female Senior Advocate of Nigeria (*Matriarch of the legal profession worldwide*); Prof Jadesola Debo-Akande – first female Professor of Law; Justice Modupe Omo Eboh – first female judge in Nigeria, Justice Modupe Omo Eboh (1976); Mrs Hairat Balogun, OON – first female Attorney General of Lagos State; Mrs. Pricilla Kuye – first female president of the Nigerian Bar Association; Hon. Justice Aloma Mariam Mukhtar, GCON – first female Justice of the Supreme Court and first female Chief Justice of Nigeria.

I must not fail to recognise and celebrate the generation after the above-mentioned, represented by the likes of, Hon. Justice Amina Adamu Augie, JSC; Hon Justice Monica Bolna'an Dongban-Mensem, PCA; Mrs Funke Adekoya, SAN; Iyom Anayo Justina Offiah, SAN; Miannaya Essien, SAN; F. Boma Alabi, SAN; Folashade Alli, SAN; to mention just a few, who have in recent time been a source of inspiration to the younger generation of female lawyers; providing shoulders on which they can stand to reach for the stars.

Only yesterday (7/3/2024), I had the privilege to celebrate and receive into the Nigerian Bar, the Overall Best Student of the Year from the Nigerian Law School (NLS) for this year, Lawal Aminat Odunayo, a young woman. Aminat also emerged as the Best Promising Student of the Year as well as the Best Female Student in Civil Litigation. It is historic that the latter award was instituted by another Amazon at the Bar and on the Bench, His Lordship Hon. Justice Aloma Mariam Mukhtar, GCON, the first female Justice of the Supreme Court and the first female Chief Justice of Nigeria. It is worthy of note that of the 251 students, now

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our colleagues, who made First Class at the NLS this year, more than 70 percent were females.

Some Nigerian women that have thrilled the world with their brilliance and excellence, outside the field of law, include Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti; Magaret Ekpo; Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, GCON (Director General, World Trade Organisation); Amina J. Mohammed (Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations); Dora Akunyili (of blessed memory); Folorunsho Alakija; Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche; Dr Zainab Shinkafi Bagudu (Founder, MEDICAID Foundation; Board Member, Union for International Cancer Control); Eugenia Abu (a Broadcast Journalist/Media Consultant); Aisha Ali-Gombe (US-based Professor of Computer Science and Cybersecurity expert) – women who stood in defiance of the age-long false belief that women had limited capability.

The theme of this year's celebration, **Investing in Women: Accelerate Progress**, is instructive. The Nigerian Bar Association as the umbrella organisation of legal practitioners called to the Nigerian Bar is committed to a gender equal world, a world free of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination. The NBA is making conscious efforts to ensure that our female colleagues are given platforms to showcase their capabilities and by so doing encourage Nigerians on the imperative to make deliberate investment in the womenfolk.

For the first time in the 64-year history of the NBA Annual General Conference, an all-female executive would lead the Conference Planning Committee. I must note that this is not an act of tokenism. It is a demonstration of our commitment to inclusivity and a recognition of the great talents and excellence that our female colleagues represent.

The Nigerian Bar Association is also proud to note that for the first time in our recent history, the Supreme Court of Nigeria has a record six female Justices. Surely, the door opened by the Honourable Justice Aloma Mariam Mukhtar, GCON was kept open. This is a positive development not only for the legal profession but for our country as a whole. I look forward to the day when we are going to have more female at all levels of our justice system.

I congratulate all our female colleagues as we mark this year's International Women's Day. Together, we can drive inclusion and take actions for increased and better investment in women for accelerated progress in all spheres of our national life.

Wishing you all a Happy International Women's Day.



Yakubu Chonoko Maikyau, OON, SAN
PRESIDENT